Political Science and Institution Building: Oxford in Comparative Perspective*

Robert E. Goodin

Political scientists are supposed to know quite a lot about institutions and how to build them. Let us turn that knowledge in on ourselves, asking what is required to institutionalize an academic discipline. What does it take to build and sustain a tight-knit department of scholars working collectively to advance, and not merely impart, knowledge about their discipline? Answering that might, in turn, provide insights into why Oxford found that so hard in the case of political science.

If in the end the exercise produces nothing more than fancy pigeonholes for things that people have known all along (or say they have), just remember: pigeonholes matter. They are the generalizable stuff of science. They are what allow us to apply insights garnered in one place to others that are relevantly similar. They are what save us from having to treat every case and place as utterly *sui generis*. No generalizations are perfect. But eschewing generalization, where generalization is possible, is far worse.

CHARACTERIZING INSTITUTIONS

'Institutions,' in Samuel Huntington's term, 'are stable, valued recurring patterns of behavior.'¹ Mark that definition well. Institutions are not buildings (although when we 'institutionalize' someone we lock him up in a building). Nor are institutions organizations. Both buildings (physical co-location) and organizations (departmentalization) may help promote and sustain the patterns of behaviour that define an institution. But it is the behaviours that institution builders are striving to promote and sustain.

The stable, valued, recurring behaviours to which Huntington refers occur not merely within institutions but also, importantly, *because* of them.

* I am grateful for discussions at the Lee Lecture in March 2012, and with Jean Blondel, Christopher Hood, Des King, Tony King, Duncan Snidal, John Vickers, Jeremy Waldron, and Stephen Whitefield.

¹ S. P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968), 12.

Institutionalization acquire value and more stable and pr what we value about

Think of the role the costs of transacti think of the role of c are harder to change not provide the secu

Why would anyo The answer is simpl that they are constr time, then no one c way depends upon institutionally const feasible. As Thoma under laws that all possible for them to

With academic di accepting the const otherwise do (anyw creates a common c standards for what c ation among people line, sufficiently sin different each to ha

Academic depart represent. When I t institutionalize polit ing at both levels. I the local level—and connected to discip

² Huntington, *Political Change*, *American Socie* in D. L. Sills (ed.), *In* Macmillan, 1968), 409–

³ D. Soskice, R. H. B Institutions', *Journal of*

⁴ T. C. Schelling, *T* 1960), 43.

⁵ R. E. Goodin, 'The Oxford Handbook of Po similarly T. Parsons, 'Pr vol. 12, 536–47.

Institution Building: A Different Perspective*

It is about institutions and how we see ourselves, asking what is the point. What does it take to build something working collectively to achieve their discipline? Answering this is not found that so hard in the

more than fancy pigeonholes for them (they have), just remember: the effort of science. They are what we do to others that are relevantly different in every case and place as well. But eschewing generaliza-

INSTITUTIONS

are the stable, valued recurring institutions are not buildings (to lock him up in a building). (physical co-location) and to promote and sustain the pattern. It is the behaviours that stain.

John Huntington refers occasionally, *because* of them.

© 2012, and with Jean Blondel, John Vickers, Jeremy Waldron, and

New Haven, CT: Yale University

Institutionalization is 'the process by which organizations and procedures acquire value and stability'.² Once institutionalized, behaviour is rendered more stable and predictable. Such stability and predictability are precisely what we value about institutionalized patterns of behaviour.³

Think of the role of institutions in economics, reducing uncertainties and the costs of transactions by, in effect, taking some transactions off the table. Or think of the role of constitutions in politics, laying down rules of the game that are harder to change than are ordinary laws. Were they otherwise, they would not provide the secure, stable legal environment that we seek through them.

Why would anyone want his behaviour to be constrained in these ways? The answer is simple. Institutions are enabling, for precisely the same reason that they are constraining. If anyone might do absolutely anything at any given time, then no one can confidently pursue any project that in any important way depends upon the inputs of others. Among people whose behaviour is institutionally constrained, mutually productive interactions become more feasible. As Thomas Schelling says, no one wants to be sued—but living under laws that allow those breaching them to be sued is what makes it possible for them to enter into contracts at all.⁴

With academic disciplines, as with institutions more generally, the point of accepting the constraints is to enable you to do something you could not otherwise do (anyway, not nearly so effectively). A discipline imposes order, it creates a common code, it focuses attention on common problems, and it sets standards for what count as good solutions to them.⁵ It orchestrates collaboration among people who have been rendered, by the discipline of the discipline, sufficiently similar to work together productively—yet still sufficiently different each to have something uniquely to contribute.

Academic departments are the local embodiments of the discipline that they represent. When I talk about what political science has to tell us about how to institutionalize political science itself, I will be talking about institution building at both levels. I will be asking what it takes to build a strong department at the local level—and one that is itself institutionalized, by being strongly connected to discipline as a whole. That is to say, I will be asking what it

² Huntington, *Political Order*, 12. See similarly S. N. Eisenstadt, 'Institutionalization and Change', *American Sociological Review*, 29 (1964), 235–47 and 'Social Institutions: The Concept', in D. L. Sills (ed.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, vol. 14 (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 409–21 at 410, 414–18.

³ D. Soskice, R. H. Bates, and D. Epstein, 'Ambition and Constraint: The Stabilizing Role of Institutions', *Journal of Law, Economics and Organization*, 8 (1992), 547–60.

⁴ T. C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), 43.

⁵ R. E. Goodin, 'The State of the Discipline, the Discipline of the State', in R. E. Goodin (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of Political Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3–57 at 7. See similarly T. Parsons, 'Professions', in Sills (ed.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, vol. 12, 536–47.

takes to build a department devoted to advancing, rather than merely imparting, knowledge about the subject to which it is devoted.

INSTITUTION BUILDING

The prime function of institutions politically, Huntington tells us, is to 'give new meaning to the common purpose and create new linkages between the particular interests of individuals and groups'.⁶ Institutionalization imposes coherence and imparts a sense of common purpose.⁷ '[D]evelop[ing] an esprit and style that become distinctive marks' is the prime task in building an institution.⁸ So how do we do that?

Institutional differentiation

The first step is surely to differentiate sharply your institution from other surrounding, competing institutions. Ali Mazrui once shrewdly remarked that the *sine qua non* of a new state was having a flag and a national airline all its own. Similarly with an academic discipline: for it to thrive in a place, it ought ideally have a department all its own. Of course there can be 'invisible departments', or 'departments within departments', with much the same effect. But for cultivating a sense of common purpose, there is nothing like having a department all your own, connected to a wider discipline outside your own university, and sharply differentiated from other departments and disciplines.

It is a mark of the maturity of a discipline that universities create departments devoted to that discipline and it alone. Political science achieved this status earlier in some places than others. In the US it happened early in the twentieth century; in Continental Europe politics teaching and research were subsumed within law faculties until much later (and in some places still are). In the UK departments of Politics began proliferating in the middle of the twentieth century. But again, in Oxford it happened much later. Although Politics and International Relations is now a separate department, it was a sub-faculty until not so very long ago. Although the department offers degrees entirely its own at Master's level, it still has no undergraduate degree all its

⁶ Huntington, *Political Order*, 10. 'In the total absence of social conflict, political institutions are unnecessary; in the total absence of social harmony they are impossible' (ibid., p. 9).

⁷ 'The more unified and coherent an organization is, the more highly institutionalized it is; the greater the disunity of the organization, the less it is institutionalized' (Huntington, *Political Order*, 22).

⁸ Huntington, *Political Order*, p. 22.

own. In terms of the traditional differentiation

There is another That has to do with introduced just after History or Philosophy Politics were created historians, *de facto* far as to entitle his *Century*.¹⁰ But both degrees as their high

Brian Barry is right Political Studies As science" and replaced historian'.¹² Shortly Wheare expressed or current political

Now, as Finer and his colleagues during his subjects', and he should taught both'.¹⁴ The academic subject, is mined the building and has done so, with

Still more problems journalism, masquerade Ernest Barker (who

⁹ J. Hayward, 'British J. Hayward, B. Barry, and (Oxford: Oxford University Study of Politics as a Variable 1930s, colleges responded 'for Politics, Colleges D. N. Chester, 'Politics 151-64 at 156.

¹⁰ New Haven, CT: Yale Dictionary of National Biography B. Harrison (eds), Oxford Press, 2004), 39-40 at 39.

¹¹ P. Pulzer's doctoral Modern History (1938).

¹² Namely, A. Cobban Approaches to Politics',

¹³ K. C. Wheare, 'The

¹⁴ Quoted in D. Kavari (eds), *Oxford Handbook*

ng, rather than merely impart-
devoted.

BUILDING

Huntington tells us, is to 'give
ate new linkages between the
Institutionalization imposes
ose.⁷ [D]evelop[ing] an esprit
e prime task in building an

ation

your institution from other
once shrewdly remarked that
; and a national airline all its
to thrive in a place, it ought
rse there can be 'invisible
ents', with much the same
rpose, there is nothing like
o a wider discipline outside
rom other departments and

it universities create depart-
political science achieved this
US it happened early in the
teaching and research were
nd in some places still are).
rating in the middle of the
ened much later. Although
ite department, it was a sub-
department offers degrees
undergraduate degree all its

ocial conflict, political institutions
re impossible' (ibid., p. 9).
re highly institutionalized it is; the
tionalized' (Huntington, *Political*

own. In terms of the organizational chart and degree structure, then, institu-
tional differentiation has been slow in coming.

There is another important aspect of institutional differentiation at work.
That has to do with staffing. When the Modern Greats/PPE degree was first
introduced just after the First World War, teaching of it fell to fellows in
History or Philosophy.⁹ That pattern persisted even when dedicated posts in
Politics were created, with appointments often going to people who were
historians, *de facto* or *de jure*. One Gladstone Professor, Max Beloff, went so
far as to entitle his intellectual autobiography *An Historian in the Twentieth
Century*.¹⁰ But both of the next occupants of that chair also held history
degrees as their highest qualifications.¹¹

Brian Barry is right, I think, to find it significant that, at the founding of the
Political Studies Association, 'the successful amendment striking "political
science" and replacing it with "political studies" was moved by an [Oxford]
historian'.¹² Shortly thereafter, speaking from Oxford's Gladstone chair, Ken-
neth Wheare expressed the view that 'political science is no more than recent
or current political and constitutional history'.¹³

Now, as *Finer* is quoted as having told a scandalized meeting of his
colleagues during his stint in the chair, 'history and politics were different
subjects', and he should know because (as he went on to say pointedly) 'he had
taught both'.¹⁴ The failure to differentiate politics sharply from history, as an
academic subject, is another failure of institutional differentiation that under-
mined the building of a distinct department devoted to politics in Oxford—
and has done so, well into the final years of the last century.

Still more problematic, in a way, is the failure to differentiate politics from
journalism, masquerading as contemporary history. In a previous generation,
Ernest Barker (who had taught modern history at Oxford before taking up the

⁹ J. Hayward, 'British Approaches to Politics: The Dawn of a Self-deprecating Discipline', in J. Hayward, B. Barry, and A. Brown (eds), *The British Study of Politics in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, for the British Academy, 1999), 1–36 at 1; and B. Barry, 'The Study of Politics as a Vocation', *ibid.*, 425–67 at 433. When the degree was restructured in the 1930s, colleges responded with dedicated appointments in Economics as well as Philosophy; but 'for Politics, Colleges tried to make do with their philosophy and history tutors' still: D. N. Chester, 'Political Studies: Recollection and Comments', *Political Studies*, 23 (1975), 151–64 at 156.

¹⁰ New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992. The anomaly is remarked upon even in his *Dictionary of National Biography* entry; D. Cameron Watt, 'Beloff, Max', in H.C.G. Matthew and B. Harrison (eds), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 5 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 39–40 at 39.

¹¹ P. Pulzer's doctorate is in History; Samuel Finer took honours in both PPE (1937) and Modern History (1938).

¹² Namely, A. Cobban; Barry, 'The Study of Politics as a Vocation', 434, and Hayward, 'British Approaches to Politics', 20.

¹³ K. C. Wheare, 'The Teaching of Political Science', *Political Studies*, 3 (1955), 70–2 at 71.

¹⁴ Quoted in D. Kavanagh, 'Antecedents', in M. Flinders, A. Gamble, C. Hay, and M. Kenny (eds), *Oxford Handbook of British Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 37, n. 1.

Cambridge Chair of Political Science) declared that he 'learned such lessons of political wisdom as I have mastered, and acquired the tastes that have conducted me to a Chair of Politics', from reading the *Manchester Guardian*.¹⁵ It was a nice compliment to pay to the *Guardian*, but a dreadful description of the qualifications that should be professionally required for a Chair of Political Science.

Crowding out and historical lock-in

Political scientists and others talk much of 'path dependence'. Previous decisions set the parameters for future decisions.¹⁶

Staffing is of course one important source of historical lock-in. But firmly though staffing decisions might lock you in, that is only for thirty years or so. Placeholders eventually die or retire, and opportunities arise to replace them with others of a different sort. There is another historical lock-in that might be more serious and long-lasting. That concerns the syllabus or, more precisely, the examination papers.

A department with a strong disciplinary orientation will try to tailor its members' teaching to their research interests. That can never be done completely: there are always service courses to be taught, of a more introductory sort. Still, in departments that attach high priority to their members contributing to the discipline themselves rather than merely reporting the work of others, synergies between research and teaching are always sought and often found. More often than not, people teach what they research, after some fashion or another.

At Oxford things are different, the consequence of another historical lock-in. As Alan Ryan's chapter notes, pre-modern Oxford was primarily a place of undergraduate instruction, and mechanisms for assessing and teaching undergraduates were firmly in place long before there was any real expectation that tutors should contribute to knowledge as well as impart it. At other newer universities, teachers are substantially free to design their own courses and write their own examinations. At Oxford, you are constrained by the 'strait-jacket of a prescribed syllabus'.¹⁷ Examination papers are set centrally, and everyone has to teach to them. Not only do all tutors teach to the same papers; they typically also have to teach across a wide range of papers, well beyond

their own active research. This encourages dilettantism, research. In characteristic system' as 'the institution

There is one other aspect of colleges. Institution building. Even where institutions are strong, examples being particularly in the particular sphere of life that states have historical that reason that Aaron public policy was no job appointments in the sch

Anyone striving to in cope with the fact that lished, commanding the demands on their time functions that they also greedy institutions but s

Nor is it just a matter compete with the colleg monastic institutions fr leges can serve as place come (but not unwarranted wider disciplinary nor social science colleges, count for only a quarter staff.²⁴

¹⁵ Quoted in Hayward, 'British Approaches to Politics', 9.

¹⁶ P. Pierson, *Politics in Time* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

¹⁷ R. Wokler, 'The Professoriate of Political Thought in England since 1914: A Tale of Three Chairs', in D. Castiglione and I. Hampsher-Monk (eds), *The History of Political Thought in National Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 136.

¹⁸ 'This problem of amateurism in the undergraduate colleges according to which the Fellow and a large proportion of the Politics as a Vocation', 433).

¹⁹ Barry, 'The Study of Politics', 10.

²⁰ E. Goffman, *Asylums* (Harvard, 1961), 13.

²¹ L. A. Coser, *Greedy Institutions* (Chicago, 1956), 1.

²² J. Blatter, 'Dual Citizenship', 769-98.

²³ A. Wildavsky, *The Art of Politics* (New York, 1984), 409.

²⁴ Under 27 per cent: <v accessed 3 September 2013.

that he 'learned such lessons of
red the tastes that have con-
ne *Manchester Guardian*.¹⁵ It
but a dreadful description of
quired for a Chair of Political

al lock-in

dependence'. Previous deci-

historical lock-in. But firmly
is only for thirty years or so.
unities arise to replace them
historical lock-in that might be
a syllabus or, more precisely,

mentation will try to tailor its
that can never be done com-
right, of a more introductory
ty to their members contrib-
erely reporting the work of
are always sought and often
it they research, after some

ze of another historical lock-
ford was primarily a place of
ssessing and teaching under-
was any real expectation that
s impart it. At other newer
sign their own courses and
e constrained by the 'strait-
papers are set centrally, and
ors teach to the same papers;
ange of papers, well beyond

their own active research interests.¹⁸ The tutorial pressure thus tends to encourage dilettantism, rather than concentration on topics for sustained research. In characteristically purple prose, Brian Barry refers to the 'tutorial system' as 'the institutionalization of the amateur ethos'.¹⁹

There is one other aspect of crowding out that is central to the story: the colleges. Institution builders know all too well the dangers of divided loyalties. Even where institutions are not 'total' (in Goffman's sense of all-encompassing, examples being prisons and armies²⁰), they are nonetheless 'greedy'.²¹ Strong, successful institutions brook no divided loyalties, at least within the particular sphere of life that they claim as their own. It is for just that reason that states have historically been allergic to dual citizenship.²² And it is for just that reason that Aaron Wildavsky's first rule for creating a good school of public policy was no joint appointments: 'make direct, 100 per cent-time appointments in the school'.²³

Anyone striving to institutionalize an academic discipline in Oxford has to cope with the fact that the undergraduate colleges were already well established, commanding the loyalty and affection of members and making heavy demands on their time and attention. Indeed, given the wide range of other functions that they also serve, those self-governing communities are not just greedy institutions but sometimes border on total institutions.

Nor is it just a matter of any new disciplinary organization having to compete with the college for people's time, attention, and loyalty. Like the monastic institutions from which they evolved, Oxford undergraduate colleges can serve as places of sanctuary for people who come under unwelcome (but not unwarranted) pressure from the department to comply with wider disciplinary norms. Although things differ at the two postgraduate social science colleges, St Antony's and Nuffield, between them those account for only a quarter of Oxford's Politics and International Relations staff.²⁴

¹⁸ 'This problem of amateurishness was exacerbated in Oxford by the norm maintained by the undergraduate colleges (now much attenuated by the growth of swap arrangements) according to which the Fellow in a subject was expected to teach all the compulsory papers and a large proportion of the optional ones to the college's undergraduates' (Barry, 'The Study of Politics as a Vocation', 433).

¹⁹ Barry, 'The Study of Politics as a Vocation', 433.

²⁰ E. Goffman, *Asylums* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961).

²¹ L. A. Coser, *Greedy Institutions* (New York: Free Press, 1974).

²² J. Blatter, 'Dual Citizenship and Theories of Democracy', *Citizenship Studies*, 15 (2011), 769–98.

²³ A. Wildavsky, *The Art and Craft of Policy Analysis* (London: Macmillan, 1979), 407–19 at 409.

²⁴ Under 27 per cent: <www.politics.ox.ac.uk/index.php/people/academic-staff.html>, last accessed 3 September 2013.

Institutional culture

Institutions have tonal properties as well as organizational aspects. These are perhaps best captured by the concept of 'organizational culture'.

Every successful institution needs a discrete mission. To command the loyalty that is required for an institution to succeed, there had better be a ready answer—which had better be pretty much the same, across all members of the institution—to the question, 'What at root are we all about?' That is required to engender the sense of shared purpose that Huntington finds so central to political institutionalization.²⁵

That everyone involved sees themselves as engaged in broadly the same enterprise is a necessary but not sufficient cultural condition of successful institutionalization. A sense of mutual trust is required, as well as a sense of shared purpose. As one scholar of the military remarks, 'Comrades must trust one another's ability to resist the innumerable temptations that threaten the group's solidarity; otherwise, in trying social situations, the desire to fend for oneself becomes overwhelming.'²⁶ That is just as true in academic wars as in shooting ones.

In a strong academic department, colleagues will actually be interested in and supportive of what each other is doing. Mutual affection is nice but not strictly necessary; mutual respect is enough. You must be able to trust the competence and the values of your colleagues, if the department is to work well as an institution. Inculcating that sort of trust is one of the prime aims of an institution builder.²⁷

Cooperation 'requires trust; trust involves predictability; and predictability requires regularized and institutionalized patterns of behaviour'.²⁸ Huntington goes on to observe:

[T]he absence of trust in the culture of the society provides formidable obstacles to the creation of public institutions. Those societies deficient in stable and effective government are also deficient in mutual trust among their citizens, in

national and public loyalty cultures are . . . marked by:

Once again, what is true of ones. Cultures of mutual sustaining. Experience is innovating.³⁰ If you have warranted, you will have more have distrusted in the past the more reluctant to trust reciprocators', which behaviour inhabit, getting off on the

The remarkable departed to in several other virtuous cycle of this sort *Biography* reports, 'A special and social studies [in MacL between the senior professors Polanyi and Max Gluckman

Oxford may well be an stories one hears. My examination theory, because those are to generalize.

There has been, as one political theorists to 'articulate other's work . . . with a concrete example, Isaiah Berlin 'freedom him [in the Chichele chair Berlin himself, I am reliably motorcar on the mantle in sharks out there' (namely, J morning Philosophy reading

²⁵ Value-driven management, based on shared values within the organization, is a crucial element the McKinsey recipe; T. Peters and R. H. Waterman, Jr, *In Search of Excellence* (New York: HarperCollins, 1982), ch. 9.

²⁶ D. Rapoport, quoted in Huntington, *Political Order*, 23.

²⁷ The advice Wildavsky gives to would-be deans also applies well to those who would build strong institutions at the departmental level: 'Correcting errors when things go bad is easier if you help school members when things are good. Administration and staff usually meet when one needs something from the other . . . It is desirable, therefore, for administrators to ask members how things are going, and to offer assistance, outside of a specific need to ask for or grant a favor. The idea that somebody out there cares, that administration is there to help as well as to harass, is best reinforced when nothing evident is at stake' (*Art and Craft of Policy Analysis*, 417).

²⁸ Huntington, *Political Order*, 24.

²⁹ Huntington, *Political Order*
³⁰ J. G. March, *The Ambiguities* 106–14.

³¹ S. Bowles and H. Gintis, 'F'

³² J. M. Lee, 'Mackenzie, William' 624–6 at 625.

³³ Wokler, 'The Professoriate' similarly listed, as the first distinguishing that 'they were decades of prima critical dialogue with others or 'Philosophy', R. E. Goodin and J (Oxford: Oxford University Press

³⁴ Wokler, 'The Professoriate

re

anizational aspects. These are
national culture'.

the mission. To command the
succeed, there had better be a
the same, across all members
not are we all about?' That is
ose that Huntington finds so

engaged in broadly the same
atural condition of successful
required, as well as a sense of
emarks, 'Comrades must trust
temptations that threaten the
uations, the desire to fend for
s true in academic wars as in

will actually be interested in
atural affection is nice but not
ou must be able to trust the
if the department is to work
ist is one of the prime aims of

redictability; and predictability
ns of behaviour'.²⁸ Hunting-

provides formidable obstacles
ieties deficient in stable and
trust among their citizens, in

within the organization, is a crucial
an, Jr, *In Search of Excellence* (New

3.
) applies well to those who would
cting errors when things go bad is
l. Administration and staff usually
lesirable, therefore, for administra-
ssistance, outside of a specific need
there cares, that administration is
othing evident is at stake' (*Art and*

national and public loyalties, and in organization skills and capacity. Their public
cultures are . . . marked by suspicion, jealousy, and latent or actual hostility . . .²⁹

Once again, what is true of political institutions is equally true of academic
ones. Cultures of mutual trust and of mutual recrimination are both self-
sustaining. Experience is an imperfect teacher, good at reinforcing, bad at
innovating.³⁰ If you have trusted someone in the past and found that trust
warranted, you will have more reason for trusting in future. Conversely, if you
have distrusted in the past and found your distrust warranted, you will be all
the more reluctant to trust in the future. In a tit-for-tat world of 'strong
reciprocators', which behavioural economists tell us is the world that we
inhabit, getting off on the right foot is everything.³¹

The remarkable department that Bill Mackenzie built at Manchester, re-
ferred to in several other chapters in this volume, is a good example of a
virtuous cycle of this sort. As his biographer in the *Dictionary of National
Biography* reports, 'A special feature of the Manchester faculty of economic
and social studies [in Mackenzie's day] was the high degree of mutual respect
between the senior professors, such as Ely Devons, W. Arthur Lewis, Michael
Polanyi and Max Gluckman.'³²

Oxford may well be an example of the opposite, at least from some of the
stories one hears. My examples come from my home subdiscipline of political
theory, because those are the stories I happen to hear. But I suspect they may
generalize.

There has been, as one commentator puts it, something of a tradition for
political theorists to 'articulate their opinions of one another and of each
other's work . . . with a courteous smile through clenched teeth'.³³ Thus, for
example, Isaiah Berlin 'frequently described John Plamenatz, who succeeded
him [in the Chichele chair], as "Montenegro's greatest political thinker" . . .'.³⁴
Berlin himself, I am reliably informed, propped a placard advertising the Austin
motorcar on the mantle in his study, in order (he said) 'to remind him of the
sharks out there' (namely, J. L. Austin, whose withering remarks in his Saturday
morning Philosophy reading group were legendary). H. L. A. Hart apparently

²⁹ Huntington, *Political Order*, 28.

³⁰ J. G. March, *The Ambiguities of Experience* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010),
106–14.

³¹ S. Bowles and H. Gintis, 'Homo reciprocans', *Nature*, 415/6868 (10 January 2002), 125–8.

³² J. M. Lee, 'Mackenzie, William James Millar', *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 35,
624–6 at 625.

³³ Wokler, 'The Professoriate of Political Thought in England since 1914', 151. Bhikhu Parekh
similarly listed, as the first distinguishing features of political philosophy of the 1950s and 1960s,
that 'they were decades of prima donnas or gurus. Hardly any of the major figures engaged in a
critical dialogue with others or even referred to them': 'Political Theory: Traditions in Political
Philosophy', R. E. Goodin and H.-D. Klingemann (eds), *A New Handbook of Political Science*
(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 503–18.

³⁴ Wokler, 'The Professoriate of Political Thought in England since 1914', 151.

lived in crippling intellectual terror of his colleagues, judging from his authorized biography.³⁵ None of that is the stuff of which a mutually supportive institutional culture is made.

Such an intellectual climate has consequences not only for how one engages one's colleagues but also for the sorts of thing one chooses to study. In a world of snide intellectual sharpshooters, foxholes provide the best refuge. In such an environment, it is only sensible to avoid exposing yourself. So cultivate norms against having serious conversations with colleagues about your work (they might catch you out). Choose a research topic that no one else is interested in (so no one can catch you out). Take shelter in the relative safety of single-country comparativism (fewer others can catch you out).³⁶ All of those practices are still strikingly common in Oxford, perhaps for self-protective reasons deriving from the institutional culture.

Institutional leadership and transitions

Institutions are supposed to be relatively enduring. To institutionalize something is to set it in stone. In order to give rise to 'stable, recurring patterns of behaviour', institutions must themselves be relatively stable and enduring.

That in turn entails something about leadership, leadership transitions, and succession planning. Strong institutions are more likely to be led by cadres of people with similar values and priorities, rather than by a single individual. As Huntington observes politically, so too academically: 'The simplest political system is that which depends on one individual. [But i]t is also least stable. Tyrannies, Aristotle pointed out, are virtually all "quite short-lived."³⁷

Second, strong institutions need a succession plan and a mechanism for smooth leadership transition. They are robust against changes in personnel. They are made so in part by cultivating a cadre of possible leaders who share similar institutional values and priorities, and hence who are institutionally virtually interchangeable for one another. Institutions are made robust against changes in personnel, also, by self-consciously cultivating successor

generations. The formula hiring, for each generation itself.

It is a matter, not only of having identified and hired the research stars you have unwanted teaching and as possible from those ultimate time they assume the sufficiently captivated by was certainly Mackenzie's

Elsewhere in Britain all an 'absence of clear identity. Nowhere has that been necessary. Researchers pop up from thin air, leaving no intellectual heir

PR

Those are all things that are departments. The lessons of Huntington draw at the level of department.

So too do their findings. Huntington coins the phrase which institutionalization he characterizes that situation

The presence or absence of The absence of effective power is fragmented: it comes over the system as a whole

³⁵ N. Lacey, *A Life of H. L. A. Hart: The Nightmare and the Noble Dream* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

³⁶ 'Safety in singularity', Jack Hayward puts it in his chapter in this volume. That is not to deny that 'getting your facts straight' about each of the countries you are comparing is not important, nor is it to deny that that is highly specialized labour in the first instance: V. Bogdanor, 'Comparative Politics', in J. Hayward et al. (eds), *British Study of Politics in the Twentieth Century*, 147–80 at 178. But that is just a matter of collecting and cleaning data, which until you do something more with it is just data awaiting analysis. As Barry rightly replies, genuine comparison require that those single-country studies either be embedded in some 'collective multi-national project' or else at least 'deploy concepts and ideas that have already [been] developed for comparative use' ('The Study of Politics as a Vocation', 446).

³⁷ Huntington, *Political Order*, 18, referring to Aristotle's *Politics*.

³⁸ C. Hood, 'Twelve Volume "Volumes of Influence" conference irony is that he did it too well: in of Mackenzie's coterie went on to some of their finest professors of as is widely known, but also Manchester and was plucked by on Mackenzie's recommendation

³⁹ Wokler, 'The Professoriate

⁴⁰ Huntington, *Political Order*

s, judging from his author-
 ich a mutually supportive

t only for how one engages
 hooses to study. In a world
 the best refuge. In such an
 ourself. So cultivate norms
 ies about your work (they
 no one else is interested in
 e relative safety of single-
 you out).³⁶ All of those
 perhaps for self-protective

insitions

To institutionalize some-
 able, recurring patterns of
 ly stable and enduring.
 eadership transitions, and
 kely to be led by cadres of
 i by a single individual. As
 ly: 'The simplest political
 But i]t is also least stable.
 uite short-lived.'³⁷

plan and a mechanism
 gainst changes in person-
 e of possible leaders who
 d hence who are institu-
 tutions are made robust
 usly cultivating successor

Noble Dream (Oxford: Oxford

r in this volume. That is not to
 tries you are comparing is not
 labour in the first instance:
British Study of Politics in the
 lecting and cleaning data, which
 alysis. As Barry rightly replies,
 either be embedded in some
 pts and ideas that have already
 a Vocation', 446).
 itics.

generations. The formula for building a great academic department is, when hiring, for each generation to strive to hire people younger and better than itself.

It is a matter, not only of picking horses, but also of backing them. Once you have identified and hired promising youngsters, protect and cultivate them as the research stars you hope they will become. Instead of dumping all your unwanted teaching and administration on them, shelter them for as long as possible from those ultimately inevitable facts of academic life. In that way, by the time they assume the burdens of leadership, they will have become sufficiently captivated by their research to lead in the right direction. That was certainly Mackenzie's strategy at Manchester.³⁸

Elsewhere in Britain all of this was largely missing. Observers comment on an 'absence of clear identities, shared convictions or dynastic continuities'.³⁹ Nowhere has that been more true than at Oxford, where great politics researchers pop up from time to time, shine brightly for a time, and then fade leaving no intellectual heirs behind.

PRAETORIAN POLITICS

Those are all things that need to be done, and not to be done, to build strong departments. The lessons that scholars of comparative politics such as Huntington draw at the level of the state carry over well to the level of the academic department.

So too do their findings about what life is like without strong institutions. Huntington coins the phrase 'praetorian politics' to characterize a situation in which institutionalization is low and participation is high. Quoting Macaulay, he characterizes that situation as akin to 'all sail and no anchor'.⁴⁰

The presence or absence of strong institutions is what makes all the difference. The absence of effective political institutions in a praetorian society means that power is fragmented: it comes in many forms and in small quantities. Authority over the system as a whole is transitory, and the weakness of political institutions

³⁸ C. Hood, 'Twelve Volumes, Varying Influence: W. J. M. Mackenzie'. Paper presented at 'Volumes of Influence' conference, University of York, 1-3 September 2003, 20, fn 12. The great irony is that he did it too well: instead of building a cadre that stayed on to run Manchester, most of Mackenzie's coterie went on to provide many of the new universities and some of the old with some of their finest professors of politics. They included not only Samuel Finer and Richard Rose as is widely known, but also Jean Blondel, who had briefly passed through Mackenzie's Manchester and was plucked by the founding Essex Vice Chancellor from what is now Keele on Mackenzie's recommendation.

³⁹ Wokler, 'The Professoriate of Political Thought in England since 1914', 152.

⁴⁰ Huntington, *Political Order*, 87.

means that authority and office are easily acquired and easily lost. Consequently, no incentive exists for a leader or group to make significant concessions in the search for authority.⁴¹

In a system with strong institutions, in contrast,

The institutions impose political socialization as the price of political participation. In a praetorian society groups become mobilized into politics without becoming socialized by politics. The distinguishing characteristic of a highly institutionalized polity, in contrast, is the price it places on power. [There,] the price of authority involves limitations on the resources that may be employed in politics, the procedures through which power may be acquired, and the attitudes that power wielders may hold.⁴²

Again, as in real-world politics, so too in academic politics. If there is no strong sense of departmental identity, no strong sense of shared values and purposes, then it really is all down just to a zero-sum struggle for resources. There simply is nothing to invest in the long term for.

But it is perhaps at university level where praetorian politics manifests itself most vividly. David Marquand has commented:

Collegiality and commensality have been of Oxford's essence since medieval times, and they still are. The originally German, but now virtually universal model of the university as a 'departmentally segmented and hierarchically controlled monolith' has always been alien to it, and attempts to force or lure it into a Germanic mould have always been broken on the stubborn independence of [what Halsey calls] the 'elitist democracy of the dons'.⁴³

The most recent event to which Marquand presumably refers is the 2006 uprising in Convocation against the then Vice Chancellor John Hood's governance reforms. A leader of the successful opposition wrote in the *Guardian* after the crucial meeting, 'I swear I saw the vice-chancellor start to sweat' and 'the registrar seemed near to tears'.⁴⁴ Whatever the merits or demerits of those particular reforms, such periodic uprisings really do seem to fit Huntington's model of praetorian politics, in which 'apathy and indignation succeed each other: the twin children of the absence of authoritative political symbols and institutions'.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Huntington, *Political Order*, 196.

⁴² Huntington, *Political Order*, 83.

⁴³ D. Marquand, 'From the Forum to the Cloister—and Back Again? Resisting the Temptations of Professionalism'. Paper presented to the colloquium 'Tragedy or Triumph? A Hundred Years of Politics and IR at Oxford', Oxford, 1–2 December 2011.

⁴⁴ G. Evans, "I swear I saw the vice-chancellor start to sweat", *The Guardian* (17 November 2006). For the transcript of the debate in Convocation, see *Oxford University Gazette*, No. 4791, Supplement (1) (7 December 2006): 505–25.

⁴⁵ Huntington, *Political Order*, 88.

Most of what I have been s
apply equally to Politics or
Oxford departments have s
of shared purpose to their
special about Politics?"

Two things, I shall sugg
distance from your research
for 'political zoologists [to]
zoo'.⁴⁶ The second is a 'just
that perverts 'pluralism' to s
actually engaging with one

As regards 'critical dista
problems, which are inter
count as 'knowledge' about
Britain, and which has mor
places, holds that knowledg
it comes from yourself hav
comes from talking to the
intimations of that not only
and Beloff⁴⁹ but even, at ti

⁴⁶ Hayward, 'British Approach
politics had not been divorced fro
personal experience if one was
politics was actually conducted'.

⁴⁷ The tendency to conflate the
influential corners of the British j
of *British Politics*, ed. Gamble et al
and to the study of it carries clear
be studied.

⁴⁸ 'The best way to get a gen
practical politics' (quoted in Hay

⁴⁹ Max Beloff's *Dictionary of P*
'His own writings combined . . . ,
political and administrative conte
in getting things done at many le
In an earlier piece Beloff had a
effectively or to teach it properly
Oxford "Politics", *Political Studi*
that Wheare had himself caution
the political practitioner' ('The T

⁵⁰ 'Full contact with practical
problems of politics' (quoted in I

⁵¹ 'I cannot avoid the awkward
government', writes W. J. M. M
1975), 107.

WHAT'S SPECIAL ABOUT POLITICS?

Most of what I have been saying pertains to Oxford in general, and it should apply equally to Politics or to any other discipline. Clearly in some disciplines Oxford departments have succeeded in providing a coherent, collective sense of shared purpose to their members. So let me close by asking, 'What's so special about Politics?'

Two things, I shall suggest. The first is a failure to get sufficient critical distance from your research subjects—in Hayward's famous phrase, a failure for 'political zoologists [to] become separated from the denizens of the political zoo'.⁴⁶ The second is a 'just so' story that Politics dons tell themselves—a story that perverts 'pluralism' to serve a rationale for scholars of the same subject not actually engaging with one another. Let me elaborate each briefly, in turn.

As regards 'critical distance from your research subjects', there are three problems, which are interconnected. The first concerns what is thought to count as 'knowledge' about politics. The view that used to be endemic across Britain, and which has more exponents remaining in Oxford than most other places, holds that knowledge about politics must ideally be first-hand. Ideally, it comes from yourself having experience in government. At the very least, it comes from talking to those who have experience of that.⁴⁷ You get clear intimations of that not only from Oxford luminaries such as Bryce,⁴⁸ Wheare, and Beloff⁴⁹ but even, at times, from the likes of Laski⁵⁰ and Mackenzie.⁵¹ At

⁴⁶ Hayward, 'British Approaches to Politics', 2, speaks of 'a time when the academic study of politics had not been divorced from its practice and it was considered an advantage to have had personal experience if one was to describe, analyze and propose improvements in the way politics was actually conducted'.

⁴⁷ The tendency to conflate the academic study of politics with the practice of it still, in many influential corners of the British profession, is revealed in the very title of the *Oxford Handbook of British Politics*, ed. Gamble et al. Using the same term to refer both to the subject under study and to the study of it carries clear implications about how it is supposed that the subject should be studied.

⁴⁸ 'The best way to get a genuine and exact first-hand knowledge of the data is to mix in practical politics' (quoted in Hayward, 'British Approaches to Politics', 8).

⁴⁹ Max Beloff's *Dictionary of National Biography* entry for 'Wheare' makes the point for both: 'His own writings combined . . . , above all, an awareness of how people actually behave in the political and administrative context—an awareness solidly based on his own practical experience in getting things done at many levels' (*Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 58, 405–7 at 406). In an earlier piece Beloff had asked rhetorically 'Is it really possible to write about politics effectively or to teach it properly without some experience of the political world?': 'The Politics of Oxford "Politics"', *Political Studies*, 23 (1975): 7–39 at 16. In fairness, however, it ought to be said that Wheare had himself cautioned against confusing 'the functions of the political scientist and the political practitioner' ('The Teaching of Political Science', 72).

⁵⁰ 'Full contact with practical affairs is one of the best ways of understanding the academic problems of politics' (quoted in Hayward, 'British Approaches to Politics', 14).

⁵¹ 'I cannot avoid the awkward conclusion that to study government one must participate in government', writes W. J. M. Mackenzie, *Explorations in Government* (London: Macmillan, 1975), 107.

and easily lost. Consequently, the significant concessions in the

st,

the price of political participation into politics without anything characteristic of a highly placed on power. [There,] the sources that may be employed in may be acquired, and the attitudes

nic politics. If there is no strong of shared values and purposes, struggle for resources. There simply

etorian politics manifests itself

xford's essence since medieval n, but now virtually universal nented and hierarchically con- tempts to force or lure it into a the stubborn independence of ons'.⁴³

presumably refers is the 2006 Chancellor John Hood's gov- ernment wrote in the *Guardian* 'chancellor start to sweat' and the merits or demerits of those ly do seem to fit Huntington's and indignation succeed each oritative political symbols and

on, *Political Order*, 83.

l Back Again? Resisting the Temptation 'Tragedy or Triumph? A Hundred

2011. 'sweat"', *The Guardian* (17 November 2011), *Oxford University Gazette*, No. 4791,

Oxford (as noted by Rodney Barker and Simon Green in their chapters in this volume), that principle was written into the very terms of the endowment of the Gladstone chair, stipulating that it is to be given to 'some able man from outside, with practical experience' (a stipulation that has been honoured in the breach after the first two appointments).⁵² Politics dons who had 'had a good war'—who had spent their war in the higher civil service—were regarded as the most insightful commentators on British politics well into the last quarter of the twentieth century.

Now, I have much time for participant observation as a research technique in social science. But the first rule of that technique is to be acutely aware of the need explicitly to *interpret* your observations through a *theoretical* lens. No good anthropologist—indeed, no good journalist—would ever accept an informant's report uncritically, at face value.⁵³ It is not participant observation, but rather the lack of critical distance that can often accompany it, about which I am complaining.⁵⁴

This hankering for proximity to power has long been a particular problem at Oxford, owing to its special status as 'the great finishing school of the British Empire' (and its successor states).⁵⁵ Two things follow from that status. First, Oxford academics tend to be closely acquainted with senior politicians and administrators from their student days. Second, perhaps because of that, those academics have historically been consulted by those politicians and administrators on a regular basis.⁵⁶

Again, I have nothing against academics giving public officials the benefit of their informed advice. That is all to the good (insofar as the advice is taken and actually improves policy, at least). But notice the contrasting styles

of engagement in the US and their academic work.

In the US, academics ten years their political party is in power, ten years their party is out of power. Hoover or the Kennedy School. Politically connected 'constantly on call'. That prevents any critical distance when you are constantly called upon) to enter into might be useful for them.

So that is my first answer to the generic features of Oxford inhibit institutionalization of comment more badly in the case study of politics there is the too closely with the objects of criticism simply suffer no such

PLURAL

A second explanation is the seemingly apt defence for pluralism is 'pluralism', which we know to be a 'good thing'.

By pluralism is meant that there is more than one valid reform editor of *Political Science*

There are many styles in politics. His own is essential to our respect as in others.⁵⁹

⁵² Quoted in Wokler, 'The Professoriate of Political Thought in England since 1914', 139.

⁵³ Cf. D. Freeman's account of gullibility in *Margaret Mead and Samoa* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983).

⁵⁴ There may be an element of national character (to use that discredited notion) at work here. Macaulay remarks, 'The perfect lawgiver is a just temper between the mere man of theory, who can see nothing but general principles, and the mere man of business, who can see nothing but particular circumstances... But in English legislation the practical element has always predominated, and not seldom unduly predominated, over the speculative... Our national distaste for whatever is abstract amounts undoubtedly to a fault. Yet it is, perhaps, a fault on the right side' (quoted in Hayward, 'British Approaches to Politics', 4).

⁵⁵ Wokler, 'The Professoriate of Political Thought in England since 1914', 138. He goes on to describe the pedagogical task, seen in that light, as 'to nurture our students' zeal and prepare them for public office' (157).

⁵⁶ Perhaps more so in the past than the present. Consider the example of Mackenzie, who was 'something of an all-purpose quangocrat, moving effortlessly through the world of the "great and the good" and serving on a string of government committees, commissions and advisory bodies in many diverse arenas. For example, he worked as an adviser on the independence constitutions for Kenya and Tanzania... and served on many of the regional and national quangos he later wrote about, as well as on the Social Science Research Council when it was created in 1965 and the Herbert Royal Commission which recommended the GLC' (Hood, 'Twelve Volumes, Varying Influence', 4, fn 4).

⁵⁷ For example, Joseph Nye, Secretary of Defense, served as Deputy Secretary of Defense and Assistant Secretary of Defense under

⁵⁸ As Mackenzie, *Explorations* unawares the attitudes of the very

⁵⁹ F. F. Ridley, 'If the Devil Rides Opposition', 15 (1980), 471–85 at 4

Green in their chapters in this
y terms of the endowment of
given to 'some able man from
that has been honoured in the
ics dons who had 'had a good
vil service—were regarded as
litics well into the last quarter

ration as a research technique
ue is to be acutely aware of the
rough a *theoretical* lens. No
st—would ever accept an in-
s not participant observation,
n often accompany it, about

ng been a particular problem
finishing school of the British
follow from that status. First,
d with senior politicians and
perhaps because of that, those
iose politicians and adminis-

ng public officials the benefit
od (insofar as the advice is
: notice the contrasting styles

ught in England since 1914', 139.
Lead and Samoa (Cambridge, MA:

se that discredited notion) at work
er between the mere man of theory,
an of business, who can see nothing
the practical element has always
er the speculative. . . . Our national
fault. Yet it is, perhaps, a fault on
'politics', 4).

land since 1914', 138. He goes on to
ure our students' zeal and prepare

the example of Mackenzie, who was
through the world of the "great and
s, commissions and advisory bodies
on the independence constitutions
onal and national quangos he later
cil when it was created in 1965 and
: GLC' (Hood, 'Twelve Volumes,

of engagement in the US and UK and the different ways that those impact on
their academic work.

In the US, academics tend to be 'in and out' of government. During the
years their political party is in power, they occupy posts in government; during
years their party is out of power, they sit in the Brookings Institution or the
Hoover or the Kennedy School, and behave (more or less) as proper academ-
ics.⁵⁷ Politically connected British academics have historically been more
'constantly on call'. That pattern entails 'grave risks'.⁵⁸ And it is very hard to
get any critical distance when your research subjects never leave you alone,
when you are constantly called upon (or constantly expecting any day to be
called upon) to enter into *their* mindset to craft some piece of advice that
might be useful for them.

So that is my first answer to the question of 'why politics is special'—why
the generic features of Oxford academic arrangements that I identified seem to
inhibit institutionalization of a proper, discipline-oriented research depart-
ment more badly in the case of politics than in the case of other subjects. In the
study of politics there is the risk, which all too often is realized, of identifying
too closely with the objects of your study. Molecular biologists or astrophys-
icists simply suffer no such temptations.

PLURALISM WITHOUT A POINT

A second explanation is the ready availability, within the discipline itself, of a
seemingly apt defence for not imposing the discipline of a discipline. That
defence is 'pluralism', which every properly trained political scientist should
know to be a 'good thing'.

By pluralism is meant the opposite of monism. It involves the claim that
there is more than one valid way to study political phenomena. As the last pre-
reform editor of *Political Studies* once put it,

There are many styles in political science. The freedom of the scholar to choose
his own is essential to our academic tradition: pluralism is a 'good thing' in this
respect as in others.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ For example, Joseph Nye, sometime Academic Dean of Harvard's Kennedy School of
Government, served as Deputy Secretary to the Undersecretary of State under Carter and
Assistant Secretary of Defense under Clinton.

⁵⁸ As Mackenzie, *Explorations in Government*, 107, delicately puts it, 'one may take on
unawares the attitudes of the very pleasant people with whom one is working' so incessantly.

⁵⁹ F. F. Ridley, 'If the Devil Rules, What Can Political Science Achieve?' *Government and
Opposition*, 15 (1980), 471–85 at 480.

You hear this same sort of thing from Bernard Crick's *In Defence of Politics*.⁶⁰ You hear it in Adam Roberts's valedictory lecture, upon vacating Oxford's Montague Burton Chair of International Relations and assuming the Presidency of the British Academy.⁶¹ The *Oxford Handbook of British Politics* contains a rousing defence of the distinctively 'pluralist approach' to the study of politics in Britain, and the 'eclectic, tolerant and diverse community of scholarship' that that fosters.⁶²

Now, being a properly trained political scientist I am not about to dissent from the proposition that pluralism, together with the academic freedom that gives rise to it, is a good thing.

But pause for a moment to reflect upon *why* Robert Dahl and I think pluralism is a good thing. It paves the way for competition and opposition. And *why* do John Stuart Mill and I like freedom of speech? Because in the competition of ideas, the truth will out.

It is precisely that competition that is missed out by the 'pluralism defence' as deployed by students of politics in Britain in general and Oxford most especially. When they talk about 'tolerant eclecticism', that *sounds* good.⁶³ But if the 'live and let live' programme is so strong as to amount to creating what Almond bemoans as 'separate tables', with people at the different tables not interacting, then that defeats the whole point of pluralism—academically, just as it would politically.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Crick claims there is a distinctively British conception of politics itself, which he characterizes as the 'conciliation of differing interests', as 'a way of ruling in divided societies without undue violence'. The desirability of this view is, for Crick, self-evident: 'conciliation is better than violence' and 'diversity is better than unity': *In Defence of Politics* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962), 21, 32, 141, 160.

⁶¹ Celebrating what he regards as the characteristically British 'pluralist approach both to the actual conduct of international relations and to the academic subject', Roberts wrote: 'It is a pluralism that accepts the relevance of many different approaches to international relations: not just the proper emphasis on power and interest that is found in realist theories, but also approaches that stress the significance of ideas and norms, the impact of domestic political and economic structures on international politics, the roles of transnational movements and international organizations, and the existence of new challenges. It is a pluralism of theories, a pluralism of political systems, a pluralism of different cultures and mindsets, a pluralism of methods of analysis and a pluralism of academic disciplines.' Roberts ends by echoing Mill's comment in his *Autobiography* that 'Goethe's device, "many-sidedness", was one which I would most willingly . . . have taken for mine': 'International Relations after the Cold War', *International Affairs*, 84 (2008), 335–50 at 335–6.

⁶² Pp. 6, 3. In their preface the editors collectively refer, clearly approvingly, to 'the generally more pluralistic approach to theories and methods that has formed a defining feature of British political studies since its emergence as a distinct profession during the middle of the twentieth century' (p. vi).

⁶³ B. Crick, 'The British Way', *Government and Opposition*, 15 (1980), 297–307 at 303.

⁶⁴ G. A. Almond, 'Separate tables: schools and sects in political science', *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 21 (1988), 828–42. Pillarization depoliticizes: which is of course the whole point of introducing it in deeply divided societies such as The Netherlands: Hans Daalder, 'The Netherlands: Opposition in a Segmented Society', in R. A. Dahl (ed.), *Political Oppositions in Western Democracies* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 1966), 188–236.

In a somewhat different between 'passive' and 'active' as I have just described: a toleration of differences'. D of 'active tolerance', which acceptance and engagement

The latter is most defined when building academic is disaster. That is why stro their own PhDs, at least un put it only a little too crud you have nothing to learn collaborating with clones. V lutely essential to bring ir equally essential is that y learn from them—and they

Likewise with 'interdiscip in different disciplines com another on some topic of n people actually be deeply re have something distinctive each of whom is the same n And again, an interdiscip members actually engage w lem into disciplinary chun address all on its own.

That, then, is the second teachings of the discipline pact', allowing scholars of c

⁶⁵ R. Dahrendorf, 'Doubts about ing Modernities: Pluralism versus i description of an ideal editor is eq well-developed curiosity about wl own], a sense of where the emergi and something more hospitable tl from their own': 'Editorial Comi (1975), 199–201 at 200.

⁶⁶ As one ex-chairperson of tl Harvard overtook Yale in the pr stopped hiring its own PhDs and

⁶⁷ As Barry rightly emphasizes, 'fragmentation': 'specialization ge marking out the relations between are a number of different maps pu terra incognita' ('The Study of Pol

Crick's *In Defence of Politics*.⁶⁰ Culture, upon vacating Oxford's traditions and assuming the Presidency of the *Handbook of British Politics* by 'pluralist approach' to the tolerant and diverse community

alist I am not about to dissent with the academic freedom that

why Robert Dahl and I think competition and opposition. om of speech? Because in the

out by the 'pluralism defence' in general and Oxford most 'cism', that *sounds* good.⁶³ But as to amount to creating what ple at the different tables not pluralism—academically, just

n of politics itself, which he charac- of ruling in divided societies without lf-evident: 'conciliation is better than *Politics* (Harmondsworth: Penguin,

ritish 'pluralist approach both to the mic subject', Roberts wrote: 'It is a ches to international relations: not found in realist theories, but also is, the impact of domestic political s of transnational movements and ges. It is a pluralism of theories, a tures and mindsets, a pluralism of es.' Roberts ends by echoing Mill's -sidedness", was one which I would ns after the Cold War', *Internation-*

clearly approvingly, to 'the generally formed a defining feature of British during the middle of the twentieth

on, 15 (1980), 297–307 at 303. tical science', *PS: Political Science & h* is of course the whole point of dlands: Hans Daalder, 'The Nether- l.), *Political Oppositions in Western* 188–236.

In a somewhat different context, Ralf Dahrendorf draws a distinction between 'passive' and 'active pluralism'. The passive form that he bemoans is as I have just described: a system of 'separate but equal', 'a clearly delineated toleration of differences'. Dahrendorf compares that unfavourably to a model of 'active tolerance', which Dahrendorf describes as involving 'an attitude of acceptance and engagement with respect to a plurality of cultures'.⁶⁵

The latter is most definitely the sort of pluralism that should be sought, when building academic institutions. Mono-culturalism academically is a disaster. That is why strong departments have a firm rule against hiring their own PhDs, at least until after they have been elsewhere for a time.⁶⁶ To put it only a little too crudely: they know nothing you haven't taught them; you have nothing to learn from them; and there is simply no point in collaborating with clones. When building an academic institution, it is absolutely essential to bring interestingly different people into it. But what is equally essential is that you then actually intellectually engage with and learn from them—and they from one another.⁶⁷

Likewise with 'interdisciplinarity'. Much good can come from people rooted in different disciplines coming together and constructively engaging with one another on some topic of mutual concern. But again, it is essential that those people actually be deeply rooted in their own discipline, in order for them to have something distinctive to contribute. (Getting together a group of people each of whom is the same mish-mash of 'all disciplines and none' is pointless.) And again, an interdisciplinary team is genuinely productive only if its members actually engage with one another, rather than carving up the problem into disciplinary chunks each of which one disciplinary subgroup will address all on its own.

That, then, is the second reason 'why politics is special'. One of the core teachings of the discipline is all too easily perverted into a 'non-aggression pact', allowing scholars of differing persuasions and specializations simply to

⁶⁵ R. Dahrendorf, 'Doubts about Pluralism', in E. Ben-Rafael and Y. Sternber (eds), *Comparing Modernities: Pluralism versus Hegemony* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 223–8 at 225, 226. N. Polsby's description of an ideal editor is equally apt for an ideal institution builder. Both 'must . . . have a well-developed curiosity about what is going on in other parts of the discipline [besides their own], a sense of where the emerging interests are, a sensitivity to cliques and schools of thought, and something more hospitable than tolerance toward work in modes and traditions different from their own': 'Editorial Comment: Help Wanted', *American Political Science Review*, 69 (1975), 199–201 at 200.

⁶⁶ As one ex-chairperson of the Harvard department put it, in personal correspondence, Harvard overtook Yale in the professional rankings at the point in the 1980s when Harvard stopped hiring its own PhDs and Yale started hiring its own.

⁶⁷ As Barry rightly emphasizes, 'specialization' within a discipline does not necessarily imply 'fragmentation': 'specialization goes with all those in the discipline having a common map marking out the relations between the different areas, whereas in a fragmented discipline there are a number of different maps putting a different locality at the centre and surrounding it with *terra incognita*' ('The Study of Politics as a Vocation', 447).

go their own separate ways without seriously engaging with one another.⁶⁸ Pluralism is good, but only when it is a pluralism of engagement. A pluralism of non-engagement is a pure travesty.

CONCLUSION

Thus, building strong institutions is important, in academics as well as in politics. There are some things that make that harder and some that make it easier—and the latter have historically tended to predominate in Oxford, when it came to institutionalizing a department of politics that is internally robust and externally tightly connected to the wider discipline.

What can be done? In academic institutions, like most others, staffing is what really matters. First and foremost, anyone trying to build an institution must seize control of appointments. In the meanwhile, you simply have to 'work with what you've got'. There are already in Oxford clusters of dedicated research scholars properly socialized into wider disciplinary norms; bring them together, and create a seminar where the department-in-waiting can be melded.

Above all, take an interest in one another's work. This academic business is supposed to be fun. It is supposed to be interesting. That is why we are all in it, rather than merchant banks or barristers' chambers. There is no need for pulling punches. Part of what it is to take the discipline seriously is to engage deeply, and critically, with one another's work. But the point of critical engagement is not to score points. The point is instead to improve their analysis, to show one another where they might have gone wrong and help them get it right.

⁶⁸ One-country comparativism might be another form of non-aggression pact: 'I won't venture a view about your country, or your interpretation of goings-on there, if you don't about mine.'

Developm
Discipl

Forging a Discipline

*A Critical Assessment of Oxford's Development
of the Study of Politics and International
Relations in Comparative Perspective*

EDITED BY
CHRISTOPHER HOOD,
DESMOND KING, AND
GILLIAN PEELE

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS