CHAPTER ONE

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Political Philosophy and Philosophy

. . . To express various meanings on complex things with a scanty vocabulary of fastened senses.
—Walter Bagehot

I. Political Philosophy as a Form of Inquiry

This is a book about a special tradition of discourse—political philosophy. In it I shall attempt to discuss the general character of that tradition, the varying concerns of those who have helped to build it, and the vicissitudes that have marked the main lines of its development. At the same time, I shall also try to say something about the enterprise of political philosophy itself. This statement of intentions naturally induces the expectation that the discussion will begin with a definition of political philosophy. To attempt to satisfy this expectation, however, would be fruitless, not merely because a few sentences cannot accomplish what an entire book intends, but also because political philosophy is not an essence with an eternal nature. It is, instead, a complex activity which is best understood by analyzing the many ways that the acknowledged masters have practiced it. No single philosopher and no one historical age can be said to have defined it conclusively, any more than any one painter or school of painting has practiced all that we mean by painting.

If there is more to political philosophy than any great philosopher has expressed, there is some justification for believing that political philosophy constitutes an activity whose characteristics are most clearly revealed over time. Stated somewhat differently, political philosophy is to be understood in the same way that we go about understanding a varied and complex tradition.

Although it may not be possible to reduce political philosophy to a brief definition, it is possible to elucidate the characteristics that distinguish it from, as well as connect it with, other forms of inquiry. I shall discuss these considerations under the following headings: political philosophy's relations with philosophy, the characteristics of political philosophy as an activity, its subject-matter and language, the problem of perspectives or angle of vision, and the manner in which a tradition operates.

Ever since Plato first perceived that the inquiry into the nature of the good life of the individual was necessarily associated with a converging (and not parallel) inquiry into the nature of the good community, a close and continuing association

has persisted between political philosophy and philosophy in general. Not only have most of the eminent philosophers contributed generously to the main stock of our political ideas, but they have given the political theorist many of his methods of analysis and criteria of judgment. Historically, the main difference between philosophy and political philosophy has been a matter of specialization rather than one of method or temper. By virtue of this alliance, political theorists accepted as their own the basic quest of the philosopher for systematic knowledge.

There is a still another fundamental sense in which political theory is linked to philosophy. Philosophy can be distinguished from other methods of eliciting truths, such as the mystic vision, the secret rite, truths of conscience or of private feelings. Philosophy claims to deal with truths publicly arrived at and publicly demonstrable.[1] At the same time, one of the essential qualities of what is political, and one that has powerfully shaped the view of political theorists about their subject-matter, is its relationship to what is "public." Cicero had this in mind when he called the commonwealth a *res publica,* a "public thing" or the "property of a people." Of all the authoritative institutions in society, the political arrangement has been singled out as uniquely concerned with what is "common" to the whole community. Certain functions, such as national defense, internal order, the dispensing of justice, and economic regulation, have been declared the primary responsibility of political institutions, largely on the grounds that the interests and ends served by these functions were beneficial to all of the members of the community. The only institution that ever rivaled the authority of the political order was the mediaeval Church; yet this was made possible only because the Church, in assuming the characteristics of a political regime, had become something other than a religious body. The intimate connection existing between political institutions and public concerns has been taken over in the practices of philosophers; political philosophy has been taken to mean reflection on matters that concern the community as a whole.

It is fitting, therefore, that the inquiry into public matters should be conducted according to the canons of a public type of knowledge. To take the other alternative, to ally political knowledge with private modes of cognition, would be incongruous and self-defeating. The dramatic symbol of the right alliance was the demand of the Roman plebs that the status of the Twelve Tables of the law be transformed from a priestly mystery cognizable only by the few to a public form of knowledge accessible to all.

II. Form and Substance

Turning next to the subject-matter of political philosophy, even the most cursory examination of the masterpieces of political literature discloses the continual reappearance of certain problem-topics. Many examples could be listed, but here

we need mention only a few, such as the power relationships between ruler and ruled, the nature of authority, the problems posed by social conflict, the status of certain goals or purposes as objectives of political action, and the character of political knowledge. No political philosopher has been interested in all of these problems to the same degree, yet there has been a sufficiently widespread consensus about the identity of the problems to warrant the belief that a continuity of preoccupations has existed. Nor does the fact that philosophers have often violently disagreed about solutions cast doubt upon the existence of a common subject-matter. What is important is the continuity of preoccupations, not the unanimity of response.

Agreement about subject-matter presupposes in turn that those who are interested in extending knowledge of a particular field share in a common understanding about what is relevant to their subject and what ought to be excluded. In reference to political philosophy, this means that the philosopher should be clear about what is political and what is not. Aristotle, for example, argued in the opening pages of the *Politics* that the role of the statesman (*politikos*) ought not to be confused with that of the slave-owner or head of a household; the first was properly political, the latter were not. The point that Aristotle was making is still of vital importance, and the difficulties of preserving a clear notion of what is political form the basic theme of this book. Aristotle was alluding to the troubles that the political philosopher experiences in trying to isolate a subject-matter which, in reality, cannot be isolated. There are two main reasons for the difficulty. In the first place, a political institution, for example, is exposed to impinging influences of a non-political kind so that it becomes a perplexing problem of explanation as to where the political begins and the non-political leaves off. Secondly, there is the widespread tendency to utilize the same words and notions in describing non-political phenomena that we do in talking about political matters. In contrast to the restricted technical usages of mathematics and the natural sciences, phrases like "the authority of the father," "the authority of the church," or "the authority of Parliament" are evidence of the parallel usages prevailing in social and political discussions.

This poses one of the basic problems confronting the political philosopher when he tries to assert the distinctiveness of his subject-matter: what is political? what is it that distinguishes, say, political authority from other forms of authority, or membership in a political society from membership in other types of associations? In attempting an answer to these questions, centuries of philosophers have contributed to a conception of political philosophy as a continuing form of discourse concerning what is political and to a picture of the political philosopher as one who philosophizes about the political. How have they gone about doing this? How have they come to single out certain human actions and interactions, institutions and values, and to designate them "political"? What is the distinctive

common feature of certain types of situations or activities, such as voting and legislating, that allows us to call them political? Or what conditions must a given action or situation satisfy in order to be called political?

In one sense, the process of defining the area of what is political has not been markedly different from that which has taken place in other fields of inquiry. No one would seriously contend, for example, that the fields of physics or chemistry have always existed in a self-evident, determinate form waiting only to be discovered by Galileo or Lavoisier. If we grant that a field of inquiry is, to an important degree, a product of definition, the political field can be viewed as an area whose boundaries have been marked out by centuries of political discussion. Just as other fields have changed their outlines, so the boundaries of what is political have been shifting ones, sometimes including more, sometimes less of human life and thought. The present age of totalitarianism produces the lament that "this is a political age. War, fascism, concentration camps, rubber truncheons, atomic bombs, etc., are what we think about." In other and more serene times the political is less ubiquitous. Aquinas could write that "man is not formed for political fellowship in his entirety, or in all that he has . . ."[2] What I should like to insist upon, however, is that the field of politics is and has been, in a significant and radical sense, a created one. The designation of certain activities and arrangements as political, the characteristic way that we think about them, and the concepts we employ to communicate our observations and reactions—none of these are written into the nature of things but are the legacy accruing from the historical activity of political philosophers.

I do not mean to suggest by these remarks that the political philosopher has been at liberty to call "political" whatever he chose, or that, like the poet of Lord Kames, he has been busy "fabricating images without any foundation in reality." Nor do I mean to imply that the phenomena we designate political are, in a literal sense, "created" by the theorist. It is readily admitted that established practices and institutional arrangements have furnished political writers with their basic data, and I shall discuss this point shortly. It is true, too, that many of the subjects treated by a theorist owe their inclusion to the simple fact that in existing linguistic conventions such subjects are referred to as political. It is also true, on the other hand, that the ideas and categories that we use in political analysis are not of the same order as institutional "facts," nor are they "contained," so to speak, in the facts. They represent, instead, an added element, something created by the political theorist. Concepts like "power," "authority," "consent," and so forth are not real "things," although they are intended to point to some significant aspect about political things. Their function is to render political facts significant, either for purposes of analysis, criticism, or justification, or a combination of all three. When political concepts are put into the form of an assertion, such as, "It

is not the rights and privileges which he enjoys which makes a man a citizen, but the mutual obligation between subject and sovereign," the validity of the statement is not to be settled by referring to the facts of political life. This would be a circular procedure, since the form of the statement would inevitably govern the interpretation of the facts. Stated somewhat differently, political theory is not so much interested in political practices, or how they operate, but rather in their meaning. Thus, in the statement just quoted from Bodin, the fact that by law or practice the member of society owed certain obligations to his sovereign, and vice versa, was not as important as that these duties could be understood in a way suggestive of something important about membership and, in the later phases of Bodin's argument, about sovereign authority and its conditions. In other words, the concept of membership permitted Bodin to draw out the implications and interconnections between certain practices or institutions that were not self-evident on the basis of the facts themselves. When such concepts become more or less stable in their meaning, they serve as pointers that "cue" us to look for certain things or to keep certain considerations in mind when we try to understand a political situation or make a judgment about it. In this way, the concepts and categories that make up our political understanding help us to draw connections between political phenomena; they impart some order to what might otherwise appear to be a hopeless chaos of activities; they mediate between us and the political world we seek to render intelligible; they create an area of determinate awareness and thus help to separate the relevant phenomena from the irrelevant.

III. Political Thought and Political Institutions

The philosopher's attempt to give meaning to political phenomena is both assisted and delimited by the fact that societies possess some measure of order, some degree of arrangement which exists whether philosophers philosophize or not. In other words, the boundaries and substance of the subject-matter of political philosophy are determined to a large extent by the practices of existing societies. By practices is meant the institutionalized processes and settled procedures regularly used for handling public matters. What is important for political theory is that these institutionalized practices play a fundamental role in ordering and directing human behavior and in determining the character of events. The organizing role of institutions and customary practices creates a "nature" or field of phenomena that is roughly analogous to the nature confronted by the natural scientist. Perhaps I can clarify the meaning of "political nature" by describing something of the function of institutions.

The system of political institutions in a given society represents an arrangement of power and authority. At some point within the system, certain institutions are

recognized as having the authority to make decisions applicable to the whole community. The exercise of this function naturally attracts the attention of groups and individuals who feel that their interests and purposes will be affected by the decisions taken. When this awareness takes the form of action directed towards political institutions, the activities become "political" and a part of political nature. The initiative may originate with the institutions themselves, or rather with the men who operate them. A public decision, such as one controlling the manufacturing of woolens or one prohibiting the propagation of certain doctrines, has the effect of connecting these activities to the political order and making them, at least in part, political phenomena. Although one could multiply the ways in which human activities become "political," the main point lies in the "relating" function performed by political institutions. Through the decisions taken and enforced by public officials, scattered activities are brought together, endowed with a new coherence, and their future course shaped according to "public" considerations. In this way political institutions give additional dimensions to political nature. They serve to define, so to speak, "political space" or the locus wherein the tensional forces of society are related, as in a courtroom, a legislature, an administrative hearing, or the convention of a political party. They serve also to define "political time" or the temporal period within which decision, resolution, or compromise occurs. Thus political arrangements provide a setting wherein the activities of individuals and groups are connected spatially and temporally. Consider, for example, the workings of a national system of social security. A tax official collects revenue from a corporation's earnings of the preceding year; the revenue, in turn, might be used to establish a social security or pension system that would benefit workers otherwise unconnected with the corporation. But the benefits in question may not actually be received by the worker until a quarter of a century later. Here, in the form of a revenue agent, is a political institution whose operation integrates a series of otherwise unconnected activities and imparts to them a significance extended over time.[3]

A contemporary philosopher has said that, by means of the concepts and symbols used in our thinking, we try to make a "temporal order of words" stand for "a relational order of things."[4] If we apply this to political matters, we can say that political institutions provide the internal relationships between the "things" or phenomena of political nature and that political philosophy seeks to make meaningful assertions about these "things." In other words, institutions establish a previous coherence among political phenomena; hence, when the political philosopher reflects upon society, he is not confronted by a whirl of disconnected events or activities hurtling through a Democritean void but by phenomena already endowed with coherence and interrelationships.

IV. Political Philosophy and the Political

At the same time, however, most of the great statements of political philosophy have been put forward in times of crisis; that is, when political phenomena are less effectively integrated by institutional forms. Institutional breakdown releases phenomena, so to speak, causing political behavior and events to take on something of a random quality, and destroying the customary meanings that had been part of the old political world. From the time that Greek thought first became fascinated by the instabilities that afflicted political life, Western political philosophers have been troubled by the wasteland that comes when the web of political relationships has dissolved and the ties of loyalty have snapped. Evidence of this preoccupation is to be found in the endless discussions of Greek and Roman writers concerning the rhythmic cycles which governmental forms were destined to follow; in the fine distinctions that Machiavelli drew between the political contingencies that man could master and those that left him helpless; in the seventeenth-century notion of a "state of nature" as a condition lacking the settled relationships and institutional forms characteristic of a functioning political system; and in the mighty effort of Hobbes to found a political science that would enable men, once and for all, to create an abiding commonwealth that could weather the vicissitudes of politics. Although the task of political philosophy is greatly complicated in a period of disintegration, the theories of Plato, Machiavelli, and Hobbes, for example, are evidence of a "challenge and response" relationship between the disorder of the actual world and the role of the political philosopher as the encompasser of disorder. The range of possibilities appears infinite, for now the political philosopher is not confined to criticism and interpretation; he must reconstruct a shattered world of meanings and their accompanying institutional expressions; he must, in short, fashion a political cosmos out of political chaos.

Although conditions of extreme political disorganization lend an added urgency to the quest for order, the political theorist writing for less heroic times has also ranked order as a fundamental problem of his subject-matter. No political theorist has ever advocated a disordered society, and no political theorist has ever proposed permanent revolution as a way of life. In its most elemental meaning, order has signified a condition of peace and security that makes civilized life possible. St. Augustine's overriding concern for man's transcendent destiny did not blind him to the fact that the preparations for salvation presupposed an earthly setting wherein the basic requirements of peace and security were being met by the political order, and it was this recognition that drew from him the admission that even a pagan polity was of some value. The preoccupation with order has left its mark on the vocabulary of the political theorist. Words like "peace," "stability,"

"harmony," and "balance" are encountered in the writings of every major theorist. Similarly, every political inquiry is, in some degree, directed at the factors conducive to, or militating against, the maintenance of order. The political philosopher has asked: what is the function of power and authority in sustaining the basis of social life? what does the preservation of order demand of the members in the way of a code of civility? what kind of knowledge is needed by both ruler and ruled alike if peace and stability are to be maintained? what are the sources of disorder, and how can they be controlled?

At the same time, and with important exceptions, most political writers have accepted in some form the Aristotelian dictum that men living a life of association desire not only life but the attainment of the good life; that is, that human beings have aspirations beyond the satisfaction of certain elemental, almost biologic needs, such as domestic peace, defense against external enemies, and the protection of life and possessions. Order, as Augustine defined it, contained a hierarchy of goods, rising from the protection of life to the promotion of the highest type of life. Throughout the history of political philosophy, there have been varying notions about what was to be included under order, and these have ranged from the Greek idea of individual self-fulfillment, through the Christian conception of the political order as a kind of *praeparatio evangelica,* to the modern liberal view that the political order has little to do with either psyches or souls. Irrespectively of the particular emphasis, the preoccupation with order has drawn the political theorist into considering the kinds of goals and purposes proper to a political society. This brings us to the second broad aspect of the subject-matter: what kinds of things are proper to a *political* society and why?

In our earlier discussion of political philosophy and its relation to philosophy, we touched very briefly on the notion that political philosophy dealt with *public* matters. Here I should like to point out that the words "public," "common," and "general" have a long tradition of usage which has made them synonyms for what is political. For this reason they serve as important clues to the subject-matter of political philosophy. From its very beginnings in Greece, the Western political tradition has looked upon the political order as a common order created to deal with those concerns in which all of the members of society have some interest. The concept of an order that was at once political and common was stated most eloquently in Plato's dialogue *Protagoras.* There it was related that the gods gave men the arts and talents necessary for their physical survival, yet when men formed cities, conflict and violence continually erupted and threatened to return mankind to a brutal and savage condition. Protagoras then described how the gods, fearful that men would destroy each other, decided to provide justice and virtue:

> Zeus feared that the entire race would be exterminated, and so he sent Hermes to
> them, bearing reverence and justice to be the ordering principles of cities and the

bonds of friendship and conciliation. Hermes asked Zeus how he should impart justice and reverence among men:—Should he distribute them as the arts are distributed; that is to say, to a favored few only [or] . . . to all? "To all," said Zeus; "I should like them all to have a share; for cities cannot exist, if a few share only in the virtues, as in the arts . . ."[5]

The "commonness" of the political order has been reflected both in the range of topics selected by political theorists as proper to their subject and in the way that these topics have been treated in political theory. It is seen in the basic belief of theorists that political rule is concerned with those general interests shared by all the members of the community; that political authority is distinguished from other forms of authority in that it speaks in the name of a society considered in its common quality; that membership in a political society is a token of a life of common involvements; and that the order that political authority presides over is one that should extend throughout the length and breadth of society as a whole. The broad problem that is posed by these and similar topics comes from the fact that the objects and activities that they treat are not isolated. The member of society may share some interests with his fellows, but there are other interests that may be peculiar to him or to some group to which he belongs; similarly, political authority is not only one of several authorities in society, but finds itself competing with them on certain matters.

That the political inheres in a situation of intersecting considerations suggests that the task of defining what is political is a continual one. This becomes more evident if we now turn to consider another aspect of the subject-matter; namely, political activity or politics. For the purposes of this study I shall take "politics" to include the following: (a) a form of activity centering around the quest for competitive advantage between groups, individuals, or societies; (b) a form of activity conditioned by the fact that it occurs within a situation of change and relative scarcity; (c) a form of activity in which the pursuit of advantage produces consequences of such a magnitude that they affect in a significant way the whole society or a substantial portion of it. Throughout most of the last twenty-five hundred years, Western communities have been compelled to undergo drastic readjustments to changes induced from both within and without. Politics as one reflection of this phenomenon has come to be an activity expressive of society's need for constant readjustment. The effects of change are not only to disturb the relative positions of social groups but also to modify the objectives for which individuals and groups are contending. Thus the territorial expansion of a society may open new sources of wealth and power which will disturb the competitive positions of various domestic groups; changes in the modes of economic production may result in the redistribution of wealth and influence in such a way as to provoke protest and agitation on the part of those whose status has been adversely

affected by the new order; vast increases in population and the injection of new racial elements, as took place at Rome, may bring demands for the extension of political privileges and by that demand offer an inviting element for political manipulation; or a religious prophet may come proclaiming a new faith and calling for the extirpation of the old rites and beliefs which time and habit had woven into the existing fabric of epectations. Looked at in one way, political activities are a response to fundamental changes taking place in society. From another point of view, these activities provoke conflict because they represent intersecting lines of action whereby individuals and groups seek to stabilize a situation in a way congenial to their aspirations and needs. Thus politics is both a source of conflict and a mode of activity that seeks to resolve conflicts and promote readjustment.

We can summarize this discussion by saying that the subject-matter of political philosophy has consisted in large measure of the attempt to render politics compatible with the requirements of order. The history of political philosophy has been a dialogue on this theme; sometimes the vision of the philosopher has been of an order purged of politics, and he has produced a political philosophy from which politics, and a good deal of what has been meant by political, have been expunged; other times, he has permitted such a wide scope to politics that the case for order appears to have been neglected.

V. The Vocabulary of Political Philosophy

One important characteristic of a body of knowledge is that it is conveyed through a rather specialized language, by which we mean that words are used in certain special senses and that certain concepts and categories are treated as fundamental to an understanding of the subject. This aspect of a body of knowledge is its language or vocabulary. To a large extent, any specialized language represents an artificial creation because it is self-consciously constructed to express meanings and definitions as precisely as possible. For example, mathematicians have developed a highly complex system of signs and symbols, as well as a recognized set of conventions governing their manipulation; physicists, too, employ a number of special definitions to facilitate explanation and prediction. The language of the political theorist has its own peculiarities. Some of these have been pointed out by critics who have complained of the vagueness of traditional political concepts as contrasted with the precision characteristic of scientific discourse, or they have drawn equally unfavorable parallels between the low predictive quality of political theories and the great success of scientific theories in this respect.

Without wishing to add one more contribution to the dreary controversy over whether political science is, or can be, a true science, some misconceptions may be avoided by stating briefly what political theorists have tried to express through

their specialized vocabulary. We might begin by quoting a few characteristic statements selected from some political philosophers:

> Security for man is impossible unless it be conjoined with power. (Machiavelli)

> There can be no true Allegiance and there must remain perpetual seeds of Resistance against a power that is built upon such an unnatural Foundation, as that of fear and terrour. (Halifax)

> As soon as man enters into a state of society he loses the sense of his weakness; equality ceases, and then commences the state of war. (Montesquieu)

Admittedly the language and concepts contained in the above statements are so vague as to defy the rigorous testing prescribed by scientific experiments. In the strict sense, concepts like "the state of nature" or "civil society" are not even subject to observation. Yet it would be wrong to conclude that these and other concepts of political theory are deliberately employed to avoid describing the world of political experience. The sentence quoted from Machiavelli alludes to the fact that life and possessions tend to become insecure when the governors of society lack the power to enforce law and order. "Security," on the other hand, is a kind of shorthand expression for the fact that most men prefer a condition of assured expectations for their lives and property. Taken as a whole, the sentence from Machiavelli states a generalization consisting of two key concepts, power and security, both of which "contain," so to speak, a common-sense understanding of their practical implications. Thus security implies certain activities; namely, that the members of the society can use and enjoy their possessions with the full knowledge that these will not be taken away forcibly. Similarly, the exercise of effective power will be accompanied by certain familiar actions, such as declaring laws, punishments, and so forth. What is not so apparent to common sense, however, is the connection between power and security, and it is this the political theorist seeks to establish. The use of concepts and a special language enable him to bring together a variety of common experiences and practices, such as those connected with the enjoyment of security and the exercise of power, and to show their interconnections.

Although these generalizations may state important things, they do not permit exact predictions in the way that a law of physics will. The concepts are far too general for this, and the evidence would be too flimsy to support any of the assertions quoted earlier. This is not to say that it is impossible to formulate rigorous propositions concerning politics which could be subjected to empirical testing. It is only suggested that these are not the sort of statements that have traditionally occupied the attention of political theorists. Therefore, instead of assigning low marks to the theorists for a badly executed enterprise which they never entertained, it would be more useful to inquire whether the political theorist was

attempting something similar to prediction but less rigorous. Instead of predic-
tions, I would suggest first that theorists have been intent on posting warnings.
Machiavelli cautions that in the absence of an effective ruling authority there will
be insecurity; Halifax, that an authority that places excessive reliance on fear will
eventually provoke resistance. Although each of these admonitions bears some
similarity to a prediction, it differs in two important respects. In the first place, a
warning implies an unpleasant or undesirable consequence, while a scientific pre-
diction is neutral. Secondly, a warning is usually made by a person who feels some
involvement with the party or person being warned; a warning, in short, tokens a
commitment that is lacking in predictions. In keeping with this function of post-
ing warnings, the language of political theory contains many concepts designed
to express warning signals: disorder, revolution, conflict, and instability are some
of them.

   Political theory, however, has involved more than the prognostication of disas-
ter. It deals also in possibilities; it tries to state the necessary or sufficient condi-
tions for attaining ends which, for one reason or another, are deemed good or
desirable. Thus Machiavelli's statement contained both a warning and a possibil-
ity: power was the condition of achieving security, but ineffective power would
open the way for insecurity.

   One obvious objection to the line of argument above is that it places the po-
litical theorist in a position of being able to advance propositions and to employ
concepts that cannot be adjudged true or false by a rigorous empirical standard.
This objection is readily admitted insofar as it pertains to a large number of the
statements and concepts contained in most political theories. It is not, however,
a conclusive objection, because it assumes that an empirical test affords the only
method for determining whether or not a statement is meaningful. Rather than
dwell on the scientific shortcomings of political theories, it might be more fruit-
ful to consider political theory as belonging to a different form of discourse. Fol-
lowing this suggestion we can adopt for our purposes a proposal advanced by
Carnap.[6] He has suggested the term "explication" to cover certain expressions
used both in everyday speech and scientific discussion. Explication employs
meanings that are less precise than those ideally suited for rigorous discussion, yet
they are handy and, when redefined and rendered more precise, can perform
extremely useful service in a theory. Examples of such words would be "law,"
"cause," and "truth." Inasmuch as these words are advanced as proposals, they
cannot be qualified as true or false. The language of political theory abounds with
concepts that are used to explicate certain problems. Frequently they are words
that are similar to those in ordinary usage, but they have been redefined and
touched up to make them more serviceable. The word that the theorist uses may
be guided by common usage, but it is not necessarily restricted by the common
meaning. For example, Aristotle's definition of a good citizen as one who had

both the knowledge and the capacity for ruling and being ruled contained much that was familiar to Athenians. At the same time, the issues that Aristotle was seeking to clarify required that he refashion or reconstruct the accepted meanings. This same procedure has been followed in the formation of other key concepts in the language of political theory; concepts like "authority," "obligation," and "justice" retain some contact with common meanings and experience, yet they have been refashioned to meet the requirements of systematic discourse.

This point has been emphasized at some length in order to bring out the connections between the concepts of political theory and political experience. This connection suggests that a political theory is not an arbitrary construction, because its concepts are linked at several points with experience. A systematic theory, such as the one formulated by Hobbes, consists of a network of interrelated and (ideally) consistent concepts; none of the concepts is identical with experience, yet none are wholly severed from it. Perhaps the whole procedure may be better understood if a genetic explanation is introduced. Political theory forms no exception to the general principle that most specialized vocabularies in the early stages of their development rely on the vocabulary of everyday language to express their meanings. The concepts of early Greek political thought, for example, could be understood in reference to ordinary usage and hardly went beyond. With the systematization of political thinking, as exemplified by Plato and Aristotle, the language of political theory became more specialized and abstract. The language of everyday conversation was modified and redefined so that the theorist might state his ideas with a precision, consistency, and scope that ordinary usage would not allow. Yet a connecting thread persisted between the polished concept and the old usages. It has often been pointed out that the concept of justice (*diké*) underwent a long evolution before it became a political concept. In Homeric times, it had carried several meanings, such as to "show," "point out," or to indicate "the way things normally happen." In Hesiod's *Works and Days,* it is appropriated for political use. Hesiod warned against the prince who rendered "crooked" *diké,* and he reminded men that they were different from the animals who were ignorant of the rules of *diké.*[7] In the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, the concept of justice was formulated in more abstract fashion and could hardly be said to be identical with common meanings. Yet it is worth noting that in Plato's *Republic* the discussion of justice was initiated by having several speakers advance common notions of justice. Although some of these were discarded, others were treated as insufficient, which is to say that they were incorporated in modified form into the more comprehensive and abstract definition of justice which we associate with the dialogue. In this way, Plato constructed a concept of justice that was linked at many points with a tradition of common usage.

Although the vocabulary of the political theorist carries the traces of everyday language and experience, it is largely the product of the theorist's creative efforts.

The concepts that constitute his vocabulary are shaped to fit the over-all structure of meanings of his theory. This structure of meanings contains not only political concepts, such as law, authority, and order, but also a subtle blend of philosophical and political ideas, a concealed or latent metaphysic. Every political theory that has aimed at a measure of comprehensiveness has adopted some implicit or explicit propositions about "time," "space," "reality," or "energy." Although most of these are the traditional categories of metaphysicians, the political theorist does not state his propositions or formulate his concepts in the same manner as the metaphysician. The concern of the theorist has been with space and time as categories referring not to the world of natural phenomena, but to the world of political phenomena; that is, to the world of political nature. If he cared to be precise and explicit in these matters, he would write of "political" space, "political" time, and so forth. Admittedly, few if any writers have employed this form of terminology. Rather, the political theorist has used synonyms; instead of political space he may have written about the city, the state, or the nation; instead of time, he may have referred to history or tradition; instead of energy, he may have spoken about power. The complex of these categories we can call a political metaphysic.[8]

The metaphysical categories resident in political theory can be illustrated by the notion of political space. One might begin by pointing out how this had its origin in the ancient world in the evolution of national consciousness. The Hebraic idea of a separate people, the Greek distinction between Hellene and barbarian, the Roman pride in *Romanitas,* the mediaeval notion of Christendom, all contributed to sharpen the sense of distinctive identity which then became associated with a determinate geographic area and a particular culture.

But the concept of political space turned on more than a distinction between the "inside" of a specific and differentiated context of actions and events and an "outside" that was largely unknown and undifferentiated. It involved also the crucial question of the arrangements for settling the problems arising out of the fact that a large number of human beings, possessing a common cultural identity, occupied the same determinate area. If for the moment we were to suspend our sophisticated notions of a political society, with its impressive hierarchies of power, its rationalized institutional arrangements, and its established grooves through which behavior smoothly runs, and think of these as constituting a determinate area, a "political space," where the plans, ambitions, and actions of individuals and groups incessantly jar against each other—colliding, blocking, coalescing, separating—we could better appreciate the ingenious role of these arrangements in reducing frictions. By a variety of means, a society seeks to structure its space: by systems of rights and duties, class and social distinctions, legal and extra-legal restraints and inhibitions, favors and punishments, permissions and tabus. These arrangements serve to mark out paths along which human mo-

tions can proceed harmlessly or beneficially. We can find this sense of structured space reflected in most political theories. It was strikingly illustrated by Hobbes:

> For whatsoever is so tyed, or environed, as it cannot move, but within a certain space, which space is determined by the opposition of some externall body, we say it hath not liberty to go further . . . The Liberty of a Subject lyeth therefore only in those things, which in regulating their actions, the Soveraign hath praetermitted: such is the Liberty to buy, and sell, and otherwise contract with one another . . .[9]

In a similar vein Locke defended the utility of legal restraints: "that ill deserves the name of confinement which hedges us in only from bogs and precipices."[10]

As we have inferred above, political space becomes a problem when human energies cannot be controlled by existing arrangements. During the Reformation and its aftermath, it was the vitalities of religion that threatened the structural principles fashioned by mediaeval political societies. In the eighteenth century, it was the ambitions of the entrepreneur that were cramped by the elaborate network of mercantilism. "We have no need of favour—we require only a secure and open path."[11] The theories of the Physiocrats, Adam Smith, and Bentham responded by drawing new avenues and redefining the spatial dimension. If one wished to continue this analysis, it could be shown how Malthus called into question the spatial theory of the liberal economists by warning of the rising pressures stemming from the growth in population. It might also be possible to interpret the great revolutionary movements of the nineteenth century, such as Marxism, as articulate challenges to, as well as a demand for the reorganization of, the space-structure created by bourgeois industrial society. Or a novel, like Thomas Mann's *Dr. Faustus,* might be taken as representative of the viewpoint of the generation at the turn of the last century and its frustrating sense of suffocation at the restraints imposed by national and international arrangements:

> A new break-through seemed due . . . We were bursting with the consciousness that this was Germany's century . . . it was our turn to put our stamp on the world and be its leader; . . . that now, at the end of the bourgeois epoch begun some hundred and twenty years before, the world was to renew itself in our sign . . .[12]

VI. Vision and Political Imagination

Our discussion of political space provides a clue to another aspect of political philosophy. The varied conceptions of space indicate that each theorist has viewed the problem from a different perspective, a particular angle of vision. This suggests that political philosophy constitutes a form of "seeing" political phenomena and that the way in which the phenomena will be visualized depends in large measure on where the viewer "stands." There are two distinct but related senses

of "vision" that I wish to discuss; both of them have played an important part in political theory. Vision is commonly used to mean an act of perception. Thus we say that we see the speaker addressing a political rally. In this sense, "vision" is a descriptive report about an object or an event. But "vision" is also used in another sense, as when one talks about an aesthetic vision or a religious vision. In this second meaning, it is the imaginative, not the descriptive, element that is uppermost.

Ever since the scientific revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, this first type of "objective" vision, devoted to dispassionate reportage, has been commonly associated with scientific observation. It is rather widely acknowledged now that this conception of science errs by underestimating the role that imagination plays in the construction of scientific theories. Nevertheless, there remains a persistent belief that the scientist is akin to a highly skilled reporter in that he strives to provide a verbatim report of "reality." This notion has been repeatedly translated into a criticism of political theorists. Spinoza, for example, accused political theorists of being satirists. They assume, he wrote, that "theory is supposed to be at variance with practice . . . They conceive of men, not as they are, but as they themselves would like them to be." Although Spinoza may have overlooked the point that many political theorists have seriously tried to look at political facts as they "really" are, he was quite right in saying that the picture of society given by most political theorists is not a "real" or literal one. But the question is, are these pictures in the nature of satires? Why is it that most political writers, even avowedly scientific ones like Comte, have felt constrained to envision a right pattern for the political order? What did they hope to gain in the way of theoretical insight by adding an imaginative dimension to their representation? What, in short, did they conceive the function of political theory to be?

We can easily dispose of the possibility that political theorists were unaware that they were injecting imagination or fancy into their theories. There are too many testimonials to their self-awareness on this score.[13] Rather, they believed that fancy, exaggeration, even extravagance, sometimes permit us to see things that are not otherwise apparent. The imaginative element has played a role in political philosophy similar to that Coleridge assigned to imagination in poetry, an "esemplastic" power that "forms all into one graceful intelligent whole."[14] When Hobbes, for example, depicted a multitude of men self-consciously agreeing to form a political society, he knew quite well that such an act had never "really" occurred. But by means of this fanciful picture, he hoped to assist his readers in seeing some of the basic presuppositions on which a political order rests. Hobbes was aware, as most political philosophers have been, that fanciful statements are not of the same status as propositions that seek to prove or disprove. Fancy neither proves nor disproves; it seeks, instead, to illuminate, to help us become wiser about political things.

At the same time, most political thinkers have believed imagination to be a

necessary element in theorizing because they have recognized that, in order to render political phenomena intellectually manageable, they must be presented in what we can call "a corrected fullness." Theorists have given us pictures of political life in miniature, pictures in which what is extraneous to the theorist's purpose has been deleted. The necessity for doing this lies in the fact that political theorists, like the rest of mankind, are prevented from "seeing" all political things at first hand. The impossibility of direct observation compels the theorist to epitomize a society by abstracting certain phenomena and providing interconnections where none can be seen. Imagination is the theorist's means for understanding a world he can never "know" in an intimate way.

If the imaginative element in political thought were merely a methodological convenience which enabled the theorist to handle his materials more effectively, it would hardly warrant the extended attention we have given it. Imagination has involved far more than the construction of models. It has been the medium for expressing the fundamental values of the theorist; it has been the means by which the political theorist has sought to transcend history. The imaginative vision to which I am referring here was displayed at its artistic best by Plato. In his picture of the political community, guided by the divine art of the statesman, reaching out towards the idea of the Good, Plato exhibited a form of vision essentially architectonic. An architectonic vision is one wherein the political imagination attempts to mould the totality of political phenomena to accord with some vision of the Good that lies outside the political order. The impulse towards the total ordering of political phenomena has taken many forms in the course of Western political thought. In the case of Plato, the architectonic impulse assumed an essentially aesthetic cast: ". . . the true lawgiver, like an archer, aims only at that on which some eternal beauty is always attending . . ."[15] Something of the same quality reappeared in the finely chiseled system of Aquinas where the political order was allotted a precise niche in the soaring cathedral that was all of creation. At other times, the ordering vision has been an aggressively religious one, as occurred in seventeenth-century England when the millenarian sects dreamed of a resplendent New Jerusalem to replace the hopelessly corrupt order then existing. Or, again, the vision may take its origin in a view of history like that of Hegel, where the phenomena of politics acquire a temporal depth, an historical dimension, as they are swept up into an overriding purpose that shapes them towards an ultimate end. In more recent times, fittingly enough, the outside vision has frequently been colored by economic considerations. Under this view, political phenomena are to be harnessed to the demands of economic productivity, and the political order becomes the instrument of technological advance:

> . . . The sole aim of our thoughts and our exertions must be the kind of organization most favorable to industry . . . The kind of organization favorable to industry

consists in a government in which the political power has no more force or activity than is necessary to see that useful work is not hindered.[16]

Whatever the form manifested by the architectonic impulse, its result has been to lend differing dimensions to the perspectives of political philosophy: dimensions of aesthetic beauty, religious truth, historical time, scientific exactitude, and economic advance. All of these dimensions possess a futurist quality, a projection of the political order into a time that is yet to be. This has been true not only of political theories that have been avowedly reformist or even revolutionary, but of conservative theories as well. The conservatism of Burke, for example, consisted in the attempt to project a continuous past into the future, and even a confessed reactionary, like de Maistre, sought to recapture a "lost past" in the hope that it could be restored in the future.

For most theorists, the imaginative reordering of political life that takes place in theorizing is not confined to helping us to understand politics. Contrary to what Spinoza argued, most political thinkers have believed that precisely because political philosophy was "political," it was committed to lessening the gap between the possibilities grasped through political imagination and the actualities of political existence. Plato recognized that political action was highly purposive in character, that it was largely conscious and deliberate; to "take counsel" before acting was seen to be a distinguishing requirement of political activity, as characteristic of Homeric kings as of Athenian statesmen. But to act intelligently and nobly demanded a perspective wider than the immediate situation for which the action was intended; intelligence and nobility were not *ad hoc* qualities, but aspects of a more comprehensive vision of things. This more comprehensive vision was provided by thinking about the political society in its corrected fullness, not as it is but as it might be. Precisely because political theory pictured society in an exaggerated, "unreal" way, it was a necessary complement to action. Precisely because action involved intervention into existing affairs, it sorely needed a perspective of tantalizing possibilities.

This transcending form of vision has not been shared by the scientist until modern times.[17] When the early scientific theorists described with poetic overtones the harmony of the spheres, their vision lacked the essential element present in political philosophy: the ideal of an order subject to human control and one that could be transfigured through a combination of thought and action.

VII. Political Concepts and Political Phenomena

The exercise of imagination in political theory has ruled out the portrayal of the political order in terms of a representational likeness, but it has not released theorizing from the limitations inherent in the categories employed by the theorist.

Every political philosophy, no matter how sophisticated or varied its categories, represents a necessarily limited perspective from which it views the phenomena of political nature. The statements and propositions that it produces are, in Cassirer's phrase, "abbreviations of reality" which do not exhaust the vast range of political experience. The concepts and categories of a political philosophy may be likened to a net that is cast out to capture political phenomena, which are then drawn in and sorted in a way that seems meaningful and relevant to the particular thinker. But in the whole procedure, he has selected a particular net and he has cast it in a chosen place.

We can observe this process at work by turning to an historical illustration. To a philosopher like Thomas Hobbes, who lived during the political turmoil of seventeenth-century England, the urgent task of political philosophy was to define the conditions making for a stable political order. In this respect, he was not unique among his contemporaries, but being a rigorously systematic thinker, he far surpassed them in the thoroughness with which he explored the conditions for peace. Consequently, this category of "peace" or "order" became in his philosophy a magnetic center which drew into its orbit only those phenomena that Hobbes felt had some relevancy to the problem of order. There was much that he missed or barely noted: the influence of social classes, problems of foreign relations, matters of governmental administration (in the narrow sense).

Thus the use of certain political categories brings into play a principle of "speculative exclusiveness" whereby some aspects of political phenomena and some political concepts are advanced for consideration, while others are allowed to languish. As Whitehead has said, "Each mode of consideration is a sort of searchlight elucidating some of the facts and retreating the remainder into an omitted background."[18] Selectivity, however, is not solely a matter of choice or of the idiosyncrasies of a particular philosopher. A philosopher's thought is influenced to a great extent by the problems agitating his society. If he wishes to gain the attention of his contemporaries, he must address himself to their problems and accept the terms of debate imposed by those concerns.

VIII. A Tradition of Discourse

Of all the restraints upon the political philosopher's freedom to speculate, none has been so powerful as the tradition of political philosophy itself. In the act of philosophizing, the theorist enters into a debate the terms of which have largely been set beforehand. Many preceding philosophers have been at work collecting and systematizing the words and concepts of political discourse. In the course of time, this collection has been further refined and transmitted as a cultural legacy; these concepts have been taught and discussed; they have been pondered and frequently altered. They have become, in brief, an inherited body of knowledge.

When they are handed down from one age to another, they act as conservatizing agencies within the theory of a particular philosopher, preserving the insights, experience, and refinements of the past, and compelling those who would participate in the Western political dialogue to abide by certain rules and usages.[19] The tenacity of the tradition has been such that even the highly individualistic rebels, like Hobbes, Bentham, and Marx, came to accept so much of the tradition that they succeeded neither in destroying it nor in putting it on an entirely new basis. Instead, they only broadened it. One of the most remarkable testimonials to the tenacity of traditions was supplied by a writer who is often taken as one of its arch-enemies, Niccolò Machiavelli. Writing during his enforced retirement from public life, he gives a vivid picture of what it means to participate in the perennial dialogue:

> In the evening, I return to my house, and go into my study. At the door I take off the clothes I have worn all day, mud spotted and dirty, and put on regal and 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 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 four hours I feel no boredom and forget every worry; I do not fear poverty, and death does not terrify me. I give myself completely over to the ancients. And because Dante says that there is no knowledge unless one retains what one has read, I have written down the profit I have gained from their conversation, and composed a little book *De Principatibus,* in which I go as deep as I can into reflections on this subject, debating what a principate is, what the species are, how they are gained, how they are kept, and why they are lost.[20]

A continuous tradition of political thought presents many advantages both to the political thinker and to the political actor. It gives them the sense of traveling in a familiar world where the landscape has already been explored; and where it has not, there still exists a wide variety of suggestions concerning alternative routes. It allows, too, for communication between contemporaries on the basis of a common language even when translated into different tongues. The concepts and categories of politics serve as a convenient "shorthand" or symbolic language which enables one user to understand what another is saying when he refers to "civil rights," "arbitrary power," or "sovereignty." In this way, too, social experience can be shared and social cohesion enhanced. A tradition of political philosophy also contributes to the endless task of accommodating new political experience to the existing scheme of things. A whole book might be written showing the success that political reformers have achieved when they have been able to convince men that proposed changes were really continuities perfectly in accord with existing ideas and practices. Finally, it should be mentioned that a tradition of political thought

provides a connecting link between past and present; the facts that succeeding political thinkers have generally adhered to a common political vocabulary and have accepted a core of problems as being properly the subject of political inquiry have served to make the political thought of earlier centuries comprehensible, as well as exciting. By contrast, the discontinuities evident in scientific fields make it quite unlikely that a modern scientist would repair to mediaeval science, for example, either for support or inspiration. This, of course, has no bearing on the alleged superiority of scientific over philosophical inquiry. It is mentioned merely to point out that the tradition of political thought is not so much a tradition of discovery as one of meanings extended over time.

IX. Tradition and Innovation

In emphasizing the speculative horizon that bounds each political thinker, it is essential not to ignore the highly original and creative responses that have occurred. By viewing common political experience from a slightly different angle than the prevailing one, by framing an old question in a novel way, by rebelling against the conservative tendencies of thought and language, particular thinkers have helped to unfasten established ways of thought and to thrust on their contemporaries and posterity the necessity of rethinking political experience. Thus when Plato asked, "What is justice and what is its relationship to the political community?" a fresh series of problems was created and new lines of political speculation were opened. The same was true of the opening sentence of the *Social Contract* and the closing sentences of the *Communist Manifesto.*

Novelty is not solely a function of the positive and assertive elements of a theorist. The innovations in thought associated with such men as Marsilius, Hobbes, Rousseau, and Marx came fully as much from what they rejected and silently omitted at the level of fundamental unifying assumptions as from what they advanced as new and different. Marsilius was not being original when he roundly condemned the papacy, nor was Hobbes when he underscored the role of fear; and, as Lenin once testified, most of Marx's leading ideas could be traced to previous writers. Whatever the truth of Whitehead's dictum that "creativity is the principle of *novelty*,"[21] in the history of political theory, genius has not always taken the form of unprecedented originality. Sometimes, it has consisted of a more systematic or sharpened emphasis of an existing idea. In this sense, genius is imaginative recovery. At other times, it has taken an existing idea and severed it from the connective thread that makes an aggregate of ideas an organic complex. A connective thread or unifying principle not only integrates particular ideas into a general theory, but also apportions emphasis among them. If the unifying principle should be displaced, propositions within the complex which theretofore were commonplace or innocuous suddenly become radical in their

implications. Thus there was all the difference in the world between saying, as Aquinas had, that the temporal ruler ought not to be under the coercive force (*vis coactiva*) of the law, and asserting, as Marsilius did, that the power of the political order ought not to be hindered by any human institution. The one statement occurred in a completely integrated complex wherein religion was considered as directive over all other human activities and the Church, as the institutional guardian, was established to protect and advance the unifying assumption of the Christian religion. Marsilius' statement, on the other hand, formed part of a systematic argument which, although it left untouched the content of Christian doctrine, aimed at reducing the independence of its institutional guardian, thereby releasing the political order from any external check.

When a unifying assumption is displaced, the system of ideas is thrown out of balance; subordinate ideas become prominent; primary ideas recede into secondary importance. This is because a political theory consists of a set of concepts—such as order, peace, justice, law, etc.—bound together, as we have said, by a kind of notational principle that assigns accents and modulations. Any displacement or significant alteration of the notational principle or any exaggerated emphasis on one or a few concepts results in a different kind of theory.

The originality of a particular political philosopher is assisted from another direction. Just as history never exactly repeats itself, so the political experience of one age is never precisely the same as that of another. Hence, in the play between political concepts and changing political experience, there is bound to be a modification in the categories of political philosophy. In part this accounts for the frequency with which we encounter the spectacle of two political theorists located at different points in history, using the same concepts but meaning very different things by them: each is responding to a different set of phenomena. The result is that each important political philosophy has something of the unique about it as well as something of the traditional.

This can be summed up in another way by saying that most formal political speculation has operated simultaneously at two different levels. At one level every political philosopher has concerned himself with what he thinks to be a vital problem of his day. Few writers have surpassed Aquinas in appearing to view political problems *sub specie aeternitatis,* yet he managed to discuss the issue most agitating his contemporaries, that of the proper relationship between spiritual and secular powers. No political thinker concerns himself exclusively with the past any more than he seeks to speak solely to the distant future; the price in both cases would be unintelligibility. This is only to say that every political philosopher is to some extent *engagé,* and every work of political philosophy is to some extent a tract for the time. At another level, however, many political writings have been intended as something more than *livres de circonstance*; they have been meant as a contribution to the continuing dialogue of Western political philoso-

phy. This explains why so often we find one political thinker belaboring another who has long since died. John Adams, in *A Defense of the Constitutions of America* (1787), could still work himself into a bad temper over the ideas of the relatively obscure seventeenth-century pamphleteer Marchamont Needham. Again, John Locke's *Two Treatises of Civil Government* is commonly used by every textbook writer as an example of political literature contrived to rationalize a particular event of his own day, the Glorious Revolution of 1688. Yet a careful reader cannot fail to see that Locke had also tried to refute Thomas Hobbes, whose writings had been largely concerned with another revolution which had taken place a half-century earlier. Finally, one may point to the storm of controversy aroused in recent years by Karl Popper's polemic against Plato.

It might be said that these illustrations are misleading in that the political thinkers in question have not been concerned to contribute to the tradition of Western political speculation, but rather a goodly share of their energy has been devoted to refuting certain ideas that appeared to them to possess a persistent and contemporaneous influence. The reply to this is simple: isn't this, by admission, the very definition of a political tradition, "a persistent and contemporaneous influence"? Doesn't a contribution usually take the form of a "correction" of a traditional error without seeking the overthrow of the whole? To put it another way, when a critical political thinker turns to analyze a persisting idea from the past, he involves himself in a rather complex process. As a thinker, who is himself situated at one point in time-space, he becomes engaged with ideas which are, in turn, reflective of a past time-space situation. Moreover, the ideas in question are similarly related to previous political thought and its situations. In addressing himself to persisting ideas from the past, a political philosopher unavoidably infects his own thought with past ideas and situations that have been similarly implicated with their own precedents. In this sense, the past is never wholly superseded; it is constantly being recaptured at the very moment that human thought is seemingly preoccupied with the unique problems of its own time. The result is, to borrow Guthrie's phrase, a "coexistence of diverse elements,"[22] partly new, partly inherited, with the old being distilled into the new, and the new being influenced by the old. Thus the Western tradition of political thought has exhibited two somewhat contradictory tendencies: a tendency towards an infinite regress to the past and a tendency towards cumulation. Or if the latter sounds too much like the idea of mechanical progress, we can say that there has been a tendency towards acquiring new dimensions of insight.

One way to illustrate these two tendencies would be to take the classical idea of *fortuna,* or chance, and see how it was critically handled, first by St. Augustine and then by Calvin, who lived more than a thousand years later and yet had been deeply influenced by Augustine's thought. To Thucydides, Polybius and the Roman historians generally, *fortuna* had stood for the unpredictable element in human

history, the intrusion that upsets the best laid plans and calculations.[23] With sure instinct Augustine singled out this idea as being representative of the classical spirit that Christianity had to overcome. He argued that this notion had been superseded by the Christian knowledge of a God who guided both nature and history towards a revealed end.[24] But, as Calvin acutely noted later, the Christian notion of a divine providence, far from eliminating *fortuna,* had really incorporated it. For unpredictable *fortuna,* it had substituted inscrutable Providence.[25] Yet Calvin's concern in this matter was not to help Augustine refute the classical pagans, but to attack the Renaissance humanists of his day who had revived the same classical idea that Augustine had attacked in the first place. In this example, we see two parallel continuities, the classical-Renaissance notion of *fortuna* and the Augustinian-Calvinist rejection of it in the name of a higher *fortuna.* Beginning with Augustine, each of the participants in the dialogue had built on his predecessors, and each had added a distinctive element, a different dimension. The moral of all this is contained in the lines from Eliot:

> Time present and time past
> Are both perhaps present in time future,
> And time future contained in time past.
> If all time is eternally present
> All time is unredeemable.
> . . . And do not call it fixity,
> Where past and future are gathered . . .[26]

The ideas and concepts that have been refined over the centuries ought not to be viewed as a fund of absolute political wisdom, but rather as a continuously evolving grammar and vocabulary to facilitate communication and to orient the understanding. This does not mean that the legacy of ideas contains only truths of no more than passing validity. It does mean that the validity of an idea cannot be divorced from its effectiveness as a form of communication.

The functions performed by a tradition of political thought also provide a justification for the study of the historical development of that tradition. In studying the writings of Plato, Locke, or Marx, we are in reality familiarizing ourselves with a fairly stable vocabulary and a set of categories that help to orient us towards a particular world, the world of political phenomena. But more than this, since the history of political philosophy is, as we shall see, an intellectual development wherein successive thinkers have added new dimensions to the analysis and understanding of politics, an inquiry into that development is not so much an antiquarian venture as a form of political education.