

Reflections of a Political Scientist

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A RETROSPECTIVE LOOK at a long career is a complex and difficult business. The observer invariably changes over the years, sometimes by a deepening and ripening of his personal convictions and sometimes by a turning in the opposite direction. A person's outlook is always changing, whether the direction is the same or not. The profession to which one belongs, political science in my particular case, is subject to precisely the same vicissitudes, although the changes are much slower and not always congruent with personal changes. Many factors have an impact on both the personal and the professional aspects of one's career, such as family background and upbringing, as well as the spirit of the times in which one's career takes place.

I was born in Chicago where my father was a professor of French and I left that city as a child to go to France, where my mother came from. I am grateful for those early years in French schools, which taught me much, especially the years of *explication de texte*, a kind of literary exegesis, which was invaluable training for the proper expression of thought. I came back to the United States in 1920, when I was twelve, and learned English. Gradually I became an American citizen in feeling and in thought as I already was legally by birth.

What drew me to political science, strange as it may seem, was politics. As early as high school, I was fascinated by the ups and downs of French politics in the 1920s, by the international tensions which followed World War I, and by the dismal doings of the Harding-Coolidge-Hoover administrations. I even read the *Congressional Record* for pleasure! Because of my fascination with politics I decided to

major in political science in college and graduate school, with an emphasis on political theory, comparative government, international relations, and American government. These interests were to remain with me for the rest of my life.

Political science in those days was in its infancy, at least to the extent that in many universities it did not merit a separate department but was an appendage of the history department. Such as it was, the field of political science was fully satisfying to me. Political theory opened vistas which the best thought of the ages confers upon a student and a scholar. Comparative government reflected the life, the historical background, and the values of foreign peoples, as was brilliantly disclosed in Salvador de Madariaga's book, *Englishmen, Frenchmen, Spaniards* (1928), and in works by thinkers like James Bryce and A. Lawrence Lowell. The constitutional structures and governmental procedures of foreign countries were presented in such a way that they throbbled with life and engrossed a student's interest. International relations were connected with the great issues of national security, the League of Nations, the establishment of communism in Russia, and the dark shadow of fascism in Italy and in Germany. The field of American government was filled with the background and development of the Constitution, with a careful scrutiny of its institutions like Congress and the Presidency, and with a survey of national politics in voting, political parties, and the emerging field of public opinion and propaganda.

I was in my element, except for my deep commitment to the Christian faith. I might have considered the ministry, except that the dominant mood of the time was that of

modernism, which I could not abide. Modernism did not take the Bible seriously. It took what it liked and rejected what it disliked. It made no effort to take individual verses in the immediate or the larger context of the Bible as a whole. It paid no attention to what was meant literally or what was meant metaphorically. It read twentieth-century ideas in the first-century mind and spirit. In short it destroyed the stable and objective basis of Christianity. The 1920s were also the age of Walter Rauschenbusch and the social gospel, which reduced Christianity to political and economic programs. Today we call this movement liberalism, but it is one and the same thing with modernism.

With the influence of the New Deal, political scientists became decidedly liberal and sometimes even leftist. The most eminent, like W. Y. Elliott, held important positions in the Roosevelt administration. Through their teachings and that of countless others, political scientists became and have remained to this day liberal in politics. Many changes took place in the profession during my years of service, but they did not affect the political orientation of the majority of its members or its close identification with the Democratic party.

The general swing of the profession to liberalism was in part a reaction against the kind of political conservatism embedded in the Republican party. It ran much deeper than a revulsion against the inept handling of the Great Depression by the Hoover administration. In those days conservatism was identified with fat materialistic business men who saw everything in terms of "We" (Americans) and "They" (all others). There was no regard for an understanding of our American constitutional heritage, no sense of tradition, no intellectual underpinning or attachment. To one who had compassion for his less fortunate compatriots and a hunger and thirst for ideas and ideals, the Democratic party was the only option.

This political orientation was not wholly compatible with my Christian faith, but at that time I thought that religious conser-

vatism and political liberalism went together very nicely. The evolution of both ultimately changed my mind. I had an inkling of this during a service I attended at the Harvard Memorial Chapel. I do not remember who the minister was nor the title of his sermon, but I do remember the text: "For ye see your calling, brethren, how not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty . . ." (I Corinthians 1:26-27). These words struck me as being a challenge to the citadel of the intellect that was Harvard. To my knowledge there has not been a similar challenge there until Solzhenitsyn's 1978 Harvard address, for which the liberals have never forgiven him. Harvard, too, has succumbed to the *Zeitgeist*.

Why was I so slow in perceiving the conflict between Christianity and liberalism? One obvious reason is that my knowledge of and commitment to Christianity had not attained the depth and the strength which years of study and living were to bring forth. During this maturing process, I taught adult Sunday School classes for thirty years. I became thoroughly familiar with the Bible. I read many of the important modern theologians such as Barth, Brunner, Bonhoeffer, and Tillich. I took an active part in my denomination at all levels, from the congregation to the General Assembly. I wrote three books relating religion and political science, as well as numerous articles. Another reason was that the Democratic party moved increasingly to the left, that it held fast to the New Deal until the need for it had long passed, and that it fervently espoused programs which were incompatible with the national interest and with the teachings of the Christian faith.

I was slow in moving toward political conservatism not only because of what it meant between the Civil War and World War II, but also because an enormous gap existed between the political science pro-

fession and the Christian faith. I use the term "Christian faith" because it was not possible for a Christian to look for guidance to denominations which embraced modernism and the social gospel. In any event, the attitude of the political science profession toward religion was a mixture of indifference and hostility. Although my own main field of political theory covered the Middle Ages and the Reformation, which were eminently theological, no one ever suggested that I take courses in the Harvard Divinity School.

One reason for this omission was the prevailing view that religion is a purely private matter, inconsistent as this view is with the teachings of Luther and Calvin. Many political scientists were church members, but they said nothing about their beliefs. These were matters for Sunday morning, and that is all. Civic clubs encouraged this silence by proscribing talks on religion or politics because many people held deep feelings in both areas and were easily offended by differences of opinion. So, for the sake of peace and harmony, it was best not to touch either area.

Another reason was the cult of objectivity. According to this cult, teaching and research should avoid value-commitments and personal involvement. A scholar should not use the first person singular or, at most, he should only use the editorial "we." He should not pass judgment on what he is teaching or discovering. He should keep his personal convictions a dark secret, especially from students, colleagues, and the general public. As this trend progressed, many departments changed their name from the Department of Government to the Department of Political Science, thereby underscoring the desire of the profession to be known as a science, albeit a social science. Woe to the political scientist who did not practice the cult of objectivity! He was a bigot and a fanatic or, at least, he was unscientific.

Actually, objectivity has another meaning, as commendable as it is ignored. Far from requiring personal non-involvement, objectivity demands total involvement. The scholar must identify himself with

what he is studying. He must know and sympathize with all sides of an issue and the context in which it arises. He must participate both in the feeling and in the thinking that take place. Truth is never disembodied. On the contrary, it is a species of incarnation and therefore personal. It entails the difference between knowledge and understanding. The cult of objectivity recognizes none of this.

I remember a round table of the American Political Science Association sometime during the early 1930s when a paper entitled "The Place of God in Twentieth-Century Political Thought" was presented. I believe it was the first time that God appeared on the program of the American Political Science Association. The paper was not very good, but it did lead to a lengthy discussion of what proofs we have of God's existence. The discussion was futile and got nowhere. After a while I made the comment that one of the reasons Jesus Christ came into the world was to deliver us from discussions such as these. Needless to say, the comment was not well received.

With the passing of such great figures like Charles Howard McIlwain, Carl J. Friedrich, W. Y. Elliott, Edward S. Corwin, and A. Lawrence Lowell, the political science profession began to slide into behaviorism, which is a specific instance and a natural product of the cult of objectivity. Its founder was a psychologist by the name of John Broadus Watson. Its spirit is exemplified in a comment attributed to Watson: "If it does not register on my galvanometer, it does not exist." The behavioristic approach to political science inundated and overwhelmed the profession. An outstanding example of this take over is the title of Harold Lasswell's book, *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How* (1936). It purports to be an accurate description of the politician whose one and only objective is to get in office and stay there. Aided and abetted by the profession of advertising, the behaviorists saw a chance to control behavior. You can condition any individual or group to wrestle with the important omission in the title

of Lasswell's book, namely, *Why?* What do you say to the policy maker who asks why he should accept or reject a particular course of action? What is the common good? What is the national interest as compared with the special interests?

Behaviorism has no answer to these questions and it cannot have one on the basis of its philosophy. It tried to bypass them by further quantification made more effective by the computer. The inclusion in political science of the study of public opinion and propaganda in a pioneer work like that of Leonard Doob accelerated the process of quantification. But to no avail! As has often been said by critics, we have become the victims of "garbage in, garbage out." It is what we feed into the computer and not the computer itself that determines the value or the lack of value of a product.

The political science profession is not an entity in itself but part of the life of academic institutions. The old-time life of a college or university professor was marked by stability. Your first teaching assignment was likely to be your last—allowing some progress upward in the institution, of course. But the institution in which you worked was likely to be your permanent home. You developed a strong sense of institutional loyalty—the gap between town and gown was greatly moderated by neighborliness and family ties—and you spent your retirement years among your family, friends, and neighbors and not in some distant place or institution. But this kind of academic environment was obviously very poor soil for the introduction and growth of behaviorism.

Beginning somewhere around the 1930s, a new situation appeared that is only now being threatened by a tight market and financial stringency. I refer to academic mobility. Instead of spending the whole of your life in one institution and town, you moved around from one college or university to another, usually gaining in salary and academic rank with each move. Accompanying this change came the loss of institutional loyalty. The institution was too big when you could

know only a very small percentage of the student body; the town or city was too big to promote much neighborliness; the faculty was much too specialized to permit interpersonal understanding. With the splitting of what had been a community, power was now transmitted to the administration (presidents, chancellors, deans, department heads, etc.). Members of the faculty were too concerned with their own specializations to be interested in college or university policy. Their loyalties were now to the professions at large.

Three conditions now governed your advancement: proficiency in teaching, publication of books and articles of a professional nature, and participation in one's professional association, in my case the American Political Science Association and some of its regional counterparts. Some political scientists who got caught in less prestigious small colleges had little chance to advance professionally, not because they lacked ability but because they could not meet the requirements for moving. Their teaching load was too heavy to permit research and publication, and they were not paid enough to attend their professional associations. They were—and they felt—trapped, even if their doctoral degrees were from universities like Harvard, Yale, or Princeton. If a political scientist happened to be a Christian who wanted to be a witness to his faith in his own professional field, even more complicated problems were encountered.

To give this witness, the political scientist must be competent in his professional field and also have a thorough grounding in the Bible, theology, church history, and denominational matters. He must somehow find the time to acquire the necessary accomplishments. If he is successful, he can attempt to witness according to the Christian vocation of every believer. His attempts, however, run into difficulties. The means of professional advancement are not easily met. His salary raises and promotions in rank depend on his colleagues, especially the departmental chairman and the dean. These colleagues

and superiors are not likely to look upon his witnessing with favor, and are apt to regard his work as lacking in objectivity and unlikely to impress the profession at large. His voice is a voice in the wilderness in a profession dominated by behaviorism. You cannot feed the Holy Spirit in a computer. You are likely to be found guilty of unprofessional conduct. If you are a competent political scientist who has already obtained some recognition, your colleagues may choose to overlook your religious witnessing and advance you in spite of it, but certainly not because of it.

Your reputation on the outside is also likely to suffer. It will be difficult to get invited to read papers and otherwise participate in the activities of the American Political Science Association and other professional associations. The publication syndrome of publish-or-perish impedes your professional advancement. This impediment occurs because publishers share the prejudices of the professional associations. Even if you can find a relatively unbiased editor, you have to remember that he has to meet two requirements: that the profession thinks well of your manuscript and that the general public is likely to buy it.

The first requirement is associated with readers. The editor or editors of a publishing firm do not feel competent to evaluate a manuscript. The custom is to submit a manuscript to not less than two readers who possess some eminence in their field and whose identity is generally never disclosed to the author. At this point you are helpless and feel you are playing a game of Russian roulette. The reader may be a behaviorist, may be hostile to religion, or he may be an adherent of the cult of objectivity. If this happens, the result is a rejection slip. Another possibility is that the manuscript will fall between two groupings: the religious people who say the manuscript belongs to political science and the political science people who say that it belongs in the field of religion. In either case, you get a rejection slip. When you remember the rigors of the publish-or-perish syndrome, you realize how serious

the difficulty of publishing is in securing professional advancement. It is with real admiration, therefore, that one reads John Hallowell's *Main Currents in Modern Political Thought* (1950). It was intended as a textbook, but it is much more than that, namely, a treatise in political theory written by a well known and avowedly Christian political scientist.

Witnessing in one's professional field is difficult even in a Christian college. Having been on the faculty of a Presbyterian college and also having served on the board of trustees of another Presbyterian college, I well know what the difficulties are. The textbooks you use are secular in outlook and content because there are no others to be ordered or bought. To attract a professionally competent faculty member, you have to hire a secular-minded scholar who neither knows nor cares about the Christian religion—or else you have to settle for a mediocre faculty member. A college begins to look like a private secular university, or a state university in a few cases, where a Bible or Religion department exists as a mere appendage of the institution. Furthermore, a college more and more frequently cuts off its organic connection with the church and settles for what is known as a "covenant relationship." Thus, too, Christian colleges surrender to the modern *Zeitgeist*.

The prospects for a broader outlook in political science that includes the contributions of Christian thought are brightening. The improvement is unlikely to originate in the political science profession itself and its publications, e.g., the *American Political Science Review* and the *Journal of Politics*, which are in the hands of people who are often too set in their views to welcome change. There is, of course, some resistance to the professional status quo. The followers of Leo Strauss—the so-called Straussians—are doing battle for the re-instatement of ethics and, to some extent, for the restoration of a transcendental dimension in political science. But they stop short of a theological commitment. Leo Strauss himself was a Jew, but his

thinking strikes one as much more Greek than Hebrew, which probably accounts for his not going beyond philosophy. Like one of their most distinguished representatives, Walter F. Berns, the Straussians do an excellent demolition job and some constructive work. The group is small and militant. There is also a small group of professional political scientists like John Hallowell, whose writings disclose a religious commitment.

The best prospects for change come from people outside the profession who have written extensively and influentially in the field of political science. This is so because professional groups, whatever their field, reflect and conform to the status quo much more than they depart from it. It is worthy of note that the Old Testament prophets were always individuals, never councils, assemblies, organizations, or institutions. Challenges come from enlightened and courageous individuals who do not "conform to this world but are transformed by the renewing of their minds" and show it convincingly. The Old Testament prophets paid a heavy price for their message as do modern prophets on the other side of the Iron Curtain such as did Alexander Solzhenitsyn during his years in the Soviet Union and even now in the United States.

A good example of outside intervention is the work of Walter Lippmann, the journalist who wrote extensively in the field of political science. Among other things, he gave us an important concept known as the public philosophy. As he understood it, the public philosophy is not theological, though it comes close to civil religion. This is a far cry from behaviorism and recognizes the claims of philosophy and non-quantitative concepts, insisting on the need of community for a shared consensus of values to bind it together.

Supreme Court decisions are reinstating the interaction of religion and politics by their interpretations (and misinterpretations) of the constitutional separation of church and state. Legal decisions on a topic like abortion arouse controversy. Under the guise of constitutional law the

discussion of the interaction of religion and politics becomes respectable again.

The election of Jimmy Carter in 1976, when much was made of his being a "born again" Christian, had the same effect. The two campaigns of Ronald Reagan also thrust religion in politics to such an extent that political scientists could safely take cognizance of the phenomenon. Liberation theology is a Marxist doctrine but, because it calls itself a theology, it has made religion a legitimate topic for discussion. But it is also a proper target for attack.

The conservative movement is playing a part in the restoration of religion in politics. This movement is partly inside and partly outside of the profession. Some of its most distinguished leaders, such as William Buckley and Russell Kirk, are not members of the profession, but what they write and say has a definite impact on the general public. However, some are indeed members of the profession and work hard at influencing it. Many of them are religiously committed, but all of them support such things as tradition, community, higher non-quantifiable values, and transcendental values. The effect is to weaken the foundation of false modernist values and raise the level of politics to new heights. The combined impact of these outer and inner forces may yet penetrate the thick hide of the political science establishment.

The conservative movement extends far beyond political science. It includes the fields of religion, philosophy, history, and literature. It is also to be commended for not advocating utopias and for not being excessively bound by overly rigid doctrines. It does not include groups like the libertarians. I know that there is no agreement on this particular point, but I personally hold that libertarianism is radical liberalism. Another excluded group is the fundamentalists. This is tricky because the word has evolved so much over the years. It is now little more than a general expletive when it is possible to speak of Moslem fundamentalists. What is excluded in the conservative movement is a narrow

literalism that is viewed as the product of a divine dictaphone, the rejection of the light which linguistics and history can throw on the meaning of scripture, the mixture of "hell-and-damnation" sermons and commercialism over the air waves. What is left is a solid core of a conserva-

tive approach to life. This approach includes much more than political science and also vitalizes all fields. It restores the nobility of intellect, the sustaining power of tradition, the beauty of human literary expression and good taste, and the stature of man as a child of God.