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### The History of Political Thought as Disciplinary Genre

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### Abstract and Keywords

This article examines the history of political thought between the mid-nineteenth and the later twentieth centuries. It contends that the history of political thought became a disciplinary genre within political science largely because of the works of Robert Blakely, William Dunning, and George Sabine. It contends that a methodological awakening in the later twentieth century brought the disciplinary genre to a close and initiated the latest article in the history of political thought.

Keywords: political thought, political science, Robert Blakely, William Dunning, George Sabine, methodological awakening

The history of political thought refers, ambiguously, either to the actual chronology of past thought about politics, or to the narration and critical commentary on past thought. This parallels a similar ambiguity when referring to the history of science (Laudan 1977). Unlike the history of science, however, the ambiguity attending the history of political thought (in the second sense, which shall govern our usage) is deepened by the fact that past political thinkers engaged in narration and critical commentary on the political thought that preceded them. Whereas past scientists were not historians of science, at least beyond recent precedents, past political thinkers were historians of political thought whose reach extended to the thinkers of antiquity. This is a reminder how entangled political thought is in its own (p. 226) history; and this entanglement has changed over time. There is a history of the history of political thought.

This chapter focuses on the history of political thought—understood as narration and critical commentary on past thought—between the mid-nineteenth and the later twentieth centuries. With Robert Blakey (1855), William Dunning (1902, 1905, 1920), and George Sabine (1950), among others, the history of political thought became a disciplinary genre within political science. Its defining features marked a break from what passed as the history of political thought before the nineteenth century when greater and lesser political thinkers were not bound by any recognizable discipline. A methodological awakening in the later twentieth century brought the disciplinary genre to a close and initiated the latest chapter in the history of the history of political thought.

### 1 Narration and Critical Commentary, New and Old

The latest chapter in this history is the one most familiar to readers of this *Handbook*. “The history of political thought” names an academic specialty or subdivision of labor among political theorists in departments of politics, government, or political science at college or university. In this way, it is part of the broader “real history” of political theory in the discipline of political science (Gunnell 1993). The history of political thought is acknowledged, by name, as an area of inquiry by professional academic associations like the American Political Science Association (APSA), the Political Studies Association, and the Association of Political Theory. Academic journals publish articles in this category, among the more prominent being *The History of Political Thought*.

The academic specialists known as historians of political thought in these departments, associations, and journals are political theorists with a heightened consciousness of the bearing of the past on the present who engage in the time-honored, although contested, practice of narrating and critically commenting on one or more past thinkers or themes—from Plato to Dewey, power to democracy, and much else. The history of political thought in this contemporary and wide-ranging sense is marked by considerable depth of (p. 227) scholarship, evident in extensive research and citation of primary and secondary sources. It is also attended and partly constituted by sustained methodological reflection on the practice of narration and critical commentary. Thinkers like Leo Strauss, Quentin Skinner, and Michel Foucault, among others, are known not only for what they wrote or have written brilliantly about Hobbes, Machiavelli, liberty, power, or sovereignty. In addition, their competing methodological prescriptions—whether to pursue esoteric doctrines, intentional speech acts, archaeology, or genealogy—are followed, resisted, or amended by historians of political thought who go about their business of narration and critical commentary. Proof of this methodological consciousness may be found in the sizable and growing literature on what it is “to do” the history of political thought (Pocock 1962, 1971; Dunn 1968, 1996; Skinner 1969; Gunnell 1979; Condren 1985; Tully 1988; Bevir 1999). Broader testimony to the depth and range of the contemporary practice of the history of political thought may be found in scores of books, articles, and entries in this *Handbook*.

There are exceptions to this quick portrait of our time. There are alternative academic settings for historians of political thought in departments of philosophy, geography, or cultural studies, and a few professional alternatives in foundations, think tanks, or print media. Some forms of political theory—like social choice theory—are decidedly ahistorical. Some popular works of fiction like *Sophie's World* (1994) by Jostein Gaarder suggest how free of method and academic specialization the history of political thought can be for a broader readership. There are also tensions over the importance of historical inquiry—if not political theory itself—between historians of political thought and political scientists in the departments they mutually inhabit. But, exceptions or tensions notwithstanding, the history of political thought is today largely the province of academic professionals in political science engaged in serious scholarship and the diverse practices of narration and critical commentary.

This state of affairs dates roughly to the third quarter of the twentieth century, and features of it go back much earlier. The history of political thought was professionally acknowledged when the APSA was formed in 1903. By the late nineteenth century, it had already become an identifiable subject of higher education (Haddow 1939; Collini, Winch, and Buron 1983). Narration and critical commentary on previous political thought date nearly to the earliest political writings. But what passed for the history of political thought before 1969—to hazard a symbolic date—was notably different than today's academic specialization, scholarly depth, and methodological (p. 228) consciousness. Pre-nineteenth century history of political thought was more different and diffuse still.

Before the nineteenth century, “the history of political thought” was not a category or phrase in circulation, if it was yet coined or used at all. Political thinkers nonetheless engaged in narration and critical commentary on previous political thought as an essential element of their own thinking. This was true of epigone, as well as the greatest thinkers of antiquity and early modernity. Consider, famously, Plato on Socrates or Aristotle on Plato. Waves of neo-Platonists across history could only identify themselves as such by critical commentary on Plato, so as to adapt his thought to changing circumstances. Aristotle—“the greatest thinker of antiquity” to Marx—proved to be the dialectical spur for subsequent thinkers like Cicero, Averroes, Aquinas, Marsilius, and (negatively) Hobbes. Sections of Augustine's *City of God* read like a medieval literature review of the Old Testament and the writings of pre-Socratics, Romans, and neo-Platonists. Locke reacted to Filmer at great length before proposing his own construction of civil government. Rousseau presented his originality in republican thought after a blazing pass by natural lawyers and social contractarians like Grotius and Hobbes, as well as earlier republicans like Machiavelli. Such examples can be multiplied without end. The thinkers in question did not (nor can we) understand their thinking apart from their narration and critical commentary on the political thought that preceded them—when, of course, they actually did so.

There are some noteworthy features of this earlier period when the history of political thought proceeded without name. While many thinkers were teachers in that their works were “teachings,” as followers of Strauss say, they were usually not educators or academics, Plato and Aristotle aside. They certainly were not professionals and their political writings seldom earned them their bread. Moreover, narration and critical commentary on previous thinkers was often brief, without quotation, citation, or mention of the works in question. The great exception in the Christian West after the fourth century was commentary on the sacred canon, especially the Bible. Biblical commentary was a defining feature of medieval and early modern political thought, thus marking another distinction from what came

later. While many political thinkers were rhetoricians, aware of the array of humanistic sciences, they narrated and commented critically on what they read without much discussion of what it was to narrate or criticize in the way they did. There were exceptions to this in certain matters of interpretation, especially for political thinkers who were also jurists. But to read Rousseau's abbreviated (p. 229) critical commentary on Hobbes without benefit of quotation or to read Hobbes's abbreviated critical commentary on Aristotle without benefit of quotation conveys how some great political thinkers went about their work in light of figures who preceded them.

There was also an immediacy and viability in the history of political thought in these earlier eras. The thought of prior thinkers was alive and present to those who narrated them, however long dead the thinkers actually were. A sense of contextual difference or historical distance was scarcely in evidence. Machiavelli, for example, announced his intention to open a "new route" for political thought in the *Discourses* by commenting upon the books of Livy, as if written yesterday. The Florentine republican left special testimony to this sense of immediacy and viability in a famous letter concerning *The Prince* that begins with his doffing his work clothes, muddy from the day's labors, and assuming courtly garments:

Thus appropriately clothed, I enter into the ancient courts of ancient men, where, being lovingly received, I feed on that food which alone is mine, and for which I was born for; I am not ashamed to speak with them and to ask the reasons for their actions, and they courteously answer me. For hours ... I give myself completely over to the ancients. (translation in Wolin 1960, 22)

Hobbes made the point from an opposing, more menacing direction: sedition of modern state authority frequently followed the reading of classical writers. *Leviathan* should beware the living threat of antiquity.

### 2 A Disciplinary Genre

Beginning in the nineteenth century and in full maturation by the twentieth, the history of political thought changed dramatically. There certainly were great political thinkers, like Hegel, Mill, and Marx, who narrated and commented critically on those who came before. This was a continuation of the age-old practice. But they were more attuned to context and historical distance, as well as to breaks in the chronological trajectory of political thought. The Bible was ceasing to be a required text for political reflection, or even requisite for spiritual uplift. More significantly, "the history of political thought" came into use as a phrase, among kindred phrases, often (p. 230) figuring as the title of textbooks for collegiate instruction. This phrase and these textbooks announced the arrival of a disciplinary genre.

As an ideal-type, admitting of exceptions and differences, this genre displayed striking commonalities. (For related accounts, to which this entry is indebted, see Gunnell 1979 and Condren 1985.) The genre bundled together and presented in chronological order the thinkers deemed to be great, important, or representative. Sometimes these bundles of thinkers were organized in terms of eras or nationalities, as if they were defined by or themselves defined these eras or nationalities. More often, a chapter was dedicated to each of several individual greats. Thus emerged the long line of famous thinkers: Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Augustine, Aquinas, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Hegel, and Mill. It was not just that this list, even when extended to include a larger cast, contained and presented in chronological order the great, important, or representative thinkers who deserved attention. They had long since deserved and received attention. Rather, they went together as a line-up, later thinkers being understood in terms of previous ones. It was no mere chronology, but a linked chain of influence and attention. Whether or not a particular thinker had *actually* commented upon a previous one, the line-up made it appear that political thinkers were bound together as a tradition, engaged in a great dialogue, each later thinker speaking to or about each previous one. The dialogue of this tradition was composed of a vocabulary of key concepts that thinkers-in-line shared; and it turned upon some long-standing themes or even perennial problems of politics. This dialogue and these problems still reigned in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, despite political change. Students of political science could do no better than to study the great works of the lined-up tradition, taken as a whole. The whole of these works became a canon, the tradition realized, as if canon and tradition preceded the nineteenth and twentieth century genre of narration and critical commentary. Line-up, canon, and tradition came to be conceived as existing "out there" or "back then," not literary artifacts of a genre. They appeared as natural kinds or found objects that the historians of political thought were humbly narrating. "The history of political thought," in short, became a purportedly real object of study, a (reified) thing with an identity of its own that

justified the writing of these books.

Other features—stylized in the way of an ideal type—stand out in this defining period. The line-up of great thinkers implied progress or evolutionary improvement of political argument. There was usually, however, (p. 231) demurral about the progressiveness of the most recent political thought, as if future history still had to sort out the clamor of competing claims. Moreover, progress was charted in terms of conceptual antinomies of antique origin but modern persistence, like liberty versus tyranny (Blakey) or authority versus liberty (Dunning). These begat contemporary ideological categorizations, like liberalism versus totalitarianism (Sabine). Such antinomies gave the clue to the author's political convictions, even (no, especially) when he claimed to be value-free or without prejudice. The more significant differences among genre writers were to be found in their political convictions, forged in different decades of two very troubled centuries.

There were methodological, scholarly, and disciplinary markers to the genre, as well. A nominal contextualism was usually defended. Past political thought was explained in terms of the authors' situated biographies or "the times" (usually some mix of war, religious strife, international affairs, economic interests, and technological change). Such contextualism was a hedge, but little more, on the alleged progress of political thought or the perenniality of problems. Given the staggering hermeneutical difficulties of mastering the thought of great thinkers from Plato to Mill, not to mention scores of lesser lights, the authors of the collegiate textbooks were dependent on the scholarship of others whose ambitions fell shy of covering the entire canon. More modestly and expertly, the latter scholars took out a more limited range, often one or a few thinkers from a defined historical period. Thus the scholarship in the textbooks combined the author's own far-flung reading with in-depth studies that were acknowledged as crucial to the exercise. The genre historians also agreed that in narrating past political thought they were contributing to political science. Indeed, they *were* political scientists as much as any of their colleagues who were studying—by the historical, comparative method—the state, government, and administration. Thus one book in the genre—Sir Frederick Pollock's *An Introduction to the History of the Science of Politics* (1890, originally in *Fortnightly Review* 1883)—was aptly titled, they thought, even though it did nothing more or less than narrate and comment upon the political thought of Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Aquinas, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, with additional bits from Burke, Blackstone, and Bentham. Pollock's closing advice for political science—"Back to Aristotle"—was, to historians of political thought, not bad. They were already back there.

### (p. 232) 3 From Blakey to Sabine

It is tempting to identify the first disciplinary historian of political thought as Robert Blakey, especially since he gave himself up for the honor. In 1855, the Professor of Logic and Metaphysics at Queen's University, Belfast, boasted that his *History of Political Literature from the Earliest Times* was "the first attempt of the kind." At present, Blakey alleged, "political writers of the past are thrown into a promiscuous heap." With "no one to guide" him, he then proceeded in two large volumes to trace the history of political thought from the Old Testament and the pre-Socratics to late seventeenth-century thinking, as organized by the major European nationalities. (He drafted two more unpublished manuscripts on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century thought.) Consistent with the "great principles of polity" found in "the sacred canon," the works of political thought that Blakey identified were presented as the "progressive steps or land-marks" in "politics as a great science" that taught "the axioms of citizenship." Both volumes were framed by "two grand ideas ... namely, liberty and tyranny" (Blakey 1855, vol. 1, vi, vii, ix, xvi, xxiv, xv, xxxi, 446); and the second issued up "two grand doctrines" that "pervaded" political thought since the Reformation, namely, liberty of conscience and the right of resistance. While Blakey denied "prejudice and party-feeling," there was no suppressing his Chartist and republican commitments to liberty and popular resistance as "inalienable rights." Locke, thus, received special attention; and passages from the radical closing chapters of *Two Treatises* were quoted at length (Blakey 1855, vol. 2, 4, 20, 33, 166–70, 441–3).

Blakey's boast of being the first historian of political literature was and remains credible. However, prior developments make certain features of his book less dramatic in initial appearance. These form literary bridges between the genre and what came before. First, Blakey himself had previously authored two histories of thought, *History of Moral Science* (1833) and *History of Philosophy of Mind* (1850). In both, he lined up the great thinkers, including Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Hobbes, and Locke, invariably discussing some matters of politics. In the former, he even invoked "the whole history of political philosophy" to refute the view that liberty springs from human nature, as opposed to moral and political teachings; and he discussed theorists of natural law and the law of

nations, like Grotius, Pufendorf, and Vattel (Blakey 1833, vol. 2, 348, 299–305, 350). Blakey's two histories of mind and moral science, furthermore, were scarcely unique. A class of textbooks in (p. 233) moral and mental philosophy had been under way since the late eighteenth century in which the political views of moralists were discussed. Blakey was aware of these texts since he cited or quoted from several, including *Lectures on Moral Philosophy* (1800; 1822), originally delivered at Princeton during the 1770s and 1780s by John Witherspoon, the Scottish-born moral philosopher whose “common sense” realism influenced revolutionary America. At the end of his textbook, Witherspoon (1982) drew together a striking, non-promiscuous list of “some of the chief writers upon government and politics” that presaged the genre's line-up style:

Grotius, Puffendorf, Barbeyrac, Cumberland, Selden, Burlamaqui, Hobbs, Machiavel, Harrington, Locke, Sydney, and some late books, Montesquieu's *Spirit of Laws*; Ferguson's *History of Civil Society*; Lord Kaime's *Political Essays*, *Grandeur and Decay of the Roman Empire*; Montague's *Rise and Fall of Ancient Republics*; Goguet's *Rise and Progress of Laws, Arts, and Sciences*. (Witherspoon 1982, 187)

Encyclopedias need to be remembered, too. Blakey acknowledged encyclopedias for biographical information. But there was more in them of the history of thought. In *L'Encyclopedie* (1745–72), for example, Diderot offered entries on “egoisme,” “Hobbisme,” and “Locke, philosophie de.” Similar entries resided in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, as well as the *Encyclopedia Americana*, edited by Francis Lieber in the 1830s. Not only were there stand-alone entries on several thinkers, including Aristotle and Spinoza (Lieber's heroes), there were those on “history of philosophy,” “political science,” and “the state” that marshaled views from historical figures. Such entries were mini-chapters, as it were, that could grow to larger proportion in treatises on political science and the state, like Lieber's own textbooks—*Manual of Political Ethics* (1838) and *Civil Liberty and Self-Government* (1853)—as well as *Allgemeine Staatslehre* (1851, with many subsequent editions and translations) by Johann K. Bluntschli.

Out of moral philosophy, treatises of state, encyclopedias, and long lists, then, came Blakey's “first” history of political thought. It gained notice, if only as “crude, scrappy, and superficial” to William A. Dunning, Lieber Professor of History and Political Philosophy in the School of Political Science at Columbia University. So underwhelmed was Dunning by Blakey's efforts, that he submitted his own candidacy as the first to trace successfully, as a scholar, the history of political thought as a set of “successive transformations” in “the broad field of the world's progress.” In his three-volume *History of Political Theories* (1902, 1905, 1920), Dunning took note not only of Blakey, but of Pollock's history of political science and another early work in the genre, *Histoire de la Philosophie Morale et Politique: Dans (p. 234) l'Antiquite et les Temps Modernes* (1858, 1872, 1887) by Paul Janet. Dunning also relied upon the primary scholarship of John Neville Figgis (for divine right), Henry Hallam (for constitutional history), and Otto von Gierke (for medieval thought), as well as Bluntschli's historical overview of theories of the state. This did not prevent him from being critical of them, or from liberally dispensing his own judgments about Locke's “illogical, incoherent system,” or Marx's “shrieking contradiction,” or Rousseau's inner “spoiled child” (Dunning 1905, 1, 368, 375). He announced in the first volume a contextualism that tied “any given author's work to the current of institutional development” (Dunning 1902, xxv). However, in the final volume, the prescience of the ancients trumped institutions: “In twenty-three centuries, the movement of thought has but swung full circle. Such is the general lesson of the history of political theories.” More plausibly, Dunning noted a falsificationist's “progress,” namely, the passing into obscurity of certain foundations in the perennial struggle between liberty and authority. “Nature was dropped out of consideration as God had been before.” Replacing them were “reason, righteousness, and history, especially as embodied in constitutional formulas” (Dunning 1920, 415, 422, 423). The last of these remaining foundations was crucial. History dismissed natural rights and popular sovereignty. It allowed Dunning to sympathize with positivism (Austin, Comte, Spencer) and commend the theory of liberty in Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws*. The “scientific calm” and political moderation of this “great work in the history of political science” was disturbed only by Montesquieu's “splendid glow of wrath” over slavery. Dunning was no defender of slavery, although he thought “progress” had been made in arguments defending it. However, he shuddered at the “barbarous civil war” wrongly fought in America over the peculiar institution; and he judged Reconstruction a total horror whose “substantial factor” was not some “principle of popular will” but “the military power of the North” (Dunning 1905, 287, 336, 409, 418).

Dunning entrenched the genre's form and much of its substance. His formal influence was already apparent in the work of his student, Charles E. Merriam, who wrote more pointedly on *The History of the Theory of Sovereignty since Rousseau* (1900) and more nationally on *A History of American Political Theories* (1903, dedicated to Dunning, and retitled upon revision in 1920). Raymond G. Gettell hailed Dunning's “splendid monument,” as he



wrestled three volumes into one *History of Political Thought* (1924) and produced another on *History of American Political (p. 235) Thought* (1928). In the former, he redeployed Dunning's conceits regarding "objective conditions" and "continuous growth." He also proclaimed "the fundamental problems of political thought are essentially the same as those of two thousand years ago" (Gettell 1924, v, 5, 494). In the latter, he quoted approvingly Dunning's view of Reconstruction as "'a huge social and political revolution under the forms of law.'" But Dunning was of greatest interest to Gettell, as to Merriam in *New Aspects of Politics* (1925), because he and colleagues at Columbia and Johns Hopkins had "laid the foundations of modern methods of scientific political inquiry" (Gettell 1928, 387). This underscored the long-proclaimed identity or complementarity of the history of political thought and political science, what George Catlin called "the rational Grand Tradition" and "a Science of Politics." In *The Story of the Political Philosophers* (1939), Catlin narrated fiercely on the side of the tradition and political science. He proceeded, he said, "full of humility" in the wake of Dunning, George Sabine, and even Thomas I. Cook (whose *History of Political Philosophy* (1936, v) offered "the haven of a textbook" to hapless undergraduates, with chapters, like Catlin's, adorned with photographic plates of canonical busts, making the history of political thought appear, pictorially, as a long line of heads).

By Catlin's time, the political locus of genre histories had shifted. Professing objectivity or impartiality as political scientists, historians of political thought pitched nonetheless for liberalism or some version of democratic constitutionalism. Gettell (1924, 472–87, 493) ended his narrative skeptical of "recent proletarian political theory," meaning anarchism, syndicalism, bolshevism, and national socialism. "Democracy in ultimate control combined with efficiency in administration" was the future "compromise" he appeared to value. In *Recent Political Thought* (1934, v), Francis W. Coker professed an "impartial attitude," although "his own theoretical preconceptions" might have "colored his critical interpretation at many points." And, sure enough, liberal democracy helped him sort arguments of socialists, fascists, and "empirical collectivists." But it was Catlin (1939, ix, x, 753ff, 768, 771, 777) who was most alert to "rival philosophies of these times" and narrated accordingly. He lined up the Grand Tradition of humanist values consistent with science, inscribed in the "gnomons and canons" of Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Erasmus, Locke, and Bentham, with Confucius and recent thinkers like Dewey and Merriam serving as historical bookends. A "counter-tradition" consisted of amoralists like Machiavelli, (p. 236) Hobbes, and Nietzsche, as well as "totalitarians" like Hegel. Catlin's "friend and late colleague," George Sabine of Cornell University, was more circumspect about the political persuasion informing his *History of Political Theory* (1937). But in the second edition of 1950 (ix), Sabine admitted being "even more deeply convinced than he was in 1937 that ... he is indebted to the tradition of liberalism itself, and hence he is forced to see in that tradition the most hopeful prospect for social and political improvement by peaceful means."

Sabine's *A History of Political Theory* was the last and greatest of the genre. It was the most scholarly, too, because Sabine made independent contribution by translating Cicero and editing Winstanley's writings. It acknowledged Dunning and Janet in the genre, but relied on expert authorities like Ernest Barker (for the Greeks), Charles McIlwain (for medieval thinkers), Leo Strauss (for Hobbes), and Herbert Marcuse (for Hegel). It was even more forthright in its philosophical preferences: for Hume's criticism of natural law and his argument that value ("ought") could not be derived from fact ("is"). This gave fair warning of Sabine's skepticism about natural lawyers from Althusius to Locke, appreciation for the secular or non-clerical tendencies in less-known figures like Winstanley, and sympathy for non-foundational empirics like Machiavelli, Harrington, Burke, and Hume himself. Humean preferences allowed endorsement of the emerging dogma of political science as value-free, or at least incapable of justifying values. This implied "social relativism" for narrating the history of political thought: "political theory can hardly be said to be true" since "thought evolves" alongside institutions of government going back to the Hellenic city-state (Sabine 1937, i–iii). Such relativism did not prevent Sabine, or anyone, from choosing sides or deciding values. Indeed, he came clean about doing so, if belatedly, when it came to liberalism. In coming clean in the second edition (Sabine 1950, ix), he revised his former opinions about the Hegelian origins of national socialism, the Marxist foundations of Leninism, and the unity of liberalism. Matters were more complex, especially for a multifaceted liberalism that learned a hard lesson from the 1930s and 1940s: "no democratic movement can expect anything but disaster from an alliance with communism." Further amendments came in the third edition (1961), suggesting a scholar still at work, struggling to get his head around the history of political thought as a whole. Could it ever really be done? Could the line hold?

### (p. 237) 4 Criticism and Methodological Transformation

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In the third quarter of the twentieth century, the genre that peaked with Sabine came under attack by those both hostile and sympathetic to historical inquiry into past political thought. Developments that were indifferent to the fate of the genre abetted these attacks and signaled a new chapter in the history of political thought. A bellwether critic of the genre was David Easton in *The Political System: An Inquiry into the State of Political Science* (1953, ch. 10, 236, 237, 249, 254). In the works of Sabine and Dunning, Easton traced the “decline” of political theory into a form of “historicism” (vilified by the philosopher of science Karl Popper). Contextualism and social relativism might help historicist understanding of past thinkers in their times, but not the pressing task of constructing a political theory of value that could actually guide political actors. While Sabine was “brilliant” and Dunning’s trio worth traipsing over, Easton judged them “manifestly unsuited for training political scientists.” Easton’s longing for “a theory of a good political system” went unfulfilled, but his charge of manifest unsuitability of the genre for disciplinary training captured and influenced the mentality of a discipline becoming more behavioral, positivistic, and ahistorical. This was a considerable breach given the genre writers’ view of themselves as political scientists. The breach widened when Peter Laslett (1956, vii) opined that political theory was “dead” and “the tradition broken.” Dead, broken, or just something to avoid, John Plamenatz (1963, xiv) would preface his study of “man and society” from “Machiavelli to Marx” with a disavowing first sentence: “this book is not a history of political thought.”

Other historians of political thought—notably Sheldon Wolin and Leo Strauss—confirmed the disciplinary breach within political science. They were also harbingers of contests in the field. In *Politics and Vision* (1960, 12, 14, 27, 213, 216, ch. 9), Wolin ignored Sabine and genre writers altogether when discussing “the tradition” in the decisively temporal terms of “continuity and innovation,” as well as blaming liberalism for “the decline” of political philosophy and the “sublimation of politics” in a world of corporate orderliness. His Plato was against politics; his Calvin was a radical educator; and his Machiavelli crafted a “new science” to “unmask illusions” and bring about “a new political ethic.” How bracing and distant this was from “the (p. 238) dreary controversy over whether [contemporary] political science is, or can be, a true science.” “Rather than dwell on the scientific shortcomings of political theories,” Wolin impatiently pronounced, “it might be more fruitful to consider political theory as belonging to a different form of discourse,” one that drew upon ordinary experience and aspired to a non-scientistic “form of political education.”

If you blurred your vision, Wolin’s arguments appeared to be shared by Strauss and Joseph Cropsey (1963), especially on liberalism, the tradition, and political education. But, if one read between the lines, or read other lines that Strauss and his students wrote, then the differences with Wolin came into bolder relief (and are now starkly contrasted with the expanded edition of *Politics and Vision* (Wolin 2004)). There was first, though, a difference of form separating Strauss and Cropsey from Wolin or the genre. They were contributors and editors of a volume of thirty-three chapters by twenty-seven different authors. Strauss wrote on Plato and Marsilius (and in later editions on Machiavelli); his students covered the rest. It evidently took a village or a philosophical school to educate an undergraduate in *History of Political Philosophy* from Plato to Dewey. Strauss and Cropsey (1963, 1, 248, 722, 761, 762) began by distinguishing “political philosophy”—namely, Socratic “classical teachings” from Greek antiquity to the Islamic and Christian middle ages—from mundane “political thought”—“coeval with political life”—of the sort Wolin valued. The Straussian narrative turned declensional with Machiavelli, long before the declines of liberalism (Wolin) or the genre (Easton). Machiavelli (whom Strauss elsewhere denounced as a “teacher of evil”) led modernity away from classical natural right. Hobbes and Locke recycled Machiavelli’s malevolent teachings; Marx “proposes nothing less than the end of the West;” and “Dewey’s depreciation of the political” rested on his paltry belief in democracy as a way of life. In their undeniably powerful textbook, Strauss and company instructed undergraduates to believe that “the great majority of the profession concurs in the view that the history of political philosophy is a proper part of political science” because of “the very common practice of offering courses on this subject.” But the discipline was divided since political scientists knew neither their classical heritage nor Machiavelli’s teachings nor the inferno of twentieth-century politics. As Strauss (1962, 327) decried the year before his co-edited textbook: political science “fiddles while Rome burns. It is excused by two facts: it does not know that it fiddles, and it does not know that Rome burns.” With some irony—or a deep appreciation of the differences at stake in the new turn in the history of political thought—it (p. 239) was not political scientists but rather Wolin (with John Schaar 1963) who criticized the Straussians’ fiery assault on political science, as well as its classicist elitism.

As textbook narration and commentary on past political thought departed from both genre and political science, there appeared on several fronts a transformative methodological awakening. “Method” was then, as now, a

capacious term that covered technical and philosophical interventions in the practices or understandings of interpretation, narration, and criticism. The awakening in the history of political thought was an inevitable if delayed development that followed searching methodological discussions begun in philosophy, science, and social science. The resulting self-consciousness about the history of political thought proved more profound than, say, Dunning's institutional contextualism or Sabine's separation of facts from values. Indeed, a deeper contextualism and prouder historicism emerged from different quarters. One came out of Cambridge University in the work of Quentin Skinner, John Dunn, and J. G. A. Pocock, who were influenced by developments in the philosophy of language and action, as well as the idealist historiography of R. G. Collingwood. Contexts for understanding were linguistic, broadly speaking; language and its changing vocabularies formed the context and imposed the limits on what could be said about politics at any particular time in history, as well as what could be done, intentionally, in saying them. This broad linguistic framework was displayed in magisterial studies of Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, and supporting casts of long forgotten figures, absent in genre histories. From an altogether different quarter, influenced by structuralism and the philosophy of Martin Heidegger, came Michel Foucault at the Collège de France. With the imposing title of Professor of History of Systems of Thought, Foucault encouraged, by edict and example, an understanding of political thought, during any particular "epoch," as an "archive" or set of discourses that conditioned what counted then as truth. Discourses drew from and made possible structures of power beyond or beneath the state. Armed with discursive method, Foucault questioned "what is an author" and made dramatic pronouncements about the death of man (within humanist philosophy). He also produced several brilliant "archaeologies" of madness, clinical psychology, and the social sciences (which included canonical thinkers like Locke and Hegel whose intellectual distance from one another suggested great "ruptures" and incommensurate "epistemes" in history). These archaeologies were simultaneously social critiques of current disciplinary practices in prisons, hospitals, and academies, (p. 240) making historical recovery serve contemporary political purposes. Methodological awareness of the sort represented and encouraged by the very different figures of Foucault and the Cambridge historians—and there were others still—transformed the history of political thought.

The year 1969 may serve as a symbolic date for the methodological and disciplinary developments that upstaged the genre. It was, in any case, a banner year for reading new thoughts about old thinkers, emergent methods, and changed disciplines. Foucault came out with *L'Archeologie du Savoir* and "Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?" Skinner waged war on genre "myths" (and many expert historians, as well) in "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas." Dunn unleashed *The Political Thought of John Locke*, in which a strangely compelling theological radical of the seventeenth century escaped the bonds of liberal, Marxist, and Straussian interpretation. Wolin evoked "the vocation of political theory" with its historical mooring while savaging behavioral "methodism" in political science. Easton crossed over the disciplinary breach, as APSA president, to criticize behavioralists for their lack of historical relevance and their indifference to political crises as a "post-behavioral revolution" loomed on the horizon. All told, these were symbolic developments with real consequences for the history of political thought. There were to be trailing clouds and textbooks of the genre after 1969, just as there were intimations of it before Blakey in 1855. But there can be no doubt that the history of political thought in the last quarter of the twentieth century left the genre behind, or a shadow of its former self. This can be gauged by the contemporary range of historical studies, the depth of scholarship that comes with a humbler circumscription of past thinkers or themes, and the continuing buzz of methodological debate over authors, subject positions, speech acts, discourses, esoteric doctrines, genealogies, and conceptual histories. Narration and critical commentary goes on, keeping past political reflection alive as backdrop, alternative, or spur to contemporary thinking about politics.

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