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## A History of Political Science: How? What? Why?

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BRITISH AND AMERICAN political scientists recently have shown an unusual degree of interest in the history of their discipline. The dawn of a new millennium prompted leading figures in the British study of politics to reflect on their past and to situate themselves in relation to it.<sup>1</sup> In America, work on the history of political science has appeared off and on for some time, but the last decade has witnessed a positive flourishing of such studies. These studies include some in which luminaries in the discipline look back on their teachers and predecessors.<sup>2</sup> They also include a distinct subgenre of historical studies written from within the discipline, but by scholars outside its limelight.<sup>3</sup> The past of political science has attracted further attention recently from intellectual historians outside of the discipline in both Britain and America.<sup>4</sup> *Modern Political Science*

<sup>1</sup> Jack Hayward, Brian Barry, and Archie Brown, eds., *The British Study of Politics in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>2</sup> For example, see Ira Katznelson, *Desolation and Enlightenment: Political Knowledge after Total War, Totalitarianism, and the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

<sup>3</sup> James Farr and Raymond Seidelman, eds., *Discipline and History: Political Science in the United States* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993); John G. Gunnell, *The Descent of Political Theory: The Genealogy of an American Vocation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); James Farr, John S. Dryzek, and Stephen T. Leonard, eds., *Political Science in History: Research Programs and Political Traditions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Brian Schmidt, *The Political Discourse of Anarchy: A Disciplinary History of International Relations* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998); Ido Oren, *Our Enemies and US: America's Rivalries and the Making of Political Science* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003); John G. Gunnell, *Imagining the American Polity: Political Science and the Discourse of Democracy* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> Dorothy Ross, *The Origins of American Social Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Mark C. Smith, *Social Science in the Crucible: The American Debate over Objectivity and Purpose, 1918–1941* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994); Julia Stapleton, *Political Intellectuals and Public Identities in Britain since 1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001); S. M. Amadae, *Rationalizing Capitalist Democracy: The Cold War Origins of Rational Choice Liberalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,

brings together political scientists and intellectual historians from both sides of the Atlantic to pursue a comparative and transnational account of the development of political inquiry in Britain and America since the late-nineteenth century. In doing so, it not only explores “what” happened in the history of political science, it also embodies a distinctive analysis of “how” and “why” we might study this history.

The recent attention given to the history of political science is both the temporal companion to and in some tension with the avowedly historical approaches that are increasingly popular within political science itself. For several decades now, as we discuss more fully in chapter 12, various neostatists and institutionalists have presented themselves as offering a historically sensitive alternative to the formalist excesses of certain variants of behavioralism or, more recently, of rational choice theory. While *Modern Political Science* shares these scholars’ concern to understand the present in light of the past that produced it, beyond this rather generic overlap parallels give way to significant differences of approach. Indeed, this volume is, in part, motivated by a worry that avowedly historical approaches in contemporary political science run the risk of naturalizing one particular conception of historical inquiry by proceeding as if their own way of distinguishing “historical” from “ahistorical” studies was obvious and uncontested. Even worse, these approaches can appear to be adopting this conception simply for their own polemical purposes, without the aid of extended reflection upon the practice and purpose of historical inquiry and its relation to social science. *Modern Political Science* attempts, then, to locate the self-described “historical institutionalism” as a contingent, recently emergent approach that is but one of multiple ways of bringing the past to bear on the study of politics. More generally, it attempts to recall the plurality and range of approaches to the past that have, at one time or another, claimed the loyalty of political scientists in Britain and America.

### How to Study the History of Political Science

*Modern Political Science* draws on developments within the history of ideas that have transformed the ways in which we might think about disciplinary history.<sup>5</sup> It is indebted to a radical historicism that stands

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2003); Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> Of course there are not only other strands in the history of ideas very different from radical historicism, but also differences among those who belong within this one strand. We believe, however, that this broad strand best explains the shared features of the essays in this volume, which is why we invoke it here. Prominent examples of methodological writings we would include as part of radical historicism include Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of*

in contrast to the naturalizing perspective from which political scientists commonly view their discipline and its past. The naturalizing perspective understands political science as constituted by a pregiven empirical domain—politics—and a shared intellectual agenda, to make this domain the object of a cumulative and instrumentally useful science. It thus encourages a retrospective vision that focuses, first, on the establishment of an autonomous discipline, free from the clutches of history, law, and philosophy, and, second, on charting progress made in the subsequent development of that discipline.<sup>6</sup>

Radical historicism, in contrast, has made intellectual historians and political theorists wary of postulating a given empirical domain or a shared intellectual agenda as the defining feature of any putative discipline. It has turned the constitution of a discipline from an assumption or a fulfillment into a problem. “Disciplines are unstable compounds,” as Stefan Collini recently put it, for “what is called a ‘discipline’ is in fact a complex set of practices, whose unity, such as it is, is given as much by historical accident and institutional convenience as by a coherent intellectual rationale.”<sup>7</sup> The creation of an apparently given empirical domain and shared intellectual agenda thus appears as the contingent victory of particular intellectual traditions, where these traditions legitimate themselves precisely by telling the history of the discipline as if their own assumptions were unproblematic. For radical historicists, the history of political science might unpack the contingent origins of dominant traditions, recover alternative traditions that get left out of other histories, or question the naturalizing histories by which practitioners of a discipline legitimate their own approaches as contributing to progress in the study of politics. Such radical historicist endeavors do not seek to invert naturalizing narratives of intellectual progress into despairing narratives of stagnation or decline. Rather, they typically aspire to interpret the history of

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*Knowledge* (London: Tavistock, 1972); and the essays of Skinner collected in James Tully, ed., *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and His Critics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988). Examples of studies of the history of political science that exhibit a debt to radical historicism include Dario Castiglione and Iain Hampsher-Monk, eds., *The History of Political Thought in National Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); and Stefan Collini, Donald Winch, and John Burrow, *That Noble Science of Politics: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Intellectual History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, William H. Riker, “The Two-Party System and Duverger’s Law: An Essay on the History of Political Science,” *American Political Science Review* 76 (1982): 753–66; Gabriel A. Almond, “Political Science: The History of the Discipline,” in *A New Handbook of Political Science*, ed. Robert E. Goodin and Hans-Dieter Klingemann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 50–96.

<sup>7</sup> Stefan Collini, “Postscript: Disciplines, Canons, and Publics; The History of ‘The History of Political Thought’ in Comparative Perspective,” in Castiglione and Hampsher-Monk, *Political Thought in National Context*, 298.

political science in ways that bypass the narrative options of progress, stagnation, or decline.

The radical historicism that informs *Modern Political Science* belongs within a tradition that has played a recurring role in the human sciences during the twentieth century. This tradition arose as a distinctive perspective following on a heightening of the concern with context and change that characterizes historicism more generally. Where the developmental form of historicism prevalent in the nineteenth century sought to bring particular contexts and changes together as parts of a larger historical whole, radical historicists worry that such synthetic efforts tame the contingency of human history: they are cautious of framing particular historical developments in relation to any overarching category, let alone of framing them in terms of an apparently natural or progressive movement. Radical historicists thus break with those grand narratives, often reminiscent of a notion of providence, by which developmental historicists seek to reconcile an attention to change and context with a desire to locate particular developments in a meaningful and progressive whole.

Radical historicism's wariness toward overarching categories and grand narratives raises the question: What sort of aggregate concepts, if any, should we use when studying the past? It draws our attention, in particular, to the dangers of an excessive focus on the idea of a discipline.<sup>8</sup> Disciplinary histories here risk privileging the category of the discipline as if its institutional presence—the American Political Science Association or membership of departments of Political Science—demarcates boundaries to the flow of ideas or explains the ways in which ideas have developed within such boundaries. In contrast, radical historicism encourages us to disaggregate the institutions of a discipline and thereby to portray them as the contingent products of debates that often include ideas that have come from other disciplines. It encourages us, we would suggest, to deploy traditions as our aggregate concepts, allowing that while these traditions might parallel the institutions of a discipline, they also might parallel the contours of specific subfields or cut across disciplinary and subdisciplinary boundaries. Radical historicism also casts doubt on accounts of disciplinary change that concentrate on debates about objects or topics that appear to be given outside of the context of any tradition and of which scholars can be said to be acquiring better and better knowledge. It encourages us, instead, to understand traditions as changing as

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Stefan Collini, "'Disciplinary History' and 'Intellectual History': Reflections on the Historiography of the Social Sciences in Britain and France," *Revue de synthèse* 3, no. 4 (1988): 387–99.

and when their exponents respond to intersubjective dilemmas that arise within the context of those particular traditions.<sup>9</sup>

*Modern Political Science* thus employs concepts such as tradition and dilemma to demarcate its aggregate units. Radical historicists conceive of beliefs as contingent in that people reach them against the background of a particular intellectual inheritance, rather than by means of pure reason or pure experience. We thus need a concept akin to tradition in order to demarcate the background that helps to explain how people reach the beliefs they do. Of course, other related concepts can do much the same work—language, discourse, and so on. While the particular word we use is of little importance, there is, at times, a substantive issue at stake. Structuralists, and some of those influenced by them, adopt one version of the argument that people can only form beliefs and so act against the background of a social inheritance; they use concepts such as language and discourse in part to indicate that inherited modes of thought fix beliefs and actions in ways that sharply limit the possibility of human agency. It appears to us, in contrast, that such concepts rely on a false dichotomy between structures or quasi structures and the notion of an autonomous self: after all, we can reject autonomy, insisting that actors always are embedded in social contexts, and still accept agency, arguing that they can modify these contexts for reasons they form against the background of such contexts. Our preference for the word *tradition* thus represents a self-conscious attempt to allow for agency by viewing social inheritances as only ever influencing, as opposed to fixing, the beliefs and actions that individuals go on to hold and to perform. People inherit traditions that they then develop or transform before passing them on to others.

When we invoke abstract concepts such as tradition, discourse, or language, we raise the question, How should we analyze change within them? Concepts such as dilemma or problem suggest that change occurs as agents seek to respond to novel circumstances using the resources of the traditions they have inherited. A dilemma arises when a new idea stands in opposition to existing beliefs and so forces a reconsideration of them leading to at least somewhat new beliefs, and so typically inspiring at least slightly different actions and practices. While dilemmas can derive from theoretical and moral reflection, it is useful to recall that they often arise from our experiences of the world. Thus, although we cannot straightfor-

<sup>9</sup> On historiographies of problems, dilemmas, and traditions see James Farr, “From Modern Republic to Administrative State,” in *Regime and Discipline: Democracy and the Development of Political Science*, ed. David Easton, John G. Gunnell, and Michael B. Stein (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 133–38; Mark Bevir, *The Logic of the History of Ideas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 174–264.

wardly associate them with social, economic, or political pressures in the “real” world, we can link intellectual history to social, economic, and political history. Ideas, beliefs, traditions, and dilemmas are profoundly impacted upon by our competing experiences of the world about us.

Because the essays in *Modern Political Science* operate at a range of levels of aggregation, pursuing differing mixes of descriptive and explanatory goals, the traditions and dilemmas they invoke vary in scope from broad characterizations of widespread patterns of thought, such as developmental historicism, to narrower depictions of networks of scholars, such as historical institutionalism. Whatever the scope of the traditions and dilemmas invoked, radical historicists should be wary of attempts to equate them with a fixed core and a penumbra that then varies over time, for doing so postulates an allegedly given content or trajectory in much the same way as do naturalizing narratives. Instead, we might think of an undifferentiated social context of crisscrossing interactions, rather than a series of discrete and identifiable traditions or dilemmas. Historians then slice a particular tradition or dilemma out of this undifferentiated background so as to explain whatever set of beliefs, actions, or practices interests them. In this view, traditions and dilemmas are aggregate concepts that are crafted by historians to suit their particular purposes; they should not be mistaken for given chunks of the past as if they were fixed in the past so that they and they alone were part of an adequate history, nor should they be mistaken for structures of thought that fix the diversity and capacities for change of the individuals located under them. The criteria for deploying the concept of a tradition, and for identifying the content of particular accounts of traditions, are thus expected to vary with the purposes of the narrative being told. When the purpose is to offer a historical explanation of specific developments in a particular context, for example, the criteria for membership will need to be grounded in the conceptual and personal links between specific individuals.

Once we have shifted attention from a reified discipline to traditions and problems that we craft for our own purposes, we then might proceed to reconsider the place of national and transnational themes in the history of political science.<sup>10</sup> At times, earlier historiographies have char-

<sup>10</sup> For one of the earliest and most important reconsiderations of transatlanticism see J.G.A. Pocock, “British History: A Plea for a New Subject,” *Journal of Modern History* 47 (1975): 601–28. For recent discussions see David Armitage, Jane Ohlmeyer, Ned C. Landsman, Eliga H. Gould, and J.G.A. Pocock, “AHR Forum: The New British History in Atlantic Perspective,” *American Historical Review* 104 (1999): 426–500. For recent studies of the transatlantic flow of political ideas in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries see Mark Bevir and Frank Trentmann, eds., *Critiques of Capital in Modern Britain and America: Transatlantic Exchanges, 1800 to the Present Day* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); James T. Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory: Social Democracy and Progressivism in European and American Thought, 1870–1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986);

acterized political thought as cosmopolitan or universal in character, as if it comprised a set of political ideas addressed to perennial philosophical problems or to scientific empirical truths possessed of a universal validity.<sup>11</sup> Radical historicism queries any such characterization by emphasizing that particular beliefs are always embedded in wider webs of belief and traditions, which are themselves contingent and historical. Political thought appears, in this view, as an activity by which people make their future out of their past: political actors inherit a tradition or a set of ideas that they then can modify, perhaps through abstract and conscious reflection or perhaps through unreflective action; when they modify their inheritance so as to act in new ways, they thereby remake the world. The history of political ideas is thus, at least in part, the study of the activity by which people collectively make and remake their communities. What is more, because the nation-state has been a leading expression of community in the modern world, it can be helpful to situate much political thought within the context of loosely national traditions of inquiry. *Modern Political Science* thus focuses on the way in which particular traditions of political science have flourished and developed in two nations: Britain and America.

At other times, earlier histories of political science have had a predominantly national orientation. Naturalizing narratives can lead to a focus on the institutions that are supposed to be the telos of the emergence of an autonomous profession, and since these institutions are generally national in scope, the result can be a history of a putative “British study of politics” or “American science of politics.” Likewise, widespread assumptions about the exceptionalism of Britain and America have obscured, for historians of each, the transatlantic exchanges that have informed the development of their traditions of inquiry. Radical historicism queries such purely national histories insofar as it prompts us to look skeptically upon any straightforward equation of traditions with institutional boundaries. While political thought is an activity by which people make the future out of their past, the relevant actors need not know any particular institutional or national boundary. On the contrary, political discussions take place in a variety of overlapping networks, many of which are transnational; institutions are just the contingent and changeable products of actions that embody competing views (reached through such discussions), of the

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and Daniel T. Rogers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

<sup>11</sup> Compare the challenge to the universalist character of much of the history of political thought in Dario Castiglione and Iain Hampsher-Monk, “Introduction: The History of Political Thought and the National Discourses of Politics,” in *Political Thought in National Context*.

ways in which we ought to maintain or to transform our communities. National influences are thus not the only ones, nor necessarily even the most important ones, upon the character of political science. By pursuing transnational exchanges, historians can query what otherwise might appear to be purely national debates and institutions. *Modern Political Science* thus combines chapters that focus on Britain or America with others that study the transnational flow of ideas between the two.

### What Happened in the History of Political Science

Radical historicism leads to narratives of the history of political science that explore interacting traditions as their adherents remake and transform them, often in response to specific dilemmas or problems. The following essays provide narratives of the emergence, development, and transformation of modern political science in Britain and the United States. They do so, moreover, by locating various approaches to political science in relation both to national traditions and transnational exchanges.

In the late nineteenth century, the study of politics on both sides of the Atlantic was dominated by a developmental historicism that infused the national traditions found in each country. This developmental historicism constitutes a common point of departure against which to view the emergence and evolution of modern political science in the twentieth century. Our first three essays focus on this point of departure, highlighting its guiding concern with grand narratives centered on the nation, the state, and freedom, while also exploring differences that mark out various traditions within developmental historicism. James Farr tracks a distinctive, diverse, and evolving tradition of comparative-historical scholarship that emerged in America in the mid-nineteenth century, dominated political science there through the turn of the century, and persisted well into the early decades of the twentieth century. Sandra den Otter's chapter on Britain distinguishes the Whiggish tradition of constitutional and institutional history from the tradition of British Idealism. Dorothy Ross traces much the same distinction only in more epistemological terms as she discusses the mixture of empiricist and idealist approaches found within the late-nineteenth-century study of politics on both sides of the Atlantic.

While various empiricist and idealist strands of developmental historicism dominated the study of politics in the late nineteenth century, some proponents of an evolutionary positivism in the tradition of Comte and Spencer were also found in both Britain and America. This evolutionary positivism began, around the turn of the century, to give way to the neopositivism that would come, in time, to exert a major influence on modern political science, especially in the United States. Hence Ross argues that

American political science began to diverge from its British counterpart after World War I, when American social scientists proved peculiarly receptive to the reconfigured and tightened notion of science promulgated by neopositivists such as Karl Pearson. The later contours of this divergence between America and Britain appear in the chapters that discuss the period since the Second World War. The chapters on America offer narratives in which an empiricist political science intertwines and contends with vibrant neopositivist currents. Those on Britain, in contrast, portray a continuing stream of idealism, as well as a lively Marxist tradition, as the main counterparts to empiricism in political science.

The divergence of British and American political science in the twentieth century should not be overplayed, however. Perhaps the most central element of modern political science on both sides of the Atlantic is a common one: the rise of a distinctive modernist empiricism that sets out to atomize and compartmentalize the flux of reality and to develop new approaches to the gathering and summarizing of empirical data. This modernist empiricism took shape in the context of a series of departures from developmental historicism's reliance on grand, national narratives to situate the study of particular political events and institutions within a larger order of developmental continuity and progress. This reliance was undermined in the early decades of the twentieth century by a growing pluralist challenge to the conception of the state so central to many such grand narratives. Sandra den Otter tracks the early formulation of pluralism among British idealists, while Dennis Kavanagh and John Gunnell consider its subsequent role in the reorientations of political science that took shape on each side of the Atlantic in the interwar decades. Kavanagh looks to pluralism alongside new political dilemmas to understand both the vibrancy of interwar challenges to the older Whig tradition and the revamping of that tradition involved in the rise of accounts spelling out the components of a distinctive Westminster model of government. Gunnell explores the particular hue that pluralism took on in America, where it contributed to the crafting of a new theory of democracy and a concomitant new understanding of the character of the American polity.

Movement away from developmental historicism involved not only the formulation of new theoretical visions of British and American politics, but also the emergence of new thematic focuses and empirical techniques that looked forward to an investigation and interpretation of contemporary politics increasingly detached from grand historical narratives. Gunnell sees these developments as intertwined. He argues that the interwar rise in American political science of techniques centered on the empirical study of the present owed less to a committed rejection of historical or legal studies than it did to the ways in which a new theory of democracy inspired a new vision of what political scientists should study. Several of

our authors note the early promotion of such developments by Wallas in Britain, as well as the notably warmer reception accorded to this agenda in America. James Farr tracks the early-twentieth-century emergence in America of new ordering themes of psychology and process, themes that would develop a wider appeal in the decades after the First World War. He also considers the range of ideas put into play by American pragmatism. While the more interpretive dimensions of pragmatism notably failed to influence political scientists,<sup>12</sup> some of its other aspects—such as its instrumentalism and faith in science as an agent of progressive social change—would be selectively drawn on as part of the interwar rise of modernist empiricism. So, Mark Smith explores the promotion of various new techniques and approaches under the aegis of an engaged reform ethos. He compares Charles Beard's advocacy of a "New History" in which historical studies would critically unmask aspects of our present self-understanding to Merriam's contention that political science's contribution to reform and progress was dependent on its adoption of new themes and empirical techniques being pioneered in psychology and other social sciences. An explicit normative thrust continued, however, to imbue Merriam's agenda, distinguishing his reform-oriented modernist empiricism from the neopositivism that was to take shape as a distinctively influential strand within American political science after World War II.

The decades after the Second World War witnessed additional shifts in the character of political science on both sides of the Atlantic, with new empirical themes and techniques gaining further ground in both countries, while a distinctly neopositivistic conception of universalizing, value-free theory also took hold among American political scientists. In his essay on British developments, Mike Kenny downplays the importance of the founding of the British Political Studies Association in 1950, attributing it to exogenous influences associated with a UNESCO initiative rather than to any groundswell among British scholars. He suggests that the dominant tradition was still the Whig one, even though this tradition underwent further shifts as modernist currents spread through British culture. Whig themes were combined ever more closely with a modernist empiricism that opened up the study of politics to new techniques emanating from America. This synthesis of Whiggism and modernist empiricism

<sup>12</sup> For more on political science's ambivalent relationship to pragmatism, and in particular its failure to pick up on the more radical, interpretive dimensions of Dewey's thought, see James Farr, "John Dewey and American Political Science," *American Journal of Political Science* 43 (April 1999): 520–41. While our own radical historicism is not directly indebted to these dimensions of American pragmatism, they have proven to be a fruitful point of reference for other contemporary radical historicists such as Richard Rorty, Richard Bernstein, and James Kloppenberg.

confronted competing traditions: the socialist tradition still thrived, Oakeshottian conservatism reshaped Whiggism in a way that can be characterized as a negative reaction to modernism, and a tradition of civic humanism that owed much to idealism also took shape.

Robert Adcock tackles the behavioral revolution in America, disaggregating prewar and postwar changes that are usually lumped together, and then tracing the varied shapes that debates took on in the postwar period. He notes the problematic relationship in the study of American politics between the growing survey research literature and historical studies, but he questions whether, on the whole, the rise of new empirical techniques led to any overall decline in the amount of concern with the past. He raises similar doubts about the impact of behavioralism on comparative politics: the explicit efforts of Gabriel Almond and others to meld new empirical techniques and new positivist forms of theory with older comparative historical perspectives suggests that behavioralists are better seen as having sought to approach the past in new ways, rather than as having rejected historical studies as such.

The essay by Adcock and Mark Bevir explores the state of political theory after the Second World War. Adcock and Bevir reject the common notion that political theory was dead or declining in this era, arguing, on the contrary, that the subfield underwent a dynamic remaking. In America, clear breaks were made with the earlier historicist tradition of institutionally grounded work on the history of ideas. Behavioralists promoted a positivist vision of empirical theory that had great influence across much of the discipline, but found little support within what became the subfield of political theory. Political theory became dominated instead by an alternative new agenda, that is, an epic tradition that was rooted in émigré critiques of the flaws of liberal modernity and of the modernist forms of social science associated with it. In Britain, older historical and institutional approaches were revamped rather than rejected. They took on the shape of a reformulated and deepened historicism that drew on recent developments in British idealism and analytic philosophy while rejecting both positivist and epic conceptions of the task of theory. This reformulated historicism acts, of course, as one of the main influences on the radical historicism that we pursue and propound in this volume.

The final three essays bring *Modern Political Science* up to the present, and illustrate more explicitly some of the contributions that the history of political science might make to contemporary debates. For Britain, Rod Rhodes and Mark Bevir counter the idea that there is any one distinctive, British way of studying politics, emphasizing instead the plurality of contemporary traditions. They suggest that a narrative of the professionalization of political science in Britain reflects the viewpoint of just one of these traditions; it embodies the self-understanding of the mainstream as it has

emerged out of the intertwining of Whiggism and modernist empiricism. They indicate the partiality of this narrative by pointing to two important alternatives: an idealist tradition, embracing both civic humanist and Oakeshottian strands, and a socialist tradition, containing strands associated with both political economy and post-Marxism. Their exploration of how these traditions have developed in response to dilemmas posed by changing intellectual agendas, such as neoliberalism, and state agendas, such as the preference for relevance, echoes Kenny's chapter in its emphasis on the impact the British state has exercised on the discipline through its control of research funds.

In their essay on contemporary American developments, Adcock, Bevir, and Shannon Stimson seek to historicize the new institutionalism. They trace the expansion of new institutionalist discourse from the mid-1980s through the early 1990s, highlighting the plurality of the traditions that came to understand themselves in such terms, and the extent to which they did so in response to dilemmas posed by alternative traditions, such as behavioralism and rational choice. In doing so, they substitute a radical historicist narrative of recent political science for the naturalizing narratives that political scientists themselves are prone to offer. They seek thereby to suggest how radical historicism might destabilize those perspectives from which recent changes in political science appear as a progressive intellectual movement. Naturalizing narratives based on presentist caricatures of the past are, of course, by no means the sole property of the new institutionalism. This chapter thus suggests, more generally, one of the roles that the history of political science might play within contemporary debates.

In the final chapter, Bevir points to a further payoff of radical historicist studies of political science by exemplifying how they might shed light on developments in the state. Bevir explores the link between political science and changes in British politics by tracing connections, both personal and conceptual, between new institutionalism and some of the policy initiatives of New Labour. By illustrating how the history of political science can explain aspects of today's practices of governance, and vice versa, the essays by Bevir, Rhodes, and Kenny point to ways in which *Modern Political Science* might contribute to discussions of how changes in the concepts and techniques of social science have influenced, and been influenced by, evolving practices of governance since the late nineteenth century.

### Why Historicize Political Science?

What, we might ask now, are the implications of the narratives of *Modern Political Science* for contemporary political science? To critics, radical

historicism may appear to make the history of political science, and the history of political ideas more generally, almost irrelevant to current political scientists or political theorists. Some might complain that radical historicism leads to purely antiquarian or sociological studies of beliefs to the neglect of the perennial questions or big ideas that make past texts of relevance to us.<sup>13</sup> Others might contend that radical historicism leads to a stress on particularity and contingency that distracts us from broader questions about the progress of knowledge.<sup>14</sup> We want to suggest, in contrast, that radical historicism not only allows us to restate many of the benefits that others allow to histories of political science, but also to show how such histories are relevant in ways these others often overlook.<sup>15</sup>

To begin, then, let us restate benefits that are widely allowed to the history of political science. One such benefit is the combating of caricatures. Engaged reactions to the work of other scholars, both present and past, are fundamental to intellectual debate. One result of this dynamic is that there are surely few political scientists who cannot think of instances where their own work or that of the traditions on which they draw have been caricatured by others. It is thus not surprising that a concern to combat caricatures of the intellectual past is endorsed by diverse historians of political science, from Gabriel Almond to John Gunnell.<sup>16</sup> By undermining caricatures, the history of political science also can query the role that bad history often plays in legitimating dominant positions in contemporary debates. For example, Adcock's chapter challenges claims about the character of behavioralism that play prominent roles in the justificatory narratives often associated with new institutionalism.

Another widely acknowledged benefit of the history of political science is that it can lead to the recovery of lost insights. As George Stocking wrote in his classic editorial for the opening volume of the *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, "[W]e have been limited by the lack of some of the perspectives that have not been transmitted to us."<sup>17</sup> Kava-

<sup>13</sup> Different versions of this complaint appear in Jorge Gracia, "The Logic of the History of Ideas or the Sociology of the History of Beliefs?" *Philosophical Books* 42 (2001): 177–86; Melissa Lane, "Why History of Ideas at All?" *History of European Ideas* 28 (2002): 33–41; Margaret Leslie, "In Defense of Anachronism," *Political Studies* 18 (1970): 433–47; Charles D. Tarlton, "Historicity, Meaning and Revisionism in the Study of Political Thought," *History and Theory* 12 (1973): 307–28.

<sup>14</sup> See Almond, "Political Science."

<sup>15</sup> For a similar attempt to show that radical historicists might accept some concepts of perennial questions see Mark Bevir, "Are There Perennial Problems in Political Theory?" *Political Studies* 42 (1994): 662–75.

<sup>16</sup> Gabriel A. Almond, *A Discipline Divided* (London: Sage, 1990); Gunnell, *Descent of Political Theory*.

<sup>17</sup> George W. Stocking, Jr., "On the Limits of 'Presentism' and 'Historicism' in the Historiography of the Behavioral Sciences," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 1 (1965): 216. See also Steven Seidman, "Beyond Presentism and Historicism: Understanding

nagh points to an example of such a lack of transmission when he suggests that interwar British pluralists offered insights on which the corporatist literature of the 1970s and 1980s might have drawn. Just as the history of political science might recover specific insights relevant to contemporary research, so it might recover alternative perspectives on the goals and mission of the discipline. Hence, the older goal of producing principles explored by Farr in this volume might represent a substantive alternative to the now dominant goal of producing empirical theory.

Yet another benefit widely associated with the history of political science is the chance it provides for us to learn from past mistakes. Quentin Skinner has foregrounded this benefit by suggesting that history can serve a therapeutic function: history can “enable us to uncover the points at which they [our key concepts] have become confused or misunderstood in a way that marked their subsequent history,” and so perhaps “we can hope not merely to illuminate but to dissolve some of our current philosophical perplexities.”<sup>18</sup> Historical research might help us, for example, to clarify the confusions evident in later discussions of pluralism by pursuing, as Gunnell does here, the transformation of that concept as it made its transatlantic journey.

Let us turn now to the suggestion that radical historicism also opens a vista onto neglected benefits of the history of political science. Radical historicists might argue, we believe, that the history of political science can contribute to conceptual sophistication, that it forms part of the substance of political science, and that it offers an arena in which we can evaluate rival approaches to political science. For radical historicists, concepts always need to be understood in terms of particular contexts of beliefs, purposes, and traditions. Historical studies can unpack such relations, thereby helping to provide pragmatic, contextually sensitive criteria against which to judge conceptual choices. For example, several of the essays in this volume, especially that by Ross, identify changes in conceptions of science since the nineteenth century. Such narratives might prompt a rejection of the idea that there is any one true form of science against which conceptions from different times and places can usefully be compared and ranked. Perhaps they might even encourage us to assess claims to political knowledge more closely in relation to the particular webs of belief and concerns in relation to which they arise. In this view, we might reject a neopositivist concept of empirical theory on the grounds

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the History of Social Science,” *Sociological Inquiry* 53 (1983): 79–94; and John S. Dryzek and Stephen T. Leonard, “History and Discipline in Political Science,” *American Political Science Review* 82 (1988): 1245–60.

<sup>18</sup> Quentin Skinner, “A Reply to My Critics” in Tully, *Meaning and Context*, 287–88.

that the beliefs and hopes against which that conception once made sense no longer are convincing to us.

Radical historicism also suggests that the history of political science constitutes a part of the substance of political science. It is a commonplace that people act upon their beliefs or, let us say, their beliefs and preferences, albeit that some of the pertinent beliefs may be subconscious or unconscious. This commonplace implies that we can explain actions, and so the practices or institutions to which they give rise, only if we appeal, at least implicitly, to the relevant beliefs. Thus, political scientists who want to explain some practice or institution have to appeal to the history of political science, at least implicitly, whenever the beliefs embedded in that practice or institution are beliefs that derive from political science. Bevir suggests in his essay, for example, that to explain New Labour's Third Way, especially its attempts to promote joined-up governance, we need to invoke those new institutionalists who advocate networks as a mode of coordination that allegedly possesses notable advantages over markets and hierarchies alike. We can trace clear influences, he suggests, from political scientists through think tanks and policy advisers to recent Labour governments. A study of the history of new institutionalism thus becomes an integral part of the political science of contemporary governance.

Whenever a political practice or institution draws on tools, categories, or beliefs that arise from social science (including the techniques of media management, voting polls or interviews, and administrative planning), the history of social science becomes a crucial part of the study of politics. The developmental historicists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries appear to have allowed as much insofar as they sought to tell historical stories that showed how their concepts had arisen as part of processes of reflection accompanying the evolution of political institutions. Contemporary political scientists, in contrast, are slow to recognize the integral relation between the history of their discipline and the substance of what they study.<sup>19</sup> They tend to marginalize questions about the holistic settings of meanings and beliefs and to treat the knowledge they produce as having a universal audience, rather than as contingent and situated in a particular tradition. Radical historicism here follows the older developmental historicism, but with a twist: its emphasis on contingency undermines assumptions of the natural, progressive, or disinterested character of the development of political science and the institutions that it informs and by which it is informed.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> For a recent exception see Oren, *Our Enemies and US*.

<sup>20</sup> The critical import of radical historicism here appears most clearly in the work of Foucault and those inspired by him. See, for example, Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1977); Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller, eds., *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (London:

We want to suggest, finally, that the history of political science offers an arena in which to evaluate rival approaches to political science.<sup>21</sup> Once we allow that all our experiences are in part constructed by our prior theories, then we will likely conclude that we cannot evaluate a theory, let alone a whole approach, by reference to facts alone: after all, if the facts are infused with the theory we want to evaluate, the process of justification would look perilously circular, while if they are not, the proponents of the theory might well reject them and any evaluation that is based upon them. The evaluation of theories, narratives, and approaches must be, then, a matter of comparing them by reference to appropriate criteria and in relation to some kind of shared or overlapping subject matter.<sup>22</sup> Political scientists might look for such subject matter, we believe, in the history of the discipline.<sup>23</sup>

Because political science seeks to explain human beliefs, actions, and their consequences, including the practices and institutions to which they give rise, any approach to political science presumably will include, at least implicitly, an analysis of beliefs, actions, and the forms of explanation that are appropriate to them. Thus, because the history of political science is the history of beliefs, actions, and their consequences, any approach to political science presumably includes the claim, at least implicitly, that it might be applied successfully to the history of the discipline. That is to say, if rational choice, historical institutionalism, or any other approach purports to offer a general approach to the analysis of human life, it should be able to show that it works with respect to the part of human life that is the history of political science. Not only do alternative approaches to political science thus need to be able to generate an adequate history of political science; when they do so, they have to engage with one another in a way that generates an overlapping subject matter. So, a rational choice history of political science would have to explain the rise and content of historical institutionalism, just as a historical institutionalist history of the discipline would have to explain the rise and content of rational choice. In this way, the history of political science acts as

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Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991); and Andrew Barry, Thomas Osborne, and Nicholas Rose, eds., *Foucault and Political Reason* (London: UCL Press, 1996).

<sup>21</sup> Cf. the argument about philosophy of science in Imre Lakatos, "History of Science and Its Rational Reconstructions," in *Philosophical Writings*, vol. 1, *The Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 102–38.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Bevir, *Logic*, 78–126.

<sup>23</sup> For another view of the relation of histories of political science to the evaluation of rival approaches see Dryzek and Leonard, "History and Discipline." Our position differs from theirs both in its emphasis on the need for a shared subject matter—in this case the history of political science itself—and in its avoidance of the notion of measuring approaches against some standard of "progress."

an arena within which rival approaches to political science might evaluate one another's merits without simply talking past each other.

When we recognize that the history of political science might play such a role, we begin to expose the impossibility of such a history being neutral between rival approaches to political science. Perhaps historians of political science can tell their stories without explicitly casting evaluative judgments on their subject matter. Even if they can, however, their stories always will embody, at least tacitly, analyses of beliefs, of actions and their consequences, and of the forms of explanation appropriate to these things, and these analyses could then be generalized so as to correspond to an existing or possible approach to political science. Let us be clear, then, that radical historicism implies a general approach to political science as well as to its history. While we welcome much of the diverse work that goes under the label of one or the other of the various new institutionalisms, we want to suggest that historical contingency goes all the way down, and this motion means that political scientists should pay more attention to meanings so as to denaturalize and disaggregate institutions. We believe that several emphases that currently are scattered around various parts of the literature—emphases on contingency, on meanings, on agency—these emphases can and should be brought together within a radical historicist political science. We hope that the essays in this volume will contribute not only to debates about political science's past, but also to the shape of its future.