POLITICAL THEORY AS A VOCATION*

SHELDON S. WOLIN
University of California, Berkeley

The purpose of this paper is to sketch some of the implications, prospective and retrospective, of the primacy of method in the present study of politics and to do it by way of a contrast, which is deliberately heightened, but hopefully not caricatured, between the vocation of the "methodist"[1] and the vocation of the theorist. My discussion will be centered around the kinds of activity involved in the two vocations. During the course of the discussion various questions will be raised, primarily the following: What is the idea which underlies method and how does it compare with the older understanding of theory? What is involved in choosing one rather than the other as the way to political knowledge? What are the human or educational consequences of the choice, that is, what is demanded of the person who commits himself to one or the other? What is the typical stance towards the political world of the methodist and how does it compare to the theorist's?

The discussion which follows will seek, first, to locate the idea of method in the context of the "behavioral revolution," and, second, to examine the idea itself in terms of some historical and analytical considerations. Then, proceeding on the assumption that the idea of method, like all important intellectual choices, carries a price, the discussion will concentrate on some of the personal, educational, vocational, and political consequences of this particular choice. Finally, I shall attempt to relate the idea of the vocation of political theory to these same matters.

I. THE IDEA OF "METHOD" IN THE BEHAVIORAL REVOLUTION

In compiling its recent *Biographical Directory*, the American Political Science Association distributed a questionnaire which in its own way helped raise the present question, "What is the vocation of the political theorist?" Political Theorists were invited to identify themselves by choosing among "Political Theory and Philosophy (Empirical)," "Political Theory and Philosophy (Historical)," and "Political Theory and Philosophy (Normative)." Although the choices offered may signify vitality and diversity, they may also testify to considerable confusion about the nature of political theory. For their part, political theorists may think of it as an identity crisis induced by finding themselves officially assigned a classification which others have defined, a classification traceable to a set of assumptions about the nature of the theoretical life perhaps uncongenial to many theorists.

Beyond the matter of professional identity there are far more compelling reasons for raising the question of vocation. Whatever one's assessment of the "behavioral revolution," it clearly has succeeded in transforming political science. What is less clear is the precise nature of that revolution. Among leading spokesmen of the profession it has become stylish to interpret that revolution as a close facsimile of the sorts of scientific changes discussed by Thomas Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.[2] Accordingly, the behavioral revolution is described as the inauguration of a new theoretical paradigm. Such a view, I think, is mistaken. It blurs the significance of the change. A more accurate account is suggested by the following: "One of the most significant recent developments in the social sciences is the revolution in data gathering and data evalu-

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[1] "*Methodist.* One who is skilled in, or attaches great importance to, method; one who follows a (specified) method." *Oxford Universal Dictionary.*

Although most social scientists would contend that actual research rarely conforms to a step-by-step procedure, it remains the case that such procedure stands as a model for what they aim at. Thus, in a section of a text-book on research methods entitled "Major Steps in Research," the authors insert the qualification above but acknowledge that "published research strongly suggests the existence of a prescribed sequence of procedures, each step presupposing the completion of the preceding one." Claire Selltiz *et al.*, *Research Methods in Social Relations*, rev. ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1963), pp. 8–9.

[2] I have discussed Kuhn's interpretation and its relevance to political science in "Paradigms and Political Theories," *Politics and Experience. Essays Presented to Michael Oakeshott*, ed. P. King and B. C. Parekh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), pp. 125–152.

ation. This revolution depends upon the developments in techniques by which data can be collected and analyzed. . . . "[3]

Assuming that this statement reflects a widespread sentiment which guides the actual practice of the profession, it provides a clue to the nature of the changes, what they are and what they are not, and what they signify for the vocations of political scientists and theorists. Despite claims to the contrary, political science has not undergone a revolution of the type described by Kuhn in which a new and dominant theory is installed. Although an abundance of new "theories" is available to the political scientist, it should be remembered that, by Kuhn's canon, the mere existence of new theories, or even the fact that some theories have attracted a following, are not conclusive evidence of a revolution. What counts is the enforcement by the scientific community of one theory to the exclusion of its rivals.

Although it is sometimes contended that "systems theory" constitutes the paradigmatic theory of the revolution, it is doubtful that this claim is tenable. Not only is there confusion about which of the several versions of the theory is the preferred one, or even whether any version is useful, but, above all, the popularity of systems theory followed rather than produced the behavioral revolution.

Whatever else it may be, a revolution without an initiating theory cannot qualify as a revolution by Kuhn's criterion. It may be, rather, a typically American revolution in which theories play a minor role. American political scientists, for the most part, have not only generally supported the traditional American diffidence toward theories, but they have elevated it to scientific status. The suspicion of theories is alleged to be a powerful contributor to the political stability of America and to its genius for pragmatic rather than ideological politics. In making this assertion I am not unmindful that there is hardly to be found a journal of political science in which some contemporary has not noted that "the mere accumulation of data without a guiding theory is, etc. . . . " Nor has it escaped my attention that a wide variety of theories exists for the political scientist to choose among. To call them political theories is, in the language of philosophy, to commit something like a category mistake. Systems theories, communication theories, and structural-functional theories are unpolitical theories shaped by the desire to explain certain forms of non-political phenomena. They offer no significant choice or critical analysis of the quality, direction, or fate of public life. Where they are not alien intrusions, they share the same uncritical—and therefore untheoretical—assumptions of the prevailing political ideology which justifies the present "authoritative allocation of values" in our society.

Nonetheless, to say that there has been no political theory which has inspired the revolution in political science is not to say either that there has been no revolution or that no intellectual patterns are being widely promoted throughout the discipline. There has in fact been a certain revolution in political science, one that reflects a tradition of politics which has prided itself on being pragmatic and concerned mainly with workable techniques. Like all technique-oriented activity, the behavioral movement presupposes that the fundamental purposes and arrangements served by its techniques have been settled and that, accordingly, it reenforces, tacitly or explicitly, those purposes and arrangements and operates according to a notion of alternatives tightly restricted by these same purposes and arrangements. The emphasis upon methods does not signify simply the acquisition of a "kit" of new "tools," but presupposes a viewpoint which has profound implications for the empirical world, the vocation and the education of political scientists, and the resources which nourish the theoretical imagination.

To contend that the idea of method is the central fact of the behavioral revolution is merely to repeat what the revolutionaries themselves have stated. "Most important, perhaps, the criteria by which one accepts or rejects statements about social life are of a special nature. The ultimate criterion is the method by which they are gathered."[4] If it should be the case that a widespread set of assumptions is commonly held among those committed to the primacy of method, it is of little consequence that the techniques are diverse and changing. What matters are the common assumptions and consequences which accompany the emphasis on technique. The extent of this transformation is such as to suggest that the study of politics is now dominated by the belief that the main objective—acquiring scientific knowledge about politics—depends upon the adoption and refinement of specific techniques and that to be qualified or certified as a political scientist is tantamount to possessing prescribed techniques. Concurrent with this de-

[3] G. A. Almond and S. Verba, *The Civic Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 43.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 43.

velopment there has been an effort to imbue political scientists with what is understood to be the ethic of science: objectivity, detachment, fidelity to fact, and deference to intersubjective verification by a community of practitioners. These changes add up to a vocation, a *vita methodica*, which includes a specified set of skills, a mode of practice, and an informing ethic. This vocation, and the education which it requires, may mark the significance of the behavioral revolution.

At this point a protest might be made that too much is being read into the idea of method. Methods *per se* do not presuppose a philosophical view of things, but are neutral or instrumental, analogous to the technician in being indifferent to the purposes of their master. Such an argument is not only wrong but superficial. In the first place, the elevation of techniques has important curricular consequences. The requirement that students become proficient in an assortment of technical skills preempts a substantial portion of their time and energy. But more important, training in techniques has educational consequences for it affects the way in which the initiates will look upon the world and especially the political portion of it. "Methodism" is ultimately a proposal for shaping the mind. Social scientists have sensed this when they have noted that research methods are "tools" which "can become a way of looking at the world, of judging everyday experience."[5]

In the second place, the alleged neutrality of a methodist's training overlooks significant philosophical assumptions admittedly incorporated into the outlook of those who advocate scientific inquiry into politics. These assumptions are such as to reenforce an uncritical view of existing political structures and all that they imply. For the employment of method assumes, even requires, that the world be of one kind rather than another if techniques are to be effective. Method is not a thing for all worlds. It presupposes a certain answer to a Kantian type of question, What must the world be like for the methodist's knowledge to be possible? This presupposition is illustrated by a recent example which listed the major assumptions alleged to underly the "movement" of political behavior. The first item was: "*Regularities*. These are discoverable uniformities in political behavior. These can be expressed in generalizations or theories with explanatory and predictive value."[6] It follows that the methodist is in trouble when the world exhibits "deformities" or emergent irregularities. As the unhappy state of theories of "development" or "modernization" suggests, similar trouble appears when the world manifests "multiformities."[7]

This is but to say that there are inherent limits to the kinds of questions which the methodist deems appropriate. The kind of world hospitable to method invites a search for those regularities that reflect the main patterns of behavior which society is seeking to promote and maintain. Predictable behavior is what societies live by, hence their structures of coercion, of rewards and penalties, of subsidies and discouragements are shaped toward producing and maintaining certain regularities in behavior and attitudes. Further, every society is a structure bent in a particular and persistent way so that it constitutes not only an arrangement of power but also of powerlessness, of poverty as well as wealth, injustice and justice, suppression and encouragement.

It is symptomatic in this connection that political scientists have increasingly taken to describing themselves as "normal scientists."[8] The phrase is Kuhn's and he used it to designate a type of scientist whose vocation is not to create theories or even to criticize them but to accept the dominant theory approved by the scientific community and to put it to work. But if we ask, what is the dominant theoretical paradigm of our normal (political) scientists, the answer is that, in Kuhn's sense, there is none. Yet, surely, although there is no paradigm derived from what Kuhn calls "an extraordinary theory," such as Galileo or Newton produced, there must still be some guiding assumptions or framework which the methodist follows. The answer, I have suggested, is that there is such a framework of assumptions. It is the ideological paradigm reflective of the same political community which the normal scientists are investigating.[9] Thus when a researcher

[5] Selltiz, *et al.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 6–7.

[6] D. Easton, *A Framework for Political Analysis* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1965), p. 7.

[7] As a recent work on political socialization (which is described as "a universal feature of political life . . .") admits: " . . . the reader is forewarned that the treatment is heavily biased in favor of a model appropriate to western democracies, particularly in the United States."

[8] See, for example, H. Eulau's language in I. de Sola Pool (ed.), *Contemporary Political Science* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), pp. 58–59; and the more cautious remarks in A. Somit and J. Tanenhaus, *The Development of American Political Science* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1967), pp. 174ff.

[9] This may appear contentious, but, in reality, it is only a restatement of what appears in G. A.

takes "the normal flow of events in American politics" as his starting point, it is not surprising to find him concluding that "the long-run stability of the system depends on the underlying division of party loyalties."[10]

These considerations become even more compelling if we concentrate for a moment upon the "systems" theorist. If society is conceived to be a system of decision-making, and if the recurrence of unjust decisions is commonly acknowledged, it follows that the system is, to some persistent degree, a structure of systematic injustice, otherwise the idea of a system is an inadequate account. The built-in embarrassments of a particular system have sometimes been recognized, as when it is asserted that a supposedly democratic system requires a certain measure of indifference or apathy, especially on the part of the poor and the uneducated. This reservation about systems which purport to be democratic, and hence participatory, is sometimes stated more bluntly when the system in question is non-Western:

> In the Congo, in Vietnam, in the Dominican Republic, it is clear that order depends on *somehow compelling* newly mobilized strata to return to a measure of passivity and defeatism from which they have recently been aroused by the process of modernization.[11]

For the most part, however, the systems theorist prefers to emphasize more formal regularities. Thus, for example, the political system is defined as a special form of "social interactions . . . that are predominantly oriented toward the authoritative allocation of values for a society."[12] What is most revealing about this definition is the location of the word "predominantly": it is placed so as to qualify the "interactions" and thereby to enable subsequent research to distinguish political from social interactions. If the same word had been used, instead, to qualify the "allocations," a substantially different view of a system would have emerged, one in which the allocations would be seen to favor some interactions rather than others. It is acknowledged in the work cited that the favored theory may "inadvertently" exclude "some elements of major importance,"[13] but not that a system may require deliberate and systematic exclusion of major elements. Rather, it is agreed that "a systems approach draws us away from a discussion of the way in which the political pie is cut up and how it happens to get cut up in one way rather than another." The remedy for this "*status quo* bias" is to fall back upon "partial theories" which deal with selected aspects of the *same* system, e.g., theories of "decision-making, coalition strategies, game theories, power, and group analysis."[14] What is conveniently overlooked by this recipe is that it merely reaffirms in different form, the same culinary assumptions about the common pie, for each partial theory claims to be a plausible account of the same whole.

That a discussion of method should naturally lead to considering some prominent theories current among political scientists is not surprising. Most contemporary theories are dependent upon the behavioral revolution, not only in the methodological sense that the theories in question look to behavioral techniques for confirmation or disconfirmation, but in the more important sense of sharing the same outlook regarding education, philosophical assumptions, and political ideology. The close linkage between contemporary ideas of theory and of methods justifies treating them as members of the same family, forming a community of common features which I have labelled "methodism." As the earlier pages have tried to suggest, the idea of method has come to mean far more than was implied by Bentham, for example, when he called it "the order of investigation."[15] It can be better understood as constituting an alternative to the *bios theoretikos*, and, as such, is one of the major achievements of the behavioral revolution. To grasp the nature of the *vita methodica* is not only important for its own sake, but should help in distinguishing it from the activity and vocation of theory.

II. HISTORY OF THE IDEA OF "METHOD"

One way to get at the idea of method is to recognize that it has a history reaching back to ancient Greek philosophy. Like *philosophia*, *methodus* was often used in association with the notion of a "way" (*aporie*) to truth.[16] Before

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Almond, "Political Theory and Political Science," *American Political Science Review*, LX (1966), 873–875.

[10] A. Campbell, "Surge and Decline: A Study of Electoral Change," in A. Campbell *et al.*, *Elections and the Political Order* (New York: Wiley, 1966), p. 45.

[11] I. de Sola Pool, "The Public and the Polity," in Pool (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 26 (emphasis added).

[12] Easton, *Framework*, p. 50.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 48.

[14] D. Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life* (New York: Wiley, 1965), p. 475.

[15] *Works*, ed. J. Bowring, 11 vols. (Edinburgh, 1843), Vol. II, p. 493.

[16] Heraclitus, frags. 203, 235; Parmenides,

long, *methodus* and *philosophia* began to diverge. Generally speaking, while *philosophia* and its sister, *theoria*, tended to stress the arduous difficulties awaiting those who sought truth, the devotees of *methodus* began to emphasize the economy of being methodical, that is, of faithfully following a prescribed sequence of mental steps, a "straight road" in Descartes' phrase.[17] The old metaphor of the "way" was subtly altered and became associated with the advantages of adhering to a beaten path rather than "blazing" a trail. A premonition of this change appeared in the Middle Ages when *methodus* tended to acquire the connotation of a "short-cut." It found popular expression in numerous attempts to compose *compendia* on various subjects.[18]

During the Middle Ages and well into the sixteenth century the idea of method remained encumbered by Aristotelian and scholastic logic. As a result, method was tightly bound by logical procedures whose main aim was to sift and order inherited knowledge and experience rather than to discover new things. Thus the two main procedures of scholastic logic were "invention" (*inventio*), or the methods by which contestable propositions could be analyzed pro and con, and "judgment" or "disposition" (*iudicium*), which comprised the methods of arranging words into propositions, then into syllogisms or inductions, and finally into whole discourses. The conservatory quality of method was illustrated in a sixteenth-century work, *The Rule of Reason*, written by Thomas Wilson and published in 1551. Declaring that "a reason [is] easier found than fashioned," he compared the logic of "invention" with the sort of traditional lore acquired by huntsmen, saying that "he that will take profite in this parte of logique, must be like a hunter, and learne by labour to knowe the boroughes. For these places [i.e., a marke whiche gieuth warnyng to our memory what we maie speake probablie] be nothyng els but couertes or boroughes, wherein if any one searche diligentlie, he maie fynd game at pleasure." In his definition of "method," Wilson clearly expressed the view of one who saw it primarily as an ordering and clarifying procedure, "the maner of handeling a single Question, and the readie waie howe to teache and sette forth any thyng plainlie, and in order, as it should be, in latine *Methodus*."[19]

Throughout the sixteenth century method continued to be thought of mainly in organizational terms. Petrus Ramus, the most influential writer of the period, reflected this tendency. "Method," according to his definition, "is of arrangement, by which among many things the first in respect to conspicuousness is put in the first place, the second in the second, the third in the third, and so on. This term refers to every discipline and every dispute. Yet it commonly is taken in the sense of a direction sign and of a shortening of the highway."[20] Despite the static nature of Ramus's conception, there was some anxiety about "the new devised aid." With his customary irony, Richard Hooker entered some reservations:

> Of marvellous quick despatch it is, and doth shew them that have it as much almost in three days, as if it dwell threescore years with them . . . Because the curiosity of man's wit doth many times with peril wade farther in the search of things than were convenient; the same is thereby restrained unto such generalities as every where offering themselves are apparent unto men of the weakest conceit that need be. So as following the rules and precepts thereof, we may define it to be, an Art which teacheth the way of speedy discourse, and restraineth the mind of man that it may not wax over-wise.[21]

Scarcely a generation later the restraints were rejected and Descartes introduced a new "way of speedy discourse" that promised to make men "the lords and possessors of nature."[22] The crucial step between Hooker and

frags. 342, 344–7. G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957). The idea reappears in Machiavelli, *Discorsi*, Bk. I, Preface; Tocqueville, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. J.-P. Mayer (Paris: Gallimard, 1961–), Vol. I, p. 293.

[17] *Discourse on Method*, tr. J. Veitch, *The Method, Meditations, and Philosophy of Descartes* (New York: Tudor Publishing Co., n.d.), Pt. I, p. 149.

[18] See W. Ong, *Ramus. Method and the Decay of Dialogue* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958), p. 53ff.; N. W. Gilbert, *Renaissance Concepts of Method* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), p. 3ff.

[19] All quotations are from W. S. Howell, *Logic and Rhetoric in England, 1500–1700* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1961), pp. 21, 23–24. The Ramist influence upon the American Puritans has been discussed by Perry Miller, *The New England Mind, The Seventeenth Century* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1939, 1961), p. 154ff. and Appendix A.

[20] Howell, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

[21] *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885), I.vi.4.

[22] *Discourse on Method* (Veitch trans.), Pt. VI, p. 192.

Descartes had been taken by Bacon who developed a distinction between two kinds of *inventio*, one a technique for the discovery of things not previously known, the other for the rediscovery of something previously known but temporarily forgotten.[23] Rightly understood, method promised not only "the use of knowledge" but, above all, "the *progression* of knowledge."[24]

With the gradual development of the idea of method, its significance soon extended beyond the simple advantages of economy and efficiency of mental effort. In following a shortcut, the mind was literally "conducting" inquiry, that is, comporting itself in a special way, following a code of intellectual conduct which, while it might not automatically lead to new truths, would for the most part prevent the methodist from wandering into grievous errors. Thus method came to mean, among other things, a form of discipline designed to compensate for unfortunate proclivities of the mind. "I am indeed amazed," Descartes exclaimed, "when I consider how weak my mind is and how prone to error."[25]

Descartes was among the first to realize that the adoption of the methodical point of view was at least as important as the acquisition of specified techniques. To adopt a method was not equivalent to buying a new suit, to a transaction in which only the external appearance of the purchaser was altered. It was, instead, a profound personal choice, perhaps the closest functional equivalent to conversionary experience that the modern mind can achieve. At the very least, it was intended as a form of reeducation, as one of Descartes' works, *Regulae ad directionem ingenii*, implied. The educational force of the title has been partially lost in translation, *Rules for the Direction of the Mind. Ingenium* carries the meaning of "nature, character, temperament," rather than the more narrowly intellectualistic connotations of "mind." That work described the specific steps for conditioning and disciplining the *ingenium* of the novice, for "rendering [it] more apt in the discovery of yet other truths." The human tendency "to guess unmethodically, at random," not only produced error but mental flabbiness as well. "In so proceeding we are bound to weaken the mind's powers of insight" and, therefore, a strict program was required. "We ought to train ourselves first in those easier matters, but methodically. Thereby we shall accustom ourselves to proceed always by easy and familiar paths, and so, as easily as though we were at play, to penetrate ever more deeply into the truth of things."[26]

The celebrated Cartesian principle of doubt formed a vital part of the new regimen for the mind. Doubt was the means of preparing the mind for *regulae* by first depriving it of the major forms of resistance. Bacon, anticipating the difficulty, had noted that "a new method must be found for quiet entry into minds so choked and overgrown" that only an *expurgatio intellectus* would suffice.[27] Radical doubt was Descartes' version of the purge. Before the mind could proceed methodically, it must be turned upon itself, stripping off acquired habits, beliefs, and values until compelled to face the primordial truth of the *cogito* whose *sum* now stood divested of its cultural heritage in an ahistorical silence. " . . . Those who have learned the least of all that has hitherto been distinguished by the name of philosophy are the most fitted for the apprehension of truth."[28] What Bacon had exultingly proclaimed earlier, "I have purged and swept and levelled the floor of the mind,"[29] had now been programmed by Descartes.

Descartes attached certain self-denying ordinances to his program that are not without interest in the light of the recent evolution of political science. He singled out some subjects, God among them, as privileged and, therefore, protected from the destructive effects of doubt and methodical probing. He cautioned especially against bringing the new method to bear upon questions of morality and practical action. He himself had decided to accept existing moral values as a "provisional code" before submitting all else to doubt, "lest," as he explained, "I should remain irresolute in my actions . . ." More tellingly, since conflicting opinions often existed about what was right, he

[23] *Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. R. L. Ellis, J. Spedding and D. D. Heath, 7 vols. (London: 1887–92), Vol. VI, pp. 268–269.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 289. "We know that the founders [of New England] studied Francis Bacon." Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

[25] *Meditations*, II in *Descartes. Philosophical Writings*, tr. N. K. Smith (New York: Random House, 1956), p. 189.

[26] Rules X–XI (tr. N. K. Smith), pp. 43–44, 47.

[27] Cited in P. Rossi, *Francis Bacon. From Magic to Science*, tr. S. Rabinovitch (London: Routledge, 1968), p. 141.

[28] "Preface to the Principles of Philosophy" (tr. Veitch), p. 288.

[29] *Francis Bacon. Selected Writings*, ed. H. G. Dick (New York: Random House, 1955), pp. 435, 533. See also Descartes, *Discourse on Method* in N. K. Smith (ed.), *Descartes. Philosophical Writings*, Pt. IV, p. 118.

would regulate "[his] conduct in conformity with the most moderate opinions, those furthest removed from extremes . . ."[30] On political matters he was equally cautious, but more ambivalent. On the one hand, he expressed great admiration for those political societies which exhibited the rational symmetry legislated by a single intelligence; on the other, he abstained from drawing practical conclusions from this, saying only that most societies manage to work tolerably well over the long-run.[31]

Although these political remarks underscore Descartes' preference for rational method over inherited knowledge, they are mainly significant for revealing the reason for his support of the *status quo:* fear of disorder. He was convinced that upheaval invariably followed fundamental reform and that innovators should be warned away:

> Great public institutions, if once overthrown, are excessively difficult to re-establish, or even to maintain erect if once seriously shaken; and their fall cannot but be very violent.[32]

From a preference for the existing scheme of institutions and for "the most moderate" morals it was easy to pass to an identification of the two so that existing arrangements were taken to be the expression of what was reasonable and "furthest removed from extremes." Such a political world snugly fits the methodist's need, not only for the security it provides for his investigations, but also for the assured regularities it gives him to investigate.

What sort of political commitment is likely from a self which has been purged of inherited notions, pledged to the support of existing political and moral schemes, yet inhibited by the belief that they are "provisional"? A self of this type is likely to treat politics and morals in a way that avoids fundamental criticism as well as fundamental commitment. This lack of commitment is connected with the special form which the fear of fundamental change takes with the political methodist. He will boldly renounce any belief in a natural structure of political societies, and declare that "any set of variables selected for description and explanation may be considered a system of behavior. At the outset, whether it is a system given in nature or simply an arbitrary construct of the human mind, is operationally a pointless and needless dichotomy."[33]

Once doubt has abolished all privileged beginnings, there is no compelling reason why *this* rather than *that* should constitute the point of departure or the way of conceiving the problem, just as there is no logical or scientific reason for siding with the status quo. And yet the astonishing culmination of these arbitrary choices is not a truly sceptical temper but, as Descartes frankly admitted, rigidity and single-mindedness.

> My second maxim was to be as unwavering and as resolute in my actions as possible, and having once adopted opinions to adhere to them, however in themselves open to doubt, no less steadfastly than if they had been amply confirmed.

Descartes embellished the point by a contrast between the person who clings steadfastly to a chosen belief and the confused traveller who constantly changes directions. "Even though at the start it may have been chance alone which determined . . . [the] choice of direction," and even though what the resolute person takes to be "very certain and true" may be very doubtful, he is still likely to get *somewhere*, and, at the same time, he most certainly will be relieved from "all the repentings and feelings of remorse which are wont to disturb the consciences" of those who vacillate.[34]

How does the state of contemporary political science compare with the Cartesian philosophy of method? Despite occasional deference paid to "the tradition of political theory," there is a widely shared belief that that tradition was largely unscientific where it was not anti-scientific and that the defining characteristic of a scientific revolution is to break with the past.[35] This animus against tradition will be considered at greater length when we try to assess its significance for the study of politics.

[30] *Philosophical Writings* (ed. Smith), *Discourse on Method*, III, p. 111.

[31] *Ibid.*, II, pp. 103–104, 112.

[32] *Ibid.*, Pt. II, p. 103.

[33] Easton, *A Framework*, p. 30.

[34] *Discourse on Method*, tr. Smith, Pt. III, pp. 111–113.

[35] "It is the very essence of the theoretical enterprise that, if and when it seems appropriate, it should feel free to sever itself from the bonds of traditional ways of looking at political life." Easton, *A Framework*, p. viii.

There is no doubt that breaking with the past has been a feature of all great theoretical innovations, including those in the history of political theory. Yet the matter is not that simple, as witness Plato's respect for tradition, Aristotle's deference to his predecessors, Augustine's retrieval of major aspects of classicism, and Machiavelli's insistence on restoring certain forms of classical political knowledge. Hobbes was probably the first writer to advocate a break in the modern sense. Some aspects of his attempt will be discussed in my forthcoming essay, *Hobbes: Political Theory as Epic* (University of California Press).

Here we are concerned with Descartes' view of politics and especially with his counsels about political change. It is easier and safer, he declared, to reconstitute the foundations of knowledge than to attempt "the slightest reformation in public affairs."[36] An echo in contemporary political science is the following:

> A political system is an accident. It is an accumulation of habits, customs, prejudices, and principles that have survived a long process of trial and error and of ceaseless response to changing circumstance. If the system works well on the whole, it is a lucky accident—the luckiest, indeed, that can befall a society . . . To meddle with the structure and operation of a successful political system is therefore the greatest foolishness that men are capable of. Because the system is intricate beyond comprehension, the chance of improving it in the ways intended is slight, whereas the danger of disturbing its workings and setting off a succession of unwarranted effects that will extend throughout the whole society is great.[37]

It might be objected that many contemporary political scientists would disavow this formulation as extreme and would draw attention to their repeated efforts at reform. Without wishing to deprecate these efforts, the contention remains that most proposals for reform on the part of political scientists represent a narrow range of alternatives founded on the assumption that the system has no inherent defects, or if it has, that these are acceptable "costs." The result is to foreclose a genuinely theoretical discussion which would seriously question and reflect upon the qualities of the system as a whole. Accordingly, the political scientist tends to follow the Cartesian path of extolling the existing as "the most moderate" or "further removed from extremes," and then defending it as though it were "very certain and true." This has taken the by now familiar form of identifying the American political system with "normal politics" and then seeking to establish by empirical methods the factors which produce it. There then follows the general explanation that the system has functioned normally, i.e., in a stable way, because it has avoided immoderation, i.e., "extremism" or "intensity." America has been spared these evils, it is alleged, not because of the excellence of her institutions or her citizens, but because of such factors as: the absence of ideological conflicts and political passions, a healthy amount of voter apathy, a measure of voter ignorance, political parties whose genius is to abstain from presenting clearly defined alternatives, the influence of cross-pressures which fragment the citizen's loyalties and reduce his commitments to the consistency of Jello, a strategy of decision-making which favors "small or incremental change" because it is not disruptive,[38] and a system where the access to power succeeds in keeping at bay the poor, ignorant, deviant, and deprived.

III. CONSEQUENCES OF "METHODISM" IN CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL SCIENCE

It would be easy, especially at the present time when attacks upon liberal pluralism are increasing, to dismiss as an unfortunate lapse the way in which contemporary political science has come to such good terms with American politics. To accuse political science of an ideological bias is not to explain why it succumbed to the bias, or whether the nature of political science in America is or has always been such that identification with the going scheme of things is a recurrent temptation. Only a superficial view would hold that the condition of American political science can be remedied merely by substituting an opposing ideology. Perhaps the problem is far more deeply rooted in the past of American political science and American political society itself. If this should be the case, it would be mere *ante bellum* nostalgia to attempt to return to the state of political science before the behavioral revolution. If such an attempt were made, it is likely that both political science and political theory would be found similarly tainted.

To expose the common root of a problem as vast as this is patently beyond our present scope, but a suggestion as to its nature is perhaps possible. Two assertions by Tocqueville supply the starting-point. The first is: "Hardly anyone in the United States devotes himself to the essentially theoretical and abstract portion of human knowledge." The second is: "Among democratic nations . . . the woof of time is every instant broken and the track of generations effaced."[39] These may be characterized as a diffidence toward theory and history. Rather than attempt to trace the course of this diffidence, let us try to suggest how it is manifested in contemporary political science, but remembering that today's political science is remarkable for its Cartesian methodism and for its protestations about the importance of theory

[36] *Discourse on Method*, Veitch tr., Pt. II, p. 158.

[37] Edward C. Banfield, "In Defense of the American Party System," *Voting, Interest Groups, and Parties*, ed. B. Seasholes (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman, 1966), p. 130.

[38] D. Braybrooke and E. Lindblom, *A Strategy of Decision* (New York: Free Press, 1963), p. 73.

[39] *Democracy in America* (ed. P. Bradley), 2 vols. New York: Knopf, 1945), Vol. II, pp. 42, 99.

as a guide for empirical research. The possibility to be explored is whether the age-old problem of America, its suspicion of theory and of the human past, has not been worsened by the behavioral revolution, especially in the domain of education.

The first methodistic act for the Cartesian was to purge the self of the opinions acquired by upbringing, education, and common experience. The contemporary methodist performs the same act of divestment, except that he will use the language of social science in order to explain that he must, as far as possible, rid the mind of biases and preconceptions, such as those produced by class, status, occupation, family, religious upbringing, or political attachments. In so doing, he is performing a true ritual, the reenactment of the archetypal American experience of breaking with the past. Or, if this seems too esoteric, perhaps the purged methodist is merely a footnote to Tocqueville's remark that "America is one of the countries where the precepts of Descartes are least studied and are best applied."[40]

This anti-traditionalist bias, cultivated in the name of the elimination of bias, has manifested itself on numerous occasions during the past decades as the effort to diminish the significance of "traditional political theory," as it has revealingly been called. Some have wished to have it eliminated entirely from the education of political scientists, while others have been mainly concerned to substitute a more scientific version of theory, and still others have wished to rescue individual "propositions" from the corpus of the ancient literature and submit them to operational testing. Leaving aside the criticisms which are anti-theoretical in principle, the other responses are interesting because what they are objecting to is not "theory" but a tradition of theory. Stated differently, what is bothersome about the history of theory is that it displays the working out of an inherited form, which is what a tradition is all about. Political theory has been perhaps the only field of study in all of American political science to exhibit this peculiar feature. Moreover, since the vast bulk of the literature which composes the tradition is European, as well as ancient, it is not difficult to see why it should be an object of suspicion.

This same bias is also manifested against the traditional forms of knowledge to which the methodist falls heir when he chooses to become a student of politics. As an ancient field of study, political science has acquired considerable knowledge about laws, constitutions, institutions, and unwritten practices. This inherited knowledge evokes a typically Cartesian and American response:

> . . . traditional methods [of political science]—i.e., history writing, the description of institutions, and legal analysis—have been thoroughly exploited in the last two generations and now it seems to many (including myself) that they can produce only wisdom and neither science nor knowledge. And while wisdom is certainly useful in the affairs of men, such a result is a failure to live up to the promise in the name of political *science*.[41]

Although one might be troubled by the kind of human concern which would provoke a confrontation between "political wisdom" and "political *science*," the antithesis has the merit of opening the question, What is political wisdom? Put in this vague form, the question is unanswerable, but it may be reformulated so as to be fruitful. The antithesis between political wisdom and political science basically concerns two different forms of knowledge. The scientific form represents the search for rigorous formulations which are logically consistent and empirically testable. As a form, it has the qualities of compactness, manipulability, and relative independence of context. Political wisdom is an unfortunate phrase, for, as the quotation suggested, the question is not *what* it is but *in what* does it inhere. History, knowledge of institutions, and legal analysis were mentioned. Without violating the spirit of the quotation, knowledge of past political theories might also be added. Taken as a whole, this composite type of knowledge presents a contrast with the scientific type. Its mode of activity is not so much the style of the search as of reflection. It is mindful of logic, but more so of the incoherence and contradictoriness of experience. And for the same reason, it is distrustful of rigor. Political life does not yield its significance to terse hypotheses, but is elusive and hence meaningful statements about it often have to be allusive and intimative. Context becomes supremely important, for actions and events occur in no other setting. Knowledge of this type tends, therefore, to be suggestive and illuminative rather than explicit and determinate. Borrowing from Polanyi, we shall call it "tacit political knowledge."[42]

The acquisition of tacit political knowledge is

[40] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 3.

[41] W. Riker, *The Theory of Political Coalitions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), p. viii, emphasis in the original.

[42] M. Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), *passim*.

preeminently a matter of education of a particular kind and it is on this ground that the issue needs to be joined with the political methodist. The mentality which is impatient of the past and of traditional political theory is equally curt with the requirements of tacit political knowledge which is rooted in knowledge of the past and of the tradition of theory. The knowledge which the methodist seeks is fairly characterized in his own language as composing a "kit of tools" or a "bag of tricks." To acquire knowledge of techniques is no small matter, for they are often difficult and require considerable "retooling," which is to say that they imply a particular kind of program of instruction in specific methods.

Tacit political knowledge, on the other hand, accrues over time and never by means of a specified program in which particular subjects are chosen in order to produce specific results. Whatever may be the truth of the adage that he who travels lightest travels farthest, diverse, even ill-assorted baggage, is needed because the life of inquiry preeminently demands reflectiveness, that is, an indwelling or rumination in which the mind draws on the complex framework of sensibilities built up unpremeditatedly and calls upon the diverse resources of civilized knowledge. But if the life of inquiry is narrowly conceived as the methodical "pursuit" of knowledge, it is likely to become not a pursuit but an escape from the spare and shabby dwelling which Descartes literally and symbolically occupied when he composed his *Meditations*. Even those who would wish to address their minds to "data" are aware that data are constituted by abstractions, and that usually what has been culled from the phenomena are the subtle traces of past practices and meanings which form the connotative context of actions and events.

To recognize the connotative context of a subject matter is to know its supporting lore; and to know the supporting lore is to know how to make one's way about the subject-field. Such knowledge is not propositional, much less formulary. It stands for the knowledge which tells us what is appropriate to a subject and when a subject-matter is being violated or respected by a particular theory or hypothesis. Although appropriateness takes many forms, and we shall return to some of them, it is impossible to reduce its contents to a check-list of items. For example, can we say with exactness what is the precise knowledge which makes us uneasy with statements like the following?

> The interesting issues in normative political theory are in the end generally empirical ones. . . There does exist, however, *one interesting problem in political theory* which is strictly normative. That is the problem of evaluating mixes of desiderata. . . . It may be called the 'utility problem' or in still more modern terminology, the 'dynamic-programming problem.' . . . On this strictly normative problem of program packages more progress has been made in the past half century than in all the previous 2,000 years of political theory put together.[43]

Although these assertions may appear absurd, it is not easy to say why, except that some important political and theoretical questions are being rendered unrecognizable. Behind the assertions, however, lie some revealing attitudes towards knowledge. These bear upon the contrast between methodistic knowledge and the forms of theory congenial to it, and, on the other hand, the kind of knowledge characteristic of tacit political knowledge and the forms of theory built upon it. The methodistic assumption holds that the truth of statements yielded by scientific methods has certain features, such as rigor, precision, and quantifiability. The connection between the statements and their features is intimate so that one is encouraged to believe that when he is offered statements rigorous, precise, and quantifiable, he is in the presence of truth. On the other hand, an approach to the "facts" consisting of statements which palpably lack precision, quantifiability, or operational value is said to be false, vague, unreliable, or even "mystical." In actuality, the contrast is not between the true and the false, the reliable and the unreliable, but between truth which is economical, replicable, and easily packaged, and truth which is not. Methodistic truth can be all these things because it is relatively indifferent to context; theoretical truth cannot, because its foundation in tacit political knowledge shapes it towards what is politically appropriate rather than towards what is scientifically operational.

Questions concerning appropriateness, context, and respect for a subject do not concern effete matters, but very practical ones. They involve the resources, or the lack thereof, which we draw upon when the decision concerns matters for which there can be no certitude. What "belongs" to a given inquiry is one such matter, and how to decide between one theory and another, or between rival methods, are others. Yet the kind of knowledge necessary to these decisions, tacit political knowledge, is being jeopardized by the education increasingly being instituted among political scientists. To illustrate the problem, we might consider the implications for tacit political knowledge of a

[43] Pool, *op. cit.*, pp. 23–24 (emphasis added).

typical proposal for increasing the student's mastery of methods. Our example is a recent volume on survey research methods for undergraduates and graduates in political science. In the spirit of Descartes' *regulae*, the authors describe it as a "handbook" or "manual," "a check-list" or inventory of "do's and don'ts," whose aim is to encourage the "empirical emphasis" in political science. Not content with offering a manual of technical instruction, the authors claim advantages of an educational and vocational kind will be promoted if survey research is made part of the curriculum. Thus the instructor, impaled by the twin demands of teaching and research, is reassured that the two can be reconciled if students are put to work learning survey methods while conducting his research. Further, the method is extolled as a way of overcoming the shortcomings of "the lone scholar" whose skills are inadequate for dealing with the size and range of problems confronting empirical political science. The imperative, "resources must be increased," decrees that the lone scholar be replaced by "group activity and teamwork." In the same vein, it is claimed that "the educational advantages for students are impressive" and among the putative advantages are the acquisition of an *ingenium* with traits congenial to the new emphasis:

> . . . students gain the opportunity to learn more about themselves . . . Too few students get the experience of fighting to remain neutral while carefully probing attitudes hostile to their own. Such instruction in self-control is valuable for the headstrong and overprotected.

Despite the tenor and direction of this conception of education, it is insisted that the new generation of students will be able to do "what was not expected of the previous generation of college students—i.e., to discover new knowledge as well as to acquire old."[44]

But will they? As for acquiring "the old," the authors bemoan the fact that political science departments have been hampered by the "lack of knowledge of research skills" and that the conventional academic calendar does not afford sufficient time for students to learn "sampling, interviewing, coding, analysis, etc." Exactly how the student will "acquire the old" when the demands of the "new" are so great is not discussed. In this connection it is relevant to recall Kuhn's description of the way scientific education has been affected by this determination to consolidate scientific advances and insure cumulative knowledge. He characterized scientific education as "narrow and rigid . . . probably more so than any other except perhaps in orthodox theology." It is not well designed "to produce the man who will easily discover a fresh approach," but it is admirably suited for preparing "normal scientists" and for enabling the community to readapt itself when a fundamental change occurs in theoretical orientations. " . . .Individual rigidity is compatible with a community that can switch from paradigm to paradigm when the occasion demands."[45] To the best of my knowledge, political scientists who otherwise approvingly cite Kuhn have consistently declined to take up the implications of his analysis of scientific education.

Although the invention of methods, like the invention of theories, demands a high order of creativity and is entitled to the highest praise something important, perhaps ironical, occurs when that discovery is institutionalized in a training program. The requirements for those who are to use the theory or method are very different from the talent which discovered them, although, paradoxically, the technical skills may be the same. Descartes noted that a child might become as proficient as the genius in following the rules of arithmetic, but he never argued that the child could discover the rules. This is so, not simply because of the chance element in discovery, but because of the more baffling questions of the personal and intellectual qualities of the discoverer and of the cultural conditions of discovery.[46]

In this context the contemporary methodist's notion of training becomes significant. The idea of training presupposes several premeditated decisions: about the specific techniques needed and how they will be used; about what is peripheral or irrelevant to a particular form of training; and about the desired behavior of the trainee after he has been released from his apprenticeship. The idea of theorizing, on the other hand, while it presupposes skills, cannot specify briefly and simply the skills needed, their degree, or combinations. Kepler's followers could be contemptuous of their master's Platonism and astrology, as Newton's admirers were of his religious fascinations; but it would be risky to discount the influence of these extra-scientific considerations upon the formation of the respective theories.

[44] C. H. Backstron and G. D. Hursh, *Survey Research* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1963), ed. J. Robinson, pp. xi-xv, 4, 13.

[45] T. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 165.

[46] R. Taton, *Reason and Chance in Scientific Discovery*, tr. A. J. Pomerans (New York: Science Editions, 1962), p. 64ff.

The impoverishment of education by the demands of methodism poses a threat not only to so-called normative or traditional political theory, but to the scientific imagination as well. It threatens the meditative culture which nourishes all creativity. That culture is the source of the qualities crucial to theorizing: playfulness, concern, the juxtaposition of contraries, and astonishment at the variety and subtle interconnection of things. These same qualities are not confined to the creation of theories, but are at work when the mind is playing over the factual world as well. An impoverished mind, no matter how resolutely empirical in spirit, sees an impoverished world. Such a mind is not disabled from theorizing, but it is tempted into remote abstractions which, when applied to the factual world, end by torturing it. Think of what must be ignored in, or done to, the factual world before an assertion like the following can be made: "Theoretical models should be tested primarily by the accuracy of their prediction rather than the reality of their assumptions."[47] No doubt one might object by pointing out that all theorizing does some violence to the empirical world. To which one might reply, that while amputations are necessary, it is still better to have surgeons rather than butchers.

It is not enough, therefore, to repeat commonplaces, viz., that facts are senseless without theoretical concepts, or that the meaning which facts acquire from a theory is purchased at the price of shaping the facts by the theoretical perspective employed. It is not enough because so much depends upon the kind of theory being used and the personal and cultural resources of the user. Perhaps it is some debilitating legacy of Puritanism that causes us to admire "parsimony" in our theories when we should be concerned that the constitution of the factual world depends upon the richness of our theories which, in turn, depends upon the richness of the inquiring mind. This concern may well be what fundamentally unites the scientific theorist and the so-called traditional theorist.

When a scientist observes a fact, he "sees" it through concepts which are usually derived from a theory. Facts are, as one philosopher has neatly put it, "theory-laden." Kepler, for example, observed many of the same facts as his predecessors, but because he viewed them differently a new era of science was ushered in.[48] The same might be said of Machiavelli, as well as of every major theorist from Plato to Marx. Some theorists, as Tocqueville suggested, see differently, others see farther. All would probably have agreed with Tocqueville that, for the theorist, nothing is more difficult to appreciate than a fact,[49] and nothing, it might be added, is more necessary as a condition for theorizing than that facts not be univocal. If they were, creativity and imagination would play a small role and it would be appropriate to speak of theorizing as a banal activity, as "theory-construction." If facts were simply "there" to be collected, classified, and then matched with a theory (or with the observation-statements derived from it), the political scientist might well declare, "Whether [a] proposition is true or false depends on the degree to which the proposition and the real world correspond."[50] But although everyone is ready to acknowledge that facts depend upon some criteria of selection or of significance, what is less frequently acknowledged is that such criteria usually turn out to be fragments of some almost-forgotten "normative" or "traditional" theory.

Because facts are more multi-faceted than a rigid conception of empirical theory would allow, they are more likely to yield to the observer whose mental capacities enable him to appreciate a known fact in an unconventional way. As one philosopher has said, "Given the *same* world it might have been construed differently. We might have spoken of it, thought of it, perceived it differently. Perhaps facts are somehow moulded by the logical forms of the fact-stating language. Perhaps these provide a 'mould' in terms of which the world coagulates for us in definite ways."[51] Once again we are confronted by the warning that the richness of the factual world depends upon the richness of our theories: "The paradigm observer is not the man who sees and reports what all normal observers see and report, but the man who sees in familiar objects what no one else has seen before."[52] Thus the world must be supplemented before it can be understood and reflected upon.

Vision, as I have tried to emphasize, depends for its richness on the resources from which it can draw. These extra-scientific considerations may be identified more explicitly as the stock of ideas which an intellectually curious and broadly educated person accumulates and which come to govern his intuitions, feelings,

[47] A. Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), p. 21.

[48] N. R. Hanson, *Patterns of Discovery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), p. 5ff.

[49] The remarks from Tocqueville are to be found in *Oeuvres complètes*, Vol. I, pp. 12, 14, 222.

[50] R. Dahl, *Modern Political Analysis* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963), p. 8

[51] Hanson, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

[52] *Ibid.*, p. 30.

and perceptions. They constitute the sources of his creativity, yet rarely find explicit expression in formal theory. Lying beyond the boundaries circumscribed by method, technique, and the official definition of a discipline, they can be summarized as cultural resources and itemized as metaphysics, faith, historical sensibility, or, more broadly, as tacit knowledge. Because these matters bear a family resemblance to "bias," they become sacrificial victim to the quest for objectivity in the social sciences. If scientists have freely acknowledged the importance of many of these items,[53] how much more significant are these human creations for the form of knowledge, political science, which centers on the perplexities of collective life, on objects which are all too animate in expressing their needs, hopes, and fears.

Doubtless the objection will be raised that if a discipline is to be empirical its practitioners must be equipped to "handle" data in ways approximative of the sciences which have been more successful, and that to suggest otherwise is to consort with the heresy of saying that philosophical and moral knowledge may lead to a better empiricism. Yet we might consider the following.

Throughout the history of political theory a student will find a preoccupation with the phenomenon of "corruption." Today, however, we scarcely know how to talk about it,[54] except when it flourishes in non-Western societies. Yet it is a common and documented fact that "organized crime" exerts significant power and influence, controls enormous wealth, and exhibits many of the same features which ordinarily arouse the interest of political scientists, e.g., organization, authority, power, kinship ties, rules, and strong consensus. Despite the promising research possibilities, no textbook on American government provides a place for organized crime in "the system," no study of "polyarchy" or community-power has taken cognizance of it. It is not far-fetched to suggest that this empirical oversight is connected with the belief that moral knowledge is empirically irrelevant.

Or, to take another example, one can think of many fine empirical studies which have never been conducted because contemporary political science has substituted the bland, status quo-oriented concept of "political socialization" for the ancient idea of "political education." If, instead of blinkering the inquiring eye with a postulate that "conduct is *politicized* in the degree that it is determined by considerations of power indulgence or deprivation of the self by others,"[55] we took seriously an old-fashioned hypothesis, such as that advanced by J. S. Mill, that "the first element of good government . . . being the virtue and intelligence of the human beings composing the community, the most important point of excellence which any form of government can possess is to promote the virtue and intelligence of the people themselves,"[56] we might be better sensitized to the importance of genuinely empirical studies of truly fundamental political concern. For example, think of the empirical richness of an inquiry into the current structure of income taxes, especially in terms of the moral and political implications it holds for civic education. The structure of income taxes is a registry of the power and powerlessness of our social, economic, and ethnic groups; of the official way we rate the value of various social activities by the one standard generally accepted. It is also a system of incentives for behavior that define what is virtuous, unvirtuous, and morally indifferent; and, by tacitly encouraging behavior otherwise deemed blameworthy, encourages the gradual legitimation of that behavior, and thereby shapes what used to be called "the virtue of the citizenry." It would be difficult to imagine a richer field for behavioral inquiry, or one more likely to yield important knowledge about the quality of life in this republic. Yet it remains unharvested because our impoverished understanding of civic

[53] E.g., K. Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (New York: Science Editions, 1961), pp. 19, 38.

[54] An exception would be S. Huntington, "Political Development and Political Decay," *World Politics*, Vol. 17 (April, 1965), 386–430. As an illustration of a contemporary way of dealing with the problems the reader is referred to A. A. Rogow and H. D. Lasswell, *Power, Corruption, and Rectitude* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963). This work criticizes Acton's epigram, points out how a like animus against power led to the separation of powers doctrine, how the latter frustrates the majority, and how the problem can be handled by organizational and bureaucratic sanctions.

[55] H. D. Lasswell and A. Kaplan, *Power and Society. A Framework for Political Inquiry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), p. 145.

[56] *Representative Government*, Ch. II (Everyman edition, p. 193). My point would not be affected if political socialization were defined in some other contemporary mode, e.g., learning "roles," or as "a readiness to tolerate outputs that are perceived to run contrary to one's wants and demands. . . . ": Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Science*, p. 272.

virtue and education has caused us to neglect the field.

Finally, one cannot help wondering whether political science, having jettisoned "metaphysical" and "normative" preoccupations about justice in favor of research into "judicial behavior" and the "judicial process," are not reaping the results: an inability to address a major phenomenon like the dangerous rash of *political* trials in America today and to reflect upon what these trials signify for the future of the authority and legitimacy of the state.

If the presence or absence of the moral and philosophical element affects the process by which theories constitute the empirical world, the choice among theories would seem to be a serious matter. But again, the contemporary mood trivializes what is involved in a theory's formulation and thereby obfuscates the importance of the choice among rival ways of constituting the world. The following quotation may be extreme but it does disclose the fantasies of the behavioral scientist about theories:

> In a report entitled *Communication Systems and Resources in the Behavioral Sciences*, the Committee on Information in the Behavioral Sciences outlines an ideal system that would in effect provide researchers with a computer analogue of the intelligent, all-informed colleague. Such a colleague would read widely, have total recall, synthesize new ideas, always be accessible, and be sensitive to each researcher's needs . . . The computer based system could respond to an individual's direct request for facts, data, and documentation; it could take the initiative and stimulate the researcher by suggesting new ideas, facts, or literature of interest; it could react intelligently to a scientist's work (analyze its logic, trace implications, suggest tests); and it could help disseminate ideas and provide feedback from the scientific community.[57]

If we can safely assume that choosing a theory or a method is not quite the same as choosing a helpful friend who, as Nietzsche taught, must be worthy of being your enemy, we might want to press the question further. When we choose a theory or a method, are we choosing something momentous, like a self, or something innocuous, like an "intellectual construct" or "conceptual scheme"? or something depersonalized, like "a series of logically consistent, interconnected, and empirically verifiable propositions," or like "a generalized statement of the interrelationships of a set of variables"?

Undoubtedly these characterizations tell us something about the formal features of a theory, but they are deceptive in their parsimony. If the question is slightly reformulated to read, what is the human significance of choosing a theory?, then it becomes evident that much more is involved. Choosing a theory is significant for two conflicting reasons: it initiates new ways of thinking, evaluating, intuiting, and feeling; and it demands a substantial sacrifice in the existing forms of these same human processes. The first point is obvious, the second less so. This is because, like the law of treason, history books tend to be written by the victors and hence the sacrifices which accompany the triumph of a new theory are apt to be overlooked or bathed in a kind of Jacobite nostalgia.

The history of political theory is instructive on this score, for many of the great innovative theorists were highly self-conscious about choosing among theoretical alternatives. They knew that the true drama of theorizing involved offering a theory which could not be accommodated within prevailing values and perceptions of the world. When Hobbes allowed that his readers would be "staggered" by his theory,[58] he was not merely stating the obvious fact that his views concerning religion, authority, rights, and human nature were incompatible with traditional religious and political notions, but the more profound point that unless his readers were prepared to revise or discard those notions, they would not be able to grasp the full meaning of the theory and the theory itself could not become an effective force in the world. The same general assumptions had been made by Plato in his challenge to traditional Greek values and to the democratic ethos of Athens, and by Augustine in his effort to demolish classical notions of history, politics, virtue, and religion. Among more recent writers, none has been as sensitive as Max Weber to the emotional and cultural losses attendant upon the commitment to scientific rationalism.

Where our contemporary way of talking has not obscured the drama and demands of theorizing, it has trivialized them. Theories are likened to appliances which are "plugged into" political life and, since it is the nature of appliances to be under sentence of built-in obsolescence, "theories are for burning," leaving only a brief funereal glow which lights the way to "more scientific theories and more efficient research procedures."[59] If adopting a theory were

[57] *Political Science.* Newsletter of the American Political Science Association, Vol. I, No. 1 (Winter, 1968), p. 25 (col. 1).

[58] *De Cive*, Pref. *ad finem.*

[59] D. Apter, *The Politics of Modernization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), p. x.

equivalent to "trying out an idea," testing an hypothesis, or selecting a technique, there would be little reason to object to treating it casually.

At the very least, a theory makes demands upon our time, attention, energy, and skills. More fundamentally, the adoption of a theory signifies a form of submission with serious consequences both for the adopter and for those who imitate him, as well as for the corner of the world which the theory seeks to change our mind about. A certain sensibility is needed, qualities of thinking and feeling which are not readily formulable but pertain to a capacity for discriminative judgment. Why is this so? To compress the answer severely, in political and social matters we tend to think in one of two ways: in trying to explain, understand, or appraise we may ask, what is it like?; or we may ask, what is appropriate? The first way invites us to think metaphorically, e.g., Hobbes' argument that a representative is like an agent, or the contemporary notion of a political society as a system of communications. Ever since Plato, theorists have recognized the fruitfulness of metaphorical thinking, but they have also come to realize that at certain crucial points a metaphor may become misleading, primarily because the metaphor has a thrust of its own which leads to grotesque implications for the object or events which it is supposed to illuminate. A recent example of this pitfall is provided by Professor Deutsch's *Nerves of Government*, which argues for the concept of a communications system as a useful and proper model for political theory. The argument rests on a combination of metaphors and the success of the argument depends upon a confusion of the two. The first metaphor consists in likening the nature of human thinking and purposive action to the operation of a communications system, e.g., the 'problem of value" is like a "switchboard problem," or "consciousness" is "analogous" to the process of feedback.[60] The second metaphor involves the reverse procedure: a communications system may be treated like a person. Human qualities, such as "spontaneity," "freedom of the will," and "creativity," can be "built into" a machine, and then it becomes possible to propose empirical propositions about society derived from the operations of the machine. But the whole argument depends upon, first, mechanizing human behavior and, second, humanizing mechanical processes. Once this is accomplished, grotesque results follow, e.g., internal rearrangements in a system, or in a person, which reduce goal-seeking effectiveness are described as "pathological" and resemble "what some moralists call 'sin'."[61]

A second way of judging asks, what is appropriate? Appropriateness of judgment cannot be encapsulated into a formula. This is because it depends upon varied forms of knowledge for which there is no natural limit. This dependence is rooted in the basic quest of political and social theory for theoretical knowledge about "wholes" made up of interrelated and interpenetrating provinces of human activity. Whether the primary theoretical task be one of explanation or critical appraisal, the theorist will want to locate "divisions" in the human world and embody them in theoretical form. For example, what aspects of that division which we call "religion" have a significant bearing on the activity called "economic"? Perforce, a political theory is, among many other things, a sum of judgments, shaped by the theorist's notion of what matters, and embodying a series of discriminations about where one province begins and another leaves off. The discriminations may have to do with what is private and what is public, or they may be about what will be endangered or encouraged if affairs move one way rather than another, or about what practices, occurrences, and conditions are likely to produce what states of affairs. The difficulty is the same regardless of whether the theoretical intention is to provide a descriptive explanation, a critical appraisal, or a prescriptive solution. By virtue of their location in a whole, one province shades off from and merges into others: where, for example, does the cure of souls end and the authority of the political order over religion begin? where do the effects of technical education merge into questions about ethics and character? where does the autonomy of administrative and judicial practices start and the "mysteries of state" stop? how much of the impetus for the Crusades is to be assigned to religious motives and how much to political or economic considerations?

If, as Plato suggested long ago, the task of theory is to locate "the real cleavages" in things and to "avoid chopping reality up into small parts" or drawing false boundaries,[62] then the sense of what is appropriate is critical. Given the theorist's preoccupation with wholes, the interconnectedness of human provinces, the values and expectations with which men have invested each of their provinces, and the ulti-

[60] *The Nerves of Government* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1963), pp. 94, 98.

[61] *Ibid.*, pp. 91–92.

[62] *Politicus*, 262 b-c.

mate bewildering fact that man is single but his provinces are multiple, a theoretical judgment which, by definition, must discriminate can only be restrained from rendering inappropriate determinations if it is civilized by a meditative culture. To be civilized is not only the quality of being sensitive to the claims and characters of many provinces, but, according to an older definition, rendering what is proper to a civil community.

IV. THE VOCATION OF THE POLITICAL THEORIST

If the preceding analysis has any merit it will have suggested that the triumph of methodism constitutes a crisis in political education and that the main victim is the tacit political knowledge which is so vital to making judgments, not only judgments about the adequacy and value of theories and methods, but about the nature and perplexities of politics as well. Here lies the vocation of these who preserve our understanding of past theories, who sharpen our sense of the subtle, complex interplay between political experience and thought, and who preserve our memory of the agonizing efforts of intellect to restate the possibilities and threats posed by political dilemmas of the past. In teaching about past theories, the historically-minded theorist is engaged in the task of political initiation; that is, of introducing new generations of students to the complexities of politics and to the efforts of theorists to confront its predicaments; of developing the capacity for discriminating judgments discussed earlier; and of cultivating that sense of "significance" which, as Weber understood so well, is vital to scientific inquiry but cannot be furnished by scientific methods; and of exploring the ways in which new theoretical vistas are opened.

For those who are concerned with the history of political theories, the vocation has become a demanding one at the present time. How demanding it is can be seen by glancing at Kuhn's account of the manner in which scientific invention treats its own past.[63] In the formative period of their education students are required to master textbooks rather than to familiarize themselves with the creative writings of the great scientists of the past. The characteristic teaching of scientific textbooks, according to Kuhn, is to show how the great achievements of the past have prepared the way for the present stage of knowledge and theory. As a result, discontinuities are smoothed over, discarded, or unsuccessful theories are assumed to have been inferior, and the idea of methodical progress dominates the entire account.

How easy it is to impoverish the past by making it appear like the present is suggested by the way in which social scientists have lapsed into the same idiom as Kuhn's scientific textbooks. "As Aristotle, the first great behavioral scientist, pointed out a long time ago . . ."[64] or, again, "the behavioral persuasion in politics represents an attempt, by modern modes of analysis, to fulfill the quest for political knowledge begun by the classical political theorists," although it is admitted that classical theory is "predominantly prescriptive rather than descriptive."[65] What seems to have been forgotten is that one reads past theories, not because they are familiar and therefore confirmative, but because they are strange and therefore provocative. If Aristotle is read as the first behavioralist, what he has to say is only of antiquarian interest and it would be far more profitable to read our contemporaries.

What we should expect from a reading of Aristotle is an increase in political understanding. What we should expect from the study of the history of political theories is an appreciation of the historical dimension of politics. The cultivation of political understanding means that one becomes sensitized to the enormous complexities and drama of saying that the political order is the most comprehensive association and ultimately responsible as no other grouping is for sustaining the physical, material, cultural and moral life of its members. Political understanding also teaches that the political order is articulated through its history; the past weighs on the present, shaping alternatives and pressing with a force of its own. At the present time the historical mode is largely ignored in favor of modes of understanding which are inherently incapable of building upon historical knowledge. One of the most striking features of game theory, communications models, and mechanical systems is that in each case the organizing notion is essentially history-less.

The threat to political understanding is not to be denied by arguing that we can substitute more precise functional equivalents for older language or that we can translate older notions into more empirical terms. From time im-

[63] *Op. cit.*, pp. 162–168.

[64] B. Berelson and G. Steiner, *Human Behavior* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1964), p. 13.

[65] Eulau, *op. cit.*, p. 7. See also G. Almond and B. Powell, *Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1966), p. 214; H. Alker, *Mathematics and Politics* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), pp. 6–8.

memorial writers have talked of the "burdens" of ruling, the "anguish" of choosing, and the "guilt" of actors who must employ coercion. To assimilate these actions to the calculations of gamesters or to describe them as "decision-making" or "outputs" is to distort both sides of the analogy. If in game-playing, for example, anguish, burdens, and guilt were recurrent features, the whole connotative context surrounding the idea of a game would be lost and nobody would "play." The ancient writer Philostratus once remarked of painting that no one could understand the imitative techniques of the painter without prior knowledge of the objects being represented. But when the attempt is being made to convey knowledge, not by imitative techniques, but by abstract signs and symbols which stand for objects commonly understood, everything depends on whether one truly understands what the symbol means. Does he understand, for example, the kinds of discriminative judgments which have been suspended when the symbol of an "input" is made to stand equally for a civil rights protest, a deputation from the National Rifle Association, and a strike by the U.A.W.? Does he understand that what allows him to discriminate between these "inputs" is a tacit knowledge derived from sources other than systems theory? Again, will he be able to compensate for the fact that systems theory makes it possible to talk about an entire political society without ever mentioning the idea of justice, except in the distorting form of its contribution to "system maintenance"? Is he aware that if one can focus on the American political order as a *system*, he does not have to confront the unpleasant possibility of it as an *imperium* of unsurpassed power. If, in rebuttal, the political scientist claims that the sort of studies referred to above really do presuppose the knowledge which would make political sense out of formal methods, then it is necessary to reply that the contemporary political scientist threatens to chalk around himself a vicious circle: his methods of study presuppose a depth of political culture which his methods of education destroy.

But what of the vocation by which political theories are created rather than transmitted? Testimony that such a vocation has existed is to be found in the ancient notion of the *bios theoretikos* as well as in the actual achievements of the long line of writers extending from Plato to Marx. How shall we understand this tradition as containing an idea of vocation which is relevant both to the challenge raised by the prestige of science and to the contemporary state of political life?

V. NATURE AND ROLE OF EPIC POLITICAL THEORISTS

In what follows I shall develop the thesis that the traditional idea of political theory displays some features which resemble forms of scientific theory, but which, by virtue of their political bearing, are uniquely the properties of political theory. As a way of bringing out the distinctive nature of this vocation, I shall call it the vocation of "epic theorist," a characterization which probably seems pretentious or precious, but which has been selected in order to call attention both to the unusual "magnitudes" of this form of theorizing, and to its distinguishing purpose and style.

Perhaps the pretentiousness of the phrase may be lessened by briefly recalling a comparable conception of theory in Kuhn's work. He employs the phrase "extraordinary" science to describe the contributions of the great scientific innovators. Kuhn's main point is that these theories mark a break with previous ones; that is, they inaugurate a new way of looking at the world, which includes a new set of concepts, as well as new cognitive *and* normative standards. Taking this as a suggestion of how to think about great theories, the first feature shared by epic theorists has to do with magnitudes. By an act of thought, the theorist seeks to reassemble the whole political world. He aims to grasp present structures and interrelationships, and to re-present them in a new way. Like the extraordinary scientific theory, such efforts involve a new way of looking at the familiar world, a new way with its own cognitive and normative standards.[66]

The second aspect of epic theory can be brought out if we look upon a theory not only as a structure of formal features, but also as a *structure of intentions*. The structure of intentions refers to the controlling purposes of the theorist, the considerations which determine how the formal features of concept, fact, logic, and interconnection are to be deployed so as to heighten the effect of the whole. In using the word "purposes" I mean to acknowledge that the structures exhibit considerable variety, and yet I also mean to maintain that there has been a persistent feature in all of them, one which may perhaps seem naive to our age of unmasking where all emperors are naked. All of the major theories of the past were informed by "public concern," a quality which was not incidental to the activity, but fundamental to the

[66] Here it is only necessary to recall Plato's long discussion of cognition or Hobbes's effort to place political philosophy upon a new and more scientific basis.

very notion of being engaged in *political* theory. The cynical "realist," Machiavelli, professed, "I love my country more than my soul."[67] In his dialogue *Utopia* Thomas More wrote emphatically about the theorist's commitment: "If you cannot pluck up wrongheaded opinions by the root, if you cannot cure according to your heart's desire vices of long standing," he declares to the pure political philosopher, represented by Hythloday, "yet you must not on that account desert the commonwealth."[68] Hobbes, who was never one to romanticize men's motives, represented himself as "one whose just grief for the present calamities of his country" had driven him to theorize.[69] Similar sentiments abound in the writings of Plato, Augustine, Locke, Rousseau, Bentham, Tocqueville, and Marx, among others. This unanimity suggests that if a Plato or a Marx had said what the modern scientist says repeatedly, and some social scientists come perilously close to saying, namely, that they are not responsible for the political and social consequences of their inquiries, it would appear more foolish than blameworthy. Concern for *res publicae* and *res gestae* are as irreducible and natural to the vocation of theorist as a concern for health is to the physician. This quality of caring for public things contrasts sharply with the mental set which believes that "the formulation of the topic into a research problem is the first step in scientific inquiry and, as such, should be influenced primarily by the requirements of scientific procedure."[70]

Because history suggests that all political societies have both endured and employed violence, cruelty, injustice, and known the defeat of human aspirations, it is not surprising that the theorist's concern for *res publicae* and the commonweal has issued in theories which, for the most part, have been critical and, in the literal sense, radical. Why this is the case and the import of it for the contemporary vocation of theorist can be shown by referring once more to Kuhn. He has argued that scientific revolutions tend to occur when research begins to turn up persistent "anomalies," i.e., when phenomena are encountered that cannot be squared with the theory. To qualify as an anomaly the phenomena, should, in principle, be explicable by the theory; or, stated differently, the anomaly must be relevant to the kinds of problems for which the theory purports to furnish an explanation. It does not count as an anomaly if it raises a question which the theory cannot be said to recognize as important and hence be expected to answer.

The concept of anomaly suggests that a scientific crisis occurs because something is wrong "in" the theory. When nature does not conform to the scientist's expectations, he reacts by reexamining his techniques and theories. He assumes that the "mistake" lies with one or the other, not with nature. The bearing of this upon political science becomes clearer when we consider some frequent criticisms directed at traditional political theories by contemporary political scientists. It is charged that such theories are useless in explaining voting behavior, political apathy, the formation of politically relevant attitudes, and the precise degree of actual control exercised by the electorate. "If someone were to ask, 'How can I learn about what sorts of people participate most in politics, and why?', I would urge him to start with the most recent studies and work backwards. I seriously doubt whether he would get much help from Aristotle, Rousseau, or the *Federalist Papers*."[71] From such criticisms one would conclude that traditional political theories are valueless because they cannot explain why the political world is as it is. There is, in other words, something "wrong" in the theories. Whether this type of criticism will stand depends upon a prior understanding of the intentions of epical theorists: to what were their theories a response? As we have noted earlier, when it is believed that something is "wrong," scientists look for the error in the theory, not in the world. The same assumption is echoed by a contemporary behaviorist when he writes, "If there is a crisis, then, it is a crisis in the theory of representation and not in the institution of representation."[72] The assumption of the epic theorist has been of a different and contrasting kind. He has been preoccupied with a particular magnitude of problems created by actual events or states of affairs in the world rather than with problems related to deficiencies in theoretical knowledge. To be sure, problems-in-the-world and problems-in-a-theory are often interconnected, but the former has taken precedence among epic theorists and has been determinative of the latter. The shaping experience has been the recurrently problematic state of the political world, not the problematic state of theories about that world. What is

[67] Letter to Vettori, April 16, 1527.

[68] *Utopia*, Bk. I, tr. E. Surtz (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), p. 49.

[69] *De Cive*, Preface to the Reader, ed. S. P. Lamprecht (New York: Appleton, 1949), p. 18.

[70] Selltiz, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

[71] Dahl, *Political Analysis*, p. viii.

[72] Eulau in Pool (ed.), *Contemporary Political Science*, p. 55.

problematic emerges when political life is experienced either as a threat or as a promise. Most of the important theories were a response to crisis; they have reflected a conviction either that political action might destroy certain civilized values and practices, or that it might be the means for deliverance from evils, such as injustice or oppression. These polarities can be illustrated by the contrasting responses of Burke and Paine to the French Revolution, or of Tocqueville and Marx to the events of 1848. The point is not that theories come in pairs, or that the "same" events can be viewed very differently and equally persuasively; but rather that epic theories issue not from crises in techniques of inquiry, but from crises in the world.

In the language of theory, crisis denotes derangement. One form of derangement is the result of forces or conditions beyond control, e.g., the plague which hit Athens during its struggle against Sparta and, according to Thucydides, weakened the vital conventions governing Athenian political life. Other kinds of derangement are closer to what Aristotle called contingent matters, that is, matters about which men can meaningfully deliberate and choose. These kinds of derangements are the result of certain types of "errors" or "mistakes": errors in *arrangements*, in *decisions*, and in *beliefs*. Obviously the three types are often interrelated and combined: mistaken beliefs may produce faulty arrangements and foolish decisions; an unwise decision, e.g., one which over-extends the resources of a society, may encourage mistaken beliefs, such as the illusion of omnipotence. Despite their obviousness, these three types may help in clarifying the defining, specific problems of traditional political theory. It is too vague to leave it that theorists are stimulated by problems-in-the-world, and it is misleading to say simply that they are drawn to a class of problems about which something can and should be done. What is all-important is that a problem be a truly theoretical one. A problem such as that presented by the inefficiency of postal services or the ineffectuality of legislative committees may be traceable to errors in arrangement (such as faulty delegations of administrative authority), or to mistaken beliefs (such as that seniority is the most expedient principle for determining committee chairmanships), or to a combination of erroneous arrangements and mistaken beliefs. Without denying the practical importance of these problems, they are not theoretical but technical in nature: they concern the most expeditious means of achieving goals which are, for the most part, agreed on beforehand. Likewise, the question of what decision is proper under particular circumstances is a matter for practical reason or judgment, not for theory.

There is one setting, however, in which specific arrangements, decisions, and beliefs become theoretically interesting. That is when they are "systematically mistaken": when arrangements or decisions appear not as random consequences of a system which otherwise works tolerably well or as the result of the personal foibles of a particular office-holder but as the necessary result of a more extensive set of evils which can confidently be expected to continue producing similar results. Such a system would be systematically deranged. An illustration of what is being argued here is provided by Plato's criticism of Athenian democracy. The main thrust of his criticism was not directed against certain politices which he opposed, or even against the democracy's condemnation of Socrates.[73] Rather, the main thrust was towards arguing that the bad policies and actions were bound to occur in one form or another, because the entire polity was systematically ordered in a mistaken way. Another example is provided by Marx. His case against capitalism did not rest on the charges that it chained the workers to a subsistence level, produced wastefully, and unfairly enriched those who owned the instruments of production. It was aimed, instead, at exposing the logic of capitalism which made injustice, alienation, and exploitation inevitabilities rather than contingencies.

This concept of the *systematically* mistaken explains why most political theories contain radical critiques. Their authors have tried to get at the basic principles (in the sense of starting-points) which produce mistaken arrangements and wrong actions. This same impulse determines why a political theory takes the form of a symbolic picture of an ordered whole. That it is a whole is dictated by its function, which is to be complementary to, or a substitute for, the systematically disordered whole which the theory seeks to displace. The possibility that the factual world is the outcome of a systematically disordered whole produces still another major difference between the epic political theorist and the scientific theorist. Although each attempts to change men's views of the world, only the former attempts to change the world itself. Although the scientist surely may claim for his theories the daring, beauty, and imaginative-

[73] If the Seventh Letter is to be believed, Plato also condemned the government of the Thirty, which included some of his kinsmen, for their threats against Socrates (324 d-e).

ness that are claimed for other forms of endeavor, he will concede that at some point his theory must submit to confirmation by the world. T. H. Huxley spoke sadly of "beautiful" theories tragically murdered by "an ugly little fact." Plato, in contrast, had asked defiantly, "Is our theory any the worse, if we cannot prove it possible that a state so organized should be actually founded?" Epic theory, if it has not strictly attempted to use theory to murder the ugly facts of the world, has taken a very different view of them, refusing to yield to facts the role of arbiter. Facts could never prove the validity of a true theory, because facts, in the form of practices or actions, were "less close to truth than [is] thought."[74] Thus for Plato the political facts of Athenian democracy were perfectly consistent with the theory of democracy, but the theory itself was systematically mistaken in its organizing principles, that is, deranged.

When we turn our attention to political life in the modern states, its appearance seems more suitable to methodical inquiry and mechanical models or theories. Our political and social landscape is dominated by large structures whose premeditated design embodies many of the presuppositions and principles of methodism. They are deliberately fabricated, their processes are composed of defined "steps," and their work is accomplished by a division of specialized labor whose aggregate effect seems marvelously disproportionate to the modest talents which are combined. Not only do these organizations impart regularity and predictability to the major realms of our existence, thereby furnishing the conditions whereby methodical inquiry can pursue its goal of scientifically verifiable knowledge with reasonable hopes of success—for what could be more hopeful than to know that the political and social world is deliberately fashioned to produce regular and predictable behavior?—but also, since these organizations are uniquely the product of mind, rather than of mysterious historical forces, we are able to say with far greater confidence than Hobbes and Vico, who first announced the principle, "we can know it, because we made it."

Yet this is the state of affairs which the greatest modern philosopher of method, Max Weber, foresaw and despaired of, a world of bleak, forbidding, almost sterile reality, dominated by large and impersonal bureaucratic structures which nullified the strivings of those political heroes evoked in "Politics as a Vocation." "A polar night of icy darkness and hardness" was his description of the world to come.[75] In a fundamental sense, our world has become as perhaps no previous world has, the product of design, the product of theories about human structures deliberately created rather than historically articulated. But in another sense, the embodiment of theory in the world has resulted in a world impervious to theory. The giant, routinized structures defy fundamental alteration and, at the same time, display an unchallengeable legitimacy, for the rational, scientific, and technological principles on which they are based seem in perfect accord with an age committed to science, rationalism and technology. Above all, it is a world which appears to have rendered epic theory superfluous. Theory, as Hegel had foreseen, must take the form of "explanation." Truly it seems to be the age where Minerva's owl has taken flight.

It would seem, then, that the world affirms what the leaders of the behavioral revolution claim, the irrelevance of epic theory. The only trouble is that the world shows increasing signs of coming apart; our political systems are sputtering, our communication networks invaded by cacophony. American society has reached a point where its cities are uninhabitable, its youth disaffected, its races at war with each other, and its hope, its treasure, and the lives of its young men dribbled away in interminable foreign ventures. Our whole world threatens to become anomalous.

Yet amidst this chaos official political science exudes a complacency which almost beggars description. It is excusable that a decade ago a political scientist could contend that only a "fanatic" would want to "maximize" political equality and popular sovereignty at the expense of other values, such as leisure, privacy, consensus, stability, and status. But it is less excusable to find the following in a recent collection of papers delivered before the APSA and subsequently published under its imprimatur: "Our discipline is enjoying a new coherence, a pleasant sense of unity, and self-confident identity that fits its rapid growth and healthy mien."[76] Polanyi has remarked that "it is the normal practice of scientists to ignore evidence which appears incompatible with the accepted system of scientific knowledge, in the hope that it will prove false or irrelevant."[77] In this spirit

[74] *Republic* 473 (Conford tr.)

[75] H. Gerth and C. W. Mills, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 128.

[76] Pool (ed.), *Contemporary Political Science*, p. vii. The essays by Eckstine and Dahl are excepted.

[77] *Personal Knowledge*, p. 138.

American political scientists continue to devote great energy to explaining how various agencies ingeniously work at the political socialization of our citizens and future citizens while mobs burn parts of our cities, students defy campus rules and authorities, and a new generation questions the whole range of civic obligations. And while American political scientists have laboriously erected "incrementalism" into a dogma and extolled its merits as a style of decision-making that is "realistic," it is apparent to all that the society suffers from maladies—the decay of the cities, the increasing cultural and economic gap between our minorities and our majority, crisis in the educational system, destruction of our natural environment —which call for the most precedent-shattering and radical measures.

Amidst all this, a political scientist approvingly quotes the following from a social scientist: "To argue that an existing order is 'imperfect' in comparison with an alternative order of affairs that turns out upon careful inspection to be unobtainable may not be different from saying that the existing order is 'perfect'."[78]

This assertion poses squarely the issue between political theory on the one side and the alliance between the methodist and the empirical theorist on the other. The issue is not between theories which are normative and those which are not; nor is it between those political scientists who are theoretical and those who are not. Rather it is between those who would restrict the "reach" of theory by dwelling on facts which are selected by what are assumed to be the functional requisites of the existing paradigm, and those who believe that because facts are richer than theories, it is the task of the theoretical imagination to restate new possibilities. In terms of theory, the basic thrust of contemporary political science is not antitheoretical so much as it is deflationary of theory. This is most frequently expressed in the anxiety of the behaviorist who discovers that the philosophy of democracy places excessive demands on the "real world" and hence it is the task of political science to suggest a more realistic version of democratic theory. Thus the authors of *The Civic Culture* admit that it would be possible to "explain" the low degree of political involvement on the part of citizens by "the malfunctioning of democracy." But, they caution, this kind of explanation rests on a belief "that the realities of political life should be molded to fit one's theories of politics." A "somewhat easier and probably more useful task," they contend, is suggested by "the view that theories of politics should be drawn from the realities of political life." Because "the standards have been set unreasonably high," the theory should be changed.[79]

Is it possible that in this genial, Panglossian twilight Minerva's owl is beginning to falter as it speeds over a real world that is increasingly discordant and is beginning to voice demands and hopes that are "unreasonably high"? Perhaps it is possible, especially if we remember that according to Greek statuary, Minerva's pet was a screech-owl, for a screech is the noise both of warning and of pain.

[78] Cited by A. Wilkausky, *The Politics of the Budgetary Process* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1964), p. 178.

[79] *Civic Culture*, p. 475.