ENCYCLOPEDIA OF GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

Volume I

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PREFACE

This encyclopedia is the product of over three years of negotiation, planning, persuasion and, in a few cases, coercion. We are grateful to all of our colleague contributors who have worked so well to produce an outstandingly interesting and distinguished account of the main themes and subjects which constitute the study of politics and government.

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M.H.
M.K.

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

VOLUME I

PART I

INTRODUCTION

1

THE SCIENCE OF POLITICS AND THE POLITICS OF SCIENCE

MARY HAWKESWORTH

The very idea of an *Encyclopedia of Government and Politics* raises important questions about the relationship between knowledge and politics. Although the concept originates from the Greek *egkuklios paideia* or general education, the notion of an encyclopedia in contemporary parlance invokes a far more ambitious and dangerous project. The transition from ancient to modern conception involves a shift from the classical objective of initiating the student into the modes of analysis and domains of inquiry characteristic of an educated person to the radical eighteenth-century objective of systematizing all human knowledge. Even in ancient times cultivating the intellect was acknowledged to pose a threat to established institutions, for education entails a distancing from tradition and the possibility of a sustained challenge to prevailing conventions and norms. The eighteenth-century experience of the French *encyclopédistes,* however, dramatically reinforced the association between the acquisition of knowledge and the threat to the *status quo*. When the *encyclopédistes'* determination to chart the branches of human knowledge met with the recurrent efforts by church and state to censor and suppress the resulting *Encyclopédie,* the dynamic of liberation/subversion was irrevocably appended to the concept of knowledge. The first major effort to produce an encyclopedia thus proved itself to be a profoundly political affair.

Confronted with the rapid development of scholarly fields, the *encyclopédistes* believed that a general inventory of knowledge was both possible and imperative. Convinced of the solidarity of the sciences, the *encyclopédistes* undertook the careful organization and classification of seemingly diverse material in order to reveal the underlying unity of knowledge. They heralded the discovery of unifying principles in the three faculties of the human mind–reason, intellect, and imagination–as the means not only to explode vulgar errors and weaken propensities toward dogmatism, but also to lay the foundation for

change in the general way of thinking. Central to this change was a repudiation of medieval metaphysics and a commitment to empiricism, understood as a reliance upon the senses as the principal sources of knowledge, and upon experience and experiment as the grounds upon which to test knowledge claims. Empiricist techniques were considered the key to liberating the mind from superstition and providing the means for objective knowledge of the natural and social worlds (Diderot *et al*. 1751–65).

The epistemological emphasis upon the human senses had a number of social, political and ethical corollaries. When the senses were accredited as the sole source of evidence, the doctrine of *homo mensuris*–the human being as measure of all things–subtly shifted the focus of human attention to the conditions and rewards in this world and away from those promised in a putative afterlife. This doctrine, brazenly egalitarian, empowered the individual knower by insisting that each individual possessed the capacity to judge truth and falsity without reference to any higher authority. The promotion of individual happiness and the elimination of human misery were validated as legitimate criteria against which to measure existing institutions. Informed by individualist assumptions and inspired by utilitarian objectives, the *encyclopédistes'* 'general way of thinking' posed a radical threat to a social order dependent upon hierarchy, religion and deference. Their science sustained standards of evaluation that warranted collective action to transform social relations. Progress was the concomitant of knowledge because science was inherently liberating. It could free the individual from slavish obligations to king and collective precisely because it freed the mind from unsupportable superstitions, supplanting prejudice and dogma with humane standards for assessing the merits of existing institutions, thereby providing both motive and legitimation for action to change any institutions found to be markedly deficient. The threat posed by the *Encyclopédie* was not overlooked by the authorities of the *ancien régime*. In 1751, the Archbishop of Paris issued a *mandement* against the *Encyclopédie;* in 1752 the Royal Council of State issued an order prohibiting further publication of the work. In 1759, the *Parlement de Paris* condemned the project and a decree in *Conseil du Roi* revoked the *Encyclopédie's* 'privilege', effectively suppressing the work until 1766.

To promote their transformative objectives, the *encyclopédistes* devised a methodology to ensure that their science would be accessible to the literate public. The *Encyclopédie* was designed to be both 'dictionary and treatise of everything the human mind might wish to know' (Diderot *et al*. 1751–65). As dictionary, the seventeen volumes emphasized careful definitions of topics, arranged alphabetically. As treatise, each entry sought to view its topic from every possible angle, 'transcending the general movement of contemporary thought in order to work for future generations'. In delving into the details of the topic, the analyst sought to illuminate the depth and complexity of issues

and the means by which apparently disparate dimensions of a problem could be brought into synthesis. In addressing a topic, each author was asked to consider *'genre, differencia specifica,* qualities, causes, uses and the elaboration of method'. On the conviction that knowledge depended upon correct use of language, special effort was made to be as precise as possible in the use of terms and to integrate the exact scientific explanation of phenomena into the accepted language of the day. Excessive recourse to jargon and mystification through the introduction of obfuscating terminology was shunned. Because the *Encyclopédie* incorporated the works of some of the most renowned authors of the day, no effort was made to correct the mistakes of the contributors. Indeed, in later editions, certain controversial essays were published intact, but immediately followed by refutations of central claims and arguments. Such a tolerance for intellectual debate was supported by the *encyclopédistes'* belief that a key element in the 'revolution of the human mind' to which they aspired was a heightened capacity for scepticism and critique (Lough 1968; Wade 1977).

The legacy of the *encyclopédistes* is rich and varied. Their convictions about the unity of the sciences and the progressive nature of scientific inquiry have had a profound influence upon subsequent developments in the social sciences. Their contention that empiricism constituted the sole method for the acquisition of knowledge remained largely unchallenged among social scientists for two centuries. The individualist premisses that undergird their work have shaped the intellectual investigations and the political aspirations of subsequent generations. Their appeal to social utility as the principal criterion for assessing social and political institutions has shaped political discourse and research methodologies in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Moreover, their attention to the political consequences of particular modes of knowledge resonates in the recent arguments of critical theorists and post-modernists, who examine the relation between social science and prevailing regimes of power.

This *Encyclopedia of Government and Politics* stands in complex relation to the *Encyclopédie,* incorporating certain of its norms and strategies, while implicitly or explicitly repudiating others. Its format is modelled upon the revised version of the *Encyclopédie methodique* (1782–1820), organized topically with a specialized focus rather than alphabetically. Leading scholars in the field were commissioned to write articles that would provide both an overview of a designated topic and a critique of alternative methodological approaches to that topic. Avoidance of unnecessarily technical jargon, precision in definition, and clarity in presentation constituted guiding principles. While the *encyclopédistes'* goal to systematize all human knowledge was intentionally abandoned, efforts were made to provide comprehensive coverage of political studies in the late twentieth century. Specific inclusions and omissions reflect

compromises necessitated by the uneasy coexistence of aspirations to timeliness and to timelessness.

Perhaps the major break with the *Encyclopédie* involves the rejection of commitments to the unity of the sciences, empiricism, and the optimistic equation of 'knowledge' with 'progress'. In contrast to the notion that the fundamental capacities of the human mind fix a simple strategy for the acquisition of knowledge in the natural and the social sciences, this encyclopedia begins with the assumption that research strategies and methodological techniques have far more to do with debates within scholarly disciplines than with fundamental faculties of the human mind. As a consequence, diversity in issues investigated, methodologies adopted, and strategies of analysis and argumentation accredited are expected as the norm, not only with respect to demarcating the natural sciences from the social sciences, but also within the social sciences themselves. Thus it is taken as given that various scholars committed to institutional, statistical, theoretical, structural, functionalist, psychological, semiotic, hermeneutic and genealogical methods will construe the political world differently. To assume unity of knowledge only serves to mask the discrepancies illuminated by various research strategies, pre-emptively precluding consideration of important dimensions of the politics of knowledge.

To conceive of the 'politics of knowledge' in this sense requires a break with empiricism, which posits a simple and direct relation between knower and known. According to empiricist precepts, the senses function as faithful recording mechanisms, placing before the 'mind's eye' exact replicas of that which exists in the external world, without cultural or linguistic mediation. Precisely because observation is understood as exact replication, empiricist strategies for the acquisition of knowledge are said to be 'neutral' and 'value-free'. From the empiricist view, scientific investigations can grasp objective reality, because the subjectivity of individual observers can be controlled through rigid adherence to neutral procedures in the context of systematic experiments and logical deductions.

Empiricist assumptions have been central to the development of the discipline of political science and to the scientific study of politics in the twentieth century (Tanenhaus and Somit 1967; Greenstein and Polsby 1975; Finifter 1983; Seidelman and Harpham 1985). (In this case, as in numerous cases throughout the essay, hundreds of texts could be cited to support this claim. For the sake of brevity, a few well-known examples have been chosen. Except in cases of direct quotation then, references should be taken as representative rather than exhaustive.) A break with empiricism then requires careful justification. Towards that end, the following section will explicate and critique the positivist and Popperian conceptions of science that have profoundly influenced the recent practice of political science. An alternative conception of science will then be

advanced and its implications for the understanding of politics and for the structure of this encyclopedia will be explored.

Although such an excursion into the philosophy of science may at first appear far removed from the central concerns of political scientists, a clear understanding of the assumptions about science that inform disciplinary practices is important for a variety of reasons. Not only will a brief review of contending conceptions of science clarify the methodological presuppositions of political scientists, but it will also lay the foundation for challenging the myth of methodological neutrality. In so doing it will identify new areas for investigation concerning the political implications of particular modes of inquiry and thereby foster theoretical self-consciousness about the relation of political science to contemporary politics.

CONTENDING CONCEPTIONS OF SCIENCE

Within the social sciences, empiricist commitments have generated a number of methodological techniques to ensure the objectivity of scientific investigations. Chief among these is the dichotomous division of the world into the realms of the empirical and the non-empirical. The empirical realm, comprising all that can be corroborated by the senses, is circumscribed as the legitimate sphere of scientific investigation. As a residual category, the non-empirical encompasses everything else–religion, philosophy, ethics, aesthetics and evaluative discourse in general, as well as myth, dogma and superstition–which is relegated beyond the sphere of science. Within this frame of reference, social science, operating within the realm of the observable, restricting its focus to descriptions, explanations and predictions that are intersubjectively testable, can achieve objective knowledge. The specific techniques requisite to the achievement of objective knowledge have been variously defined by two conceptions of science which have shaped the practice of political science–positivism and critical rationalism.

On the grounds that only those knowledge claims founded directly upon observable experience can be genuine, positivists adopted the 'verification criterion of meaning' (which stipulates that a contingent proposition is meaningful, if and only if it can be empirically verified) as their core concept (Joergenson 1951; Kraft 1952; Ayer 1959). The verification criterion was deployed to differentiate not only between science and non-science, but between science and 'nonsense'. In the positivist view, any statement which could not be verified by reference to experience constituted nonsense: it was literally meaningless. The implications of the verificationist criterion for a model of science were manifold. All knowledge was believed to be dependent upon observation, thus any claims, whether theological, metaphysical, philosophical, ethical, normative or aesthetic, which were not rooted in empirical observation

were rejected as meaningless. The sphere of science was thereby narrowly circumscribed and scientific knowledge was accredited as the only valid knowledge. In addition, induction, a method of knowledge acquisition grounded upon observation of particulars as the foundation for empirical generalizations, was taken to provide the essential logic of science.

The task of science was understood to comprise the inductive discovery of regularities existing in the external world. Scientific research sought to organize in economical fashion those regularities which experience presents in order to facilitate explanation and prediction. To promote this objective, positivists endorsed and employed a technical vocabulary, clearly differentiating facts (empirically verifiable propositions) and hypotheses (empirically verifiable propositions asserting the existence of relationships among observed phenomena) from laws (empirically confirmed propositions asserting an invariable sequence or association among observed phenomena) and theories (interrelated systems of laws possessing explanatory power). Moreover, the positivist logic of scientific inquiry dictated a specific sequence of activities as definitive to 'the scientific method'.

According to this model, the scientific method began with the carefully controlled, neutral observation of empirical events. Sustained observation over time would enable the regularities or patterns of relationships in observed events to be revealed and thereby provide for the formulation of hypotheses. Once formulated, hypotheses were to be subjected to systematic empirical tests. Those hypotheses which received external confirmation through this process of rigorous testing could be elevated to the status of 'scientific laws'. Once identified, scientific laws provided the foundation for scientific explanation, which, according to the precepts of the 'covering law' model, consisted in demonstrating that the event(s) to be explained could have been expected, given certain initial conditions (C_1, C_2, C_3,…) and the general laws of the field (L_1, L_2, L_3,…). Within the framework of the positivist conception of science, the discovery of scientific laws also provided the foundation for prediction which consisted in demonstrating that an event would occur given the future occurrence of certain initial conditions and the operation of the general laws of the field. Under the covering law model, then, explanation and prediction have the same logical form, only the time factor differs: explanation pertains to past events; prediction pertains to future events.

Positivists were also committed to the principle of the 'unity of science', i.e. to the belief that the logic of scientific inquiry was the same for all fields. Whether natural phenomena or social phenomena were the objects of study, the method for acquiring valid knowledge and the requirements for explanation and prediction remained the same. Once a science had progressed sufficiently to accumulate a body of scientific laws organized in a coherent system of theories, it

could be said to have achieved a stage of 'maturity' which made explanation and prediction possible. Although the logic of mature science remained inductive with respect to the generation of new knowledge, the logic of scientific explanation was deductive. Under the covering law model, causal explanation, the demonstration of the necessary and sufficient conditions of an event, involved the deductive subsumption of particular observations under a general law. In addition, deduction also played a central role in efforts to explain laws and theories: the explanation of a law involved its deductive subsumption under a theory; and explanation of one theory involved its deductive subsumption under wider theories.

The primary postulates of positivism have been subjected to rigorous and devastating critiques (Popper 1959, 1972a, 1972b). Neither the logic of induction nor the verification criterion of meaning can accomplish positivist objectives; neither can guarantee the acquisition of truth. The inductive method is incapable of guaranteeing the validity of scientific knowledge owing to the 'problem of induction' (Hume 1739, 1748). Because empirical events are contingent, i.e. because the future can always be different from the past, generalizations based upon limited observations are necessarily incomplete and, as such, highly fallible. For this reason, inductive generalizations cannot be presumed to be true. Nor can 'confirmation' or 'verification' of such generalizations by reference to additional cases provide proof of their universal validity. For the notion of universal validity invokes all future, as well as all past and present, occurrences of a phenomenon; yet no matter how many confirming instances of a phenomenon can be found in the past or in the present, these can never alter the logical possibility that the future could be different, that the future could disprove an inductively derived empirical generalization. Thus, a demonstration of the truth of an empirical generalization must turn upon the identification of a 'necessary connection' establishing a causal relation among observed phenomena.

Unfortunately, the notion of necessary connection also encounters serious problems. If the notion of necessity invoked is logical necessity, then the empirical nature of science is jeopardized. If, on the other hand, positivism appeals to an empirical demonstration of necessity, it falls foul of the standard established by the verification criterion of meaning, for the 'necessity' required as proof of any causal claim cannot be empirically observed. As Hume pointed out, empirical observation reveals 'constant conjunction' (a 'correlation' in the language of contemporary social science); it does not and cannot reveal necessary connection. As a positivist logic of scientific inquiry, then, induction encounters two serious problems: it is incapable of providing validation for the truth of its generalizations and it is internally inconsistent, for any attempt to demonstrate the validity of a causal claim invokes a conception of necessary connection that violates the verification criterion of meaning.

The positivist conception of the scientific method also rests upon a flawed psychology of perception. In suggesting that the scientific method commences with 'neutral' observation, positivists invoke a conception of 'manifest truth' which attempts to reduce the problem of the validity of knowledge to an appeal to the authority of the source of that knowledge (for example, 'the facts "speak" for themselves'). The belief that the unmediated apprehension of the 'given' by a passive or receptive observer is possible, however, misconstrues both the nature of perception and the nature of the world. The human mind is not passive but active; it does not merely 'receive' an image of the given, but rather imposes order upon the external world through a process of selection, interpretation and imagination. Observation is always linguistically and culturally mediated. It involves the creative imposition of expectations, anticipations and conjectures upon external events.

Scientific observation, too, is necessarily theory-laden. It begins not from 'nothing', nor from the 'neutral' perception of given relations, but rather from immersion in a scientific tradition which provides frames of reference or conceptual schemes that organize reality and shape the problems for further investigation. To grasp the role of theory in structuring scientific observation, however, requires a revised conception of 'theory'. Contrary to the positivist notion that theory is the result of observation, the result of the systematization of a series of inductive generalizations, the result of the cumulation of an interrelated set of scientific laws, theory is logically prior to the observation of any similarities or regularities in the world; indeed, theory is precisely that which makes the identification of regularities possible. Moreover, scientific theories involve risk to an extent that is altogether incompatible with the positivist view of theories as summaries of empirical generalizations. Scientific theories involve risky predictions of things that have never been seen and hence cannot be deduced logically from observation statements. Theories structure scientific observation in a manner altogether incompatible with the positivist requirement of neutral perception, and they involve unobservable propositions that violate the verification criterion of meaning: abstract theoretical entities cannot be verified by reference to empirical observation.

That theoretical propositions violate the verification criterion is not in itself damning, for the verification criterion can be impugned on a number of grounds. As a mechanism for the validation of empirical generalizations, the verification criterion fails because of the problem of induction. As a scientific principle for the demarcation of the 'meaningful' from the 'meaningless', the verification criterion is self-referentially destructive. In repudiating all that is not empirically verifiable as nonsense, the verification criterion repudiates itself, for it is not a statement derived from empirical observation nor is it a tautology. Rigid adherence to the verification criterion then would mandate that it be rejected as metaphysical

nonsense. Thus the positivist conflation of that which is not amenable to empirical observation with nonsense simply will not withstand scrutiny. Much (including the verification criterion itself) that cannot be empirically verified can be understood and all that can be understood is meaningful.

As an alternative to the defective positivist conception of science, Karl Popper advanced 'critical rationalism' (1972a, 1972b). On this view, scientific theories are bold conjectures which scientists impose upon the world. Drawing insights from manifold sources in order to solve particular problems, scientific theories involve abstract and unobservable propositions which predict what may happen as well as what may not happen. Thus scientific theories generate predictions that are incompatible with certain possible results of observation, i.e. they 'prohibit' certain occurrences by proclaiming that some things could not happen. As such, scientific theories put the world to the test and demand a reply. Precisely because scientific theories identify a range of conditions that must hold, a series of events that must occur and a set of occurrences that are in principle impossible, they can clash with observation; they are empirically testable. While no number of confirming instances could ever prove a theory to be true due to the problem of induction, one disconfirming instance is sufficient to disprove a theory. If scientific laws are construed as statements of prohibitions, forbidding the occurrence of certain empirical events, then they can be definitively refuted by the occurrence of one such event. Thus, according to Popper, 'falsification' provides a mechanism by which scientists can test their conjectures against reality and learn from their mistakes. Falsification also provides the core of Popper's revised conception of the scientific method.

According to the 'hypothetico-deductive model', the scientist always begins with a problem. To resolve the problem, the scientist generates a theory, a conjecture or hypothesis, which can be tested by deducing its empirical consequences and measuring them against the world. Once the logical implications of a theory have been deduced and converted into predictions concerning empirical events, the task of science is falsification. In putting theories to the test of experience, scientists seek to falsify predictions, for that alone enables them to learn from their mistakes. The rationality of science is embodied in the method of trial and error, a method which allows error to be purged through the elimination of false theories.

In mandating that all scientific theories be tested, in stipulating that the goal of science is the falsification of erroneous views, the criterion of falsifiability provides a means by which to reconcile the fallibility of human knowers with a conception of objective knowledge. The validity of scientific claims does not turn on a demand for an impossible neutrality on the part of individual scientists, on the equally impossible requirement that all prejudice, bias, prejudgment, expectation or value be purged from the process of observation or on the

implausible assumption that the truth is manifest. The adequacy of scientific theories is judged in concrete problem contexts in terms of their ability to solve problems and their ability to withstand increasingly difficult empirical tests. Those theories which withstand multiple intersubjective efforts to falsify them are 'corroborated', identified as 'laws' which with varying degrees of verisimilitude capture the structure of reality, and for that reason are tentatively accepted as 'true'. But in keeping with the critical attitude of science even the strongest corroboration for a theory is not accepted as conclusive proof. For Popperian critical rationalism posits that truth lies beyond human reach. As a regulative ideal which guides scientific activity truth may be approximated, but it can never be established by human authority. Nevertheless, error can be objectively identified. Thus informed by a conception of truth as a regulative ideal and operating in accordance with the requirements of the criterion of falsifiability, science can progress by the incremental correction of errors and the gradual accretion of objective problem-solving knowledge.

Most of the research strategies developed within political science in the twentieth century draw upon either positivist or Popperian conceptions of the scientific method. The legacy of positivism is apparent in behaviouralist definitions of the field which emphasize data collection, hypothesis formulation and testing, and other formal aspects of systematic empirical enterprise, as well as in approaches which stress scientific method, statistical models and quantitative research designs. It surfaces in conceptions of explanation defined in deductive terms and in commitments to the equivalence of explanation and prediction. It emerges in claims that political science must be modelled upon the methods of the natural sciences for those alone are capable of generating valid knowledge. It is unmistakable in the assumption that 'facts' are unproblematic, that they are immediately observable or 'given', and hence their apprehension requires no interpretation. It is embodied in the presumption that confirmation or verification provides a criterion of proof of the validity of empirical claims. And it is conspicuous in the repudiation of values as arbitrary preferences, irrational commitments or meaningless propositions which lie altogether beyond the realm of rational analysis (Storing 1962; Eulau 1963; Kaplan 1964; Meehan 1965; Eulau and Marsh 1969; Welsh 1973).

Popper's insistence upon the centrality of problem solving and incrementalism in scientific activity resonates in the works of those committed to a pluralist approach to political analysis. Popperian assumptions also surface in the recognition that observation and analysis are necessarily theory-laden, as well as in the commitment to intersubjective testing as the appropriate means by which to deflect the influence of individual bias from substantive political analyses. They are manifest in the substitution of testability for verifiability as the appropriate criterion for the demarcation of scientific hypotheses and in the invocation of

falsification and the elimination of error as the strategy for the accumulation of political knowledge. They are reflected in the pragmatic notion that the existing political system constitutes the appropriate 'reality' against which to test political hypotheses. They are obvious in the critique of excessive optimism concerning the possibility of securing truth through the deployment of inductive, quantitative techniques, in the less pretentious quest for useful knowledge and in the insistence that truth constitutes a regulative ideal rather than a current possession of political science. They are conspicuous in arguments that the hypothetico-deductive model is applicable to political studies and in appeals for the development of a critical, non-dogmatic attitude among political scientists. Moreover, Popperian assumptions are apparent in a variety of strategies devised to bring reason to bear upon normative issues, while simultaneously accepting that there can be no ultimate rational justification of value precepts. Popperian presuppositions about the fundamental task of social science are also manifest in the pluralists' commitment to a conception of politics premised upon a model of the market that focuses research upon the unintended consequences of the actions of multiple actors rather than upon the particular intentions of political agents (Cook 1985; Lindblom and Cohen 1979; MacRae 1976; Wildavsky 1979).

Popperian critical rationalism provides ample justification for abandoning methodological strategies informed by defective positivist precepts. It does not, however, provide either a satisfactory account of science or a sufficiently sophisticated foundation for political inquiry. Although Popper's critical rationalism is a significant improvement over early positivist conceptions of science, it too suffers from a number of grave defects. The most serious challenge to critical rationalism has been raised by post-positivist presupposition theories of science (Polanyi 1958; Humphreys 1969; Suppe 1977; Brown 1977; Bernstein 1978, 1983; Hesse 1980; Longino 1990; Stockman 1983; Gunnell 1986). Presupposition theories of science concur with Popper's depiction of observation as 'theory-laden'. They agree that 'there is more to seeing than meets the eye' (Humphreys 1969:61) and that perception involves more than the passive reception of allegedly manifest sense-data. They suggest that perception depends upon a constellation of theoretical presuppositions that structure observation, accrediting particular stimuli as significant and specific configurations as meaningful. According to presupposition theories, observation is not only theory-laden but theory is essential to, indeed, constitutive of all human knowledge.

As a form of human knowledge, science is dependent upon theory in multiple and complex ways. Presupposition theories of science suggest that the notions of perception, meaning, relevance, explanation, knowledge and method, central to the practice of science, are all theoretically constituted concepts. Theoretical presuppositions shape perception and determine what will be taken as a 'fact'; they confer meaning on experience and control the demarcation of significant

from trivial events; they afford criteria of relevance according to which facts can be organized, tests envisioned and the acceptability or unacceptability of scientific conclusions assessed; they accredit particular models of explanation and strategies of understanding; and they sustain specific methodological techniques for gathering, classifying, and analysing data. Theoretical presuppositions set the terms of scientific debate and organize the elements of scientific activity. Moreover, they typically do so at a tacit or preconscious level and it is for this reason that they appear to hold such unquestionable authority.

The pervasive role of theoretical assumptions upon the practice of science has profound implications for notions such as empirical 'reality', and the 'autonomy' of facts, which posit that facts are 'given', and that experience is ontologically distinct from the theoretical constructs that are advanced to explain it. The post-empiricist conception of a 'fact' as a theoretically constituted entity calls into question such basic assumptions. It suggests that 'the noun, "experience", the verb, "to experience" and the adjective "empirical" are not univocal terms that can be transferred from one system to another without change of meaning…. Experience does not come labelled as "empirical", nor does it come self-certified as such. What we call experience depends upon assumptions hidden beyond scrutiny which define it and which in turn it supports' (Vivas 1960:76). Recognition that 'facts' can be so designated only in terms of prior theoretical presuppositions implies that any quest for an unmediated reality is necessarily futile. Any attempt to identify an 'unmediated fact' must mistake the conventional for the 'natural', as in cases which define 'brute facts' as 'social facts which are largely the product of well-understood, reliable tools, facts that are not likely to be vitiated by pitfalls…in part [because of] the ease and certainty with which [they] can be determined and in part [because of] the incontestability of [their] conceptual base' (Murray 1983:321). Alternatively, the attempt to conceive a 'fact' that exists prior to any description of it, prior to any theoretical or conceptual mediation, must generate an empty notion of something completely unspecified and unspecifiable, a notion that will be of little use to science (Williams, 1985:138).

Recognition of the manifold ways in which perceptions of reality are theoretically mediated raises a serious challenge not only to notions of 'brute data' and the 'givenness' of experience, but also to the possibility of falsification as a strategy for testing theories against an independent reality. For falsification to provide an adequate test of a scientific theory, it is necessary that there be a clear distinction between theoretical postulates and independent correspondence rules that link theoretical principles to particular observations. Embodying the idea of theory-independent evidence, neutral correspondence rules are essential to the very possibility of refutation, to the possibility that the world could prove a theory to be wrong. If, however, there is no tenable distinction between theoretical assumptions and correspondence rules, if what is taken to be the

'world', what is understood in terms of 'brute data' is itself theoretically constituted (indeed, constituted by the same theory that is undergoing the test), then no conclusive disproof of a theory is likely. For the independent evidence upon which falsification depends does not exist; the available evidence is preconstituted by the same theoretical presuppositions as the scientific theory under scrutiny (Moon 1975:146, Brown 1977:38–48; Stockman 1983:73–6).

Contrary to Popper's confident conviction that empirical reality could provide an ultimate court of appeal for the judgement of scientific theories and that the critical, non-dogmatic attitude of scientists would ensure that their theories were constantly being put to the test, presupposition theorists emphasize that it is always possible to 'save' a theory from refutation. The existence of one disconfirming instance is not sufficient to falsify a theory because it is always possible to evade falsification on the grounds that future research will demonstrate that a counter-instance is really only an 'apparent' counter-instance. Moreover, the theory-laden character of observation and the theory-constituted character of evidence provide ample grounds upon which to dispute the validity of the evidence and to challenge the design or the findings of specific experiments which claim to falsify respected theories. Furthermore, post-positivist examinations of the history of scientific practice suggest that, contrary to Popper's claim that scientists are quick to discard discredited theories, there is a great deal of evidence that neither the existence of counter-instances nor the persistence of anomalies necessarily lead to the abandonment of scientific theories. Indeed, the overwhelming evidence of scientific practice suggests that scientists cling to long-established views tenaciously, in spite of the existence of telling criticisms, persistent anomalies and unresolved problems (Ricci 1984; Harding 1986). Thus it has been suggested that the 'theory' that scientists themselves are always sceptical, non-dogmatic, critical of received views and quick to repudiate questionable notions has itself been falsified and should be abandoned.

The problem of falsification is exacerbated by the conflation of explanation and prediction in the Popperian account of science. For the belief that a corroborated prediction constitutes proof of the validity of a scientific explanation fails to recognize that an erroneous theory can generate correct predictions (Moon 1975:146–7; Brown 1977:51–7). The logical distinction between prediction and explanation thus provides further support for the view that no theory can ever be conclusively falsified. The problem of induction also raises doubts about the possibility of definitive refutations. In calling attention to the possibility that the future could be different from the past and present in unforeseeable ways, the problem of induction arouses the suspicion that a theory falsified today might not 'stay' falsified. The assumption of regularity which sustains Popper's belief that a falsified theory will remain falsified permanently is itself an inductionist presupposition which suggests that the falsifiability principle

does not constitute the escape from induction which Popper had hoped (Stockman 1983:81–2). Thus despite the logical asymmetry between verification and falsification, no falsification can be any stronger or more final than any corroboration (Brown 1977:75).

Presupposition theorists acknowledge that 'ideally, scientists would like to examine the structure of the world which exists independent of our knowledge– but the nature of perception and the role of presuppositions preclude direct access to it: the only access available is through theory-directed research' (Brown 1977:108). Recognition that theoretical presuppositions organize and structure research by determining the meanings of observed events, identifying relevant data and significant problems for investigation and indicating both strategies for solving problems and methods by which to test the validity of proposed solutions, raises a serious challenge to the correspondence theory of truth. For it both denies that 'autonomous facts' can serve as the ultimate arbiter of scientific theories and suggests that science is no more capable of achieving the Archimedean point or of escaping human fallibility than is any other human endeavour. Indeed, it demands acknowledgement of science as a human convention rooted in the practical judgements of a community of fallible scientists struggling to resolve theory-generated problems under specific historical conditions. It sustains an image of science that is far less heroic and far more human.

As an alternative to the correspondence theory of truth, presupposition theorists suggest a coherence theory of truth premised upon the recognition that all human knowledge depends upon theoretical presuppositions whose congruence with nature cannot be established conclusively by reason or experience. Theoretical presuppositions, rooted in living traditions, provide the conceptual frameworks through which the world is viewed; they exude a 'natural attitude' which demarcates what is taken as normal, natural, real, reasonable or sane, from what is understood as deviant, unnatural, utopian, impossible, irrational or insane. In contrast to Popper's conception of theories as conscious conjectures which can be systematically elaborated and deductively elucidated, the notion of theoretical presuppositions suggests that theories operate at the tacit level. They structure 'pre-understandings' and 'pre-judgements' in such a way that it is difficult to isolate and illuminate the full range of presuppositions which affect cognition at any given time (Bernstein 1983:113–67). Moreover, any attempt to elucidate presuppositions must operate within a 'hermeneutic circle'. Any attempt to examine or to challenge certain assumptions or expectations must occur within the frame of reference established by the other pressuppositions. Certain presuppositions must remain fixed if others are to be subjected to systematic critique. This does not imply that individuals are 'prisoners' trapped within the framework of theories, expectations, past experiences and language in such a way that critical reflection

becomes impossible (ibid.: 84). Critical reflection upon and abandonment of certain theoretical presuppositions is possible within the hermeneutic circle; but the goal of transparency, of the unmediated grasp of things as they are, is not. For no reflective investigation, no matter how critical, can escape the fundamental conditions of human cognition.

A coherence theory of truth accepts that the world is richer than theories devised to grasp it; it accepts that theories are underdetermined by 'facts' and, consequently, that there can always be alternative and competing theoretical explanations of particular events. It does not, however, imply the relativist conclusion that all theoretical interpretations are equal. That there can be no appeal to neutral, theory-independent facts to adjudicate between competing theoretical interpretations does not mean that there is no rational way of making and warranting critical evaluative judgements concerning alternative views. Indeed, presupposition theorists have pointed out that the belief that the absence of independent evidence necessarily entails relativism is itself dependent upon a positivist commitment to the verification criterion of meaning. Only if one starts from the assumption that the sole test for the validity of a proposition lies in its measurement against the empirically 'given' does it follow that, in the absence of the 'given', no rational judgements can be made concerning the validity of particular claims (Bernstein 1983:92; Brown 1977:93–4; Stockman 1983:79–101; Gunnell 1986:66–8).

Once the 'myth of the given' (Sellars 1963:164) has been abandoned and once the belief that the absence of one invariant empirical test for the 'truth' of a theory implies the absence of all criteria for evaluative judgement has been repudiated, then it is possible to recognize that there are rational grounds for assessing the merits of alternative theoretical interpretations. To comprehend the nature of such assessments it is necessary to acknowledge that although theoretical presuppositions structure the perception of events, they do not create perceptions out of 'nothing'. Theoretical interpretations are 'world-guided' (Williams 1985:140). They involve both the pre-understanding brought to an event by an individual perceiver and the stimuli in the external (or internal) world which instigate the process of cognition. Because of this dual source of theoretical interpretations, objects can be characterized in many different ways, 'but it does not follow that a given object can be seen in any way at all or that all descriptions are equal' (Brown 1977:93). The stimuli that trigger interpretation limit the class of plausible characterizations without dictating one absolute description.

Assessment of alternative theoretical interpretations involves deliberation, a rational activity which requires that imagination and judgement be deployed in the consideration of the range of evidence and arguments that can be advanced in support of various positions. The reasons offered in support of alternative views marshal evidence, organize data, apply various criteria of explanation,

address multiple levels of analysis with varying degrees of abstraction and employ divergent strategies of argumentation. This range of reasons offers a rich field for deliberation and assessment. It provides an opportunity for the exercise of judgement and ensures that when scientists reject a theory, they do so because they believe they can demonstrate that the reasons offered in support of that theory are deficient. That the reasons advanced to sustain the rejection of one theory do not constitute absolute proof of the validity of an alternative theory is simply a testament to human fallibility. Admission that the cumulative weight of current evidence and compelling argument cannot protect scientific judgements against future discoveries which may warrant the repudiation of those theories currently accepted is altogether consonant with the recognition of the finitude of human rationality and the contingency of empirical relations.

Presupposition theorists suggest that any account of science which fails to accredit the rationality of the considered judgements that inform the choice between alternative scientific theories must be committed to a defective conception of reason. Although the standards of evidence and the criteria for assessment brought to bear upon theoretical questions cannot be encapsulated in a simple rule or summarized in rigid methodological principles, deliberation involves the exercise of a range of intellectual skills. Conceptions of science that define rationality in terms of one technique, be it logical deduction or empirical verification, are simply too narrow to encompass the multiple forms of rationality manifested in scientific research. The interpretive judgements that are characteristic of every phase of scientific investigations, and that culminate in the rational choice of particular scientific theories on the basis of the cumulative weight of evidence and argument, are too rich and various to be captured by the rules governing inductive or deductive logic. For this reason, *phronesis,* practical reason, manifested in the processes of interpretation and judgement characteristic of all understanding, is advanced by presupposition theorists as an alternative to logic as the paradigmatic form of scientific rationality (Brown 1977:148–52; Bernstein 1983:54–78).

Presupposition theorists suggest that a conception of practical reason more accurately depicts the forms of rationality exhibited in scientific research. In contrast to the restrictive view advanced by positivism which reduces the arsenal of reason to the techniques of logic and thereby rejects creativity, deliberative judgement and evaluative assessments as varying forms of irrationality, *phronesis* constitutes a more expansive conception of the powers of the human intellect. Presupposition theorists suggest that a consideration of the various processes of contemplation, conceptualization, representation, remembrance, reflection, speculation, rationalization, inference, deduction and deliberation (to name but a few manifestations of human cognition) reveals that the dimensions of reason are diverse. They also argue that an adequate conception of reason must encompass

these diverse cognitive practices. Because the instrumental conception of rationality advanced by positivists is clearly incapable of accounting for these various forms of reason, it must be rejected as defective. Thus presupposition theorists suggest that science must be freed from the parochial beliefs that obscure reason's diverse manifestations and restrict its operation to the rigid adherence to a narrow set of rules. The equation of scientific rationality with an infallible formal logic must be abandoned not only because there is no reason to suppose that there must be some indubitable foundation or some ahistorical, invariant method for scientific inquiry in order to establish the rationality of scientific practices, but also because the belief that science can provide final truths cannot be sustained by the principles of formal logic, the methods of empirical inquiry or the characteristics of fallible human cognition. *Phronesis* constitutes a conception of rationality that can encompass the diverse uses of reason in scientific practices, identify the manifold sources of potential error in theoretical interpretations, and illuminate the criteria of assessment and the standards of evidence and argument operative in the choice between alternative theoretical explanations of events. As a conception of scientific rationality, then, *phronesis* is more comprehensive and has greater explanatory power than the discredited positivist alternative.

Presupposition theorists offer a revised conception of science which emphasizes the conventional nature of scientific practices and the fallible character of scientific explanations and predictions. Confronted with a world richer than any partial perception of it, scientists draw upon the resources of tradition and imagination in an effort to comprehend the world before them. The theories they devise to explain objects and events are structured by a host of presuppositions concerning meaning, relevance, experience, explanation and evaluation. Operating within the limits imposed by fallibility and contingency, scientists employ creative insights, practical reason, formal logic and an arsenal of conventional techniques and methods in their effort to approximate the truth about the world. But their approximations always operate within the parameters set by theoretical presuppositions; their approximations always address an empirical realm which is itself theoretically constituted. The undetermination of theory by data ensures that multiple interpretations of the same phenomena are possible.

When alternative theoretical explanations conflict, the judgement of the scientific community is brought to bear upon the competing interpretations. Exercising practical reason, the scientific community deliberates upon the evidence and arguments sustaining the alternative views. The practical judgement of the practitioners in particular fields of science is exercised in weighing the evidence, replicating experiments, examining computations, investigating the applicability of innovative methods, assessing the potential of new concepts and considering the validity of particular conclusions. Through a

process of deliberation and debate, a consensus emerges among researchers within a discipline concerning what will be taken as the valid theory. The choice is sustained by reasons which can be articulated and advanced as proof of the inadequacy of alternative interpretations. The method of scientific deliberation is eminently rational: it provides mechanisms for the identification of charlatans and incompetents, as well as for the recognition of more subtle errors and more sophisticated approximations of truth. But the rationality of the process cannot guarantee the eternal verity of particular conclusions. The exercise of scientific reason is fallible; the judgements of the scientific community are corrigible.

The revised conception of science advanced by presupposition theorists suggests that attempts to divide the world into ontologically distinct categories of 'facts' and 'values', or into dichotomous realms of the 'empirical' and the 'normative', are fundamentally flawed (Hawkesworth 1988). Such attempts fail to grasp the implications of the theoretical constitution of all knowledge and the theoretical mediation of the empirical realm. They fail to come to grips with valuative character of all presuppositions and the consequent valuative component of all empirical propositions. The theoretically mediated world is one in which description, explanation and evaluation are inextricably linked. Any attempt to impose a dichotomous relation upon such inseparable processes constitutes a fallacy of false alternatives which is as distorting as it is logically untenable. For the suggestion that 'pure' facts can be isolated and analysed free of all valuation masks the theoretical constitution of facticity and denies the cognitive processes through which knowledge of the empirical realm is generated. Moreover, the dichotomous schism of the world into 'facts' and 'values' endorses an erroneous and excessively limiting conception of human reason, a conception which fails to comprehend the role of practical rationality in scientific deliberation and which fails to recognize that science is simply one manifestation of the use of practical reason in human life. Informed by flawed assumptions, the positivist conception of reason fails to understand that *phronesis* is operative in philosophical analysis, ethical deliberation, normative argument, political decisions and the practical choices of daily life as well as in scientific analysis. Moreover, in stipulating that reason can operate only in a naïvely simple, 'value-free', empirical realm, the positivist presuppositions that inform the fact/value dichotomy render reason impotent and thereby preclude the possibility that rational solutions might exist for the most pressing problems of the contemporary age.

Although the arguments that have discredited empiricism are well known to philosophers, they have had little impact on the conduct of substantive political studies. This is especially unfortunate because the critique of empiricism has wide-ranging implications for the discipline of political science. The post-empiricist conception of knowledge suggests that divergent theoretical assumptions should

have a pervasive influence upon the understanding of the political world, sanctioning contentious definitions of politics and focusing attention upon disparate variables, while simultaneously masking the controversial character of evidence adduced and the contestability of accredited strategies of explanation. Thus the post-positivist conception of science opens new areas of investigation concerning disciplinary presuppositions and practices: What are the most fundamental presuppositions of political science? What limitations have been imposed upon the constitution of knowledge within political science? By what disciplinary mechanisms has facticity been accredited and rendered unproblematic? How adequate are the standards of evidence, modes of analysis, and strategies of explanation privileged by the dominant tradition? Have methodological precepts subtly circumscribed contemporary politics?

Questions such as these focus attention upon the political implications of determinate modes of inquiry. The politics of knowledge emerges as a legitimate focus of analysis, for the analytic techniques developed in particular cognitive traditions may have political consequences that empiricist precepts render invisible. In circumscribing the subject matter appropriate to 'science', restricting the activities acceptable as 'empirical inquiry', establishing the norms for assessing the results of inquiry, identifying the basic principles of practice, and validating the ethos of practitioners, methodological strictures may sustain particular modes of political life. For this reason, the empiricist myth of methodological neutrality must be supplanted by an understanding of methodology as 'mind engaged in the legitimation of its own political activity' (Wolin 1981:406). Such a revised conception of methodology requires detailed examination of the complex relations among various conceptions of politics, various techniques of political analysis and various forms of polity. The next section briefly considers the stakes involved in such investigations in the context of competing definitions of politics.

POLITICS: CONSTITUTIVE DEFINITIONS

Within the field of political science there is no one definition of politics that holds the allegiance of all political scientists. The lack of a universally agreed-upon definition does not imply that the topic is indefinable, that politics is a simple concept that admits of no further definition and, hence, must be grasped intuitively (Moore 1903). Nor does it imply that political scientists do not know what they are doing. On the contrary, contending definitions reflect important epistemological and methodological disagreements within the discipline. Alternative conceptions of politics construe the political world differently, in part because they derive from different understandings of reason, evidence and explanation, and in part because they are informed by radically different

understandings of human possibility. As a consequence, the stakes in these conceptual disputes involve not just disciplinary politics, but also the shape of politics in the contemporary world. To explore these stakes, it is helpful to compare a classical definition of politics with a range of definitions advanced by contemporary political scientists.

In the classical conception advanced by Aristotle (1958) in *The Politics,* the activities of ruling and of politics were not equivalent. While ruling typically involved hierarchical relations of domination and subordination, politics was possible only as a relation among equals. In contrast to endeavours related to subsistence, production and reproduction that occurred in a sphere governed by necessity, politics existed only in a realm of freedom. On Aristotle's view, the participation of equals in collective decision making concerning the content and direction of public life constitutes the essence of politics. If the participation of equal citizens in an interchange of ruling and being ruled comprises the activity of politics, the citizens' achievement of a mode of life characterized by human excellence is its aim. To achieve this end, Aristotle noted that citizens must share a common system of values, they must be united in their perceptions of the just and the unjust. Only under such conditions could citizens escape the mire of conflicting wills and act co-operatively to achieve their common objectives. Thus political life is a testament to human freedom: within the political community, equal citizens identify the values they wish to live by and create rules and institutions to instantiate those values.

When Aristotle dubbed politics the master art, he suggested that politics necessarily involves a form of practical knowledge concerning both what is good for the community and how to attain that good. Political knowledge provides answers to questions such as: How ought people to live? What rules should govern collective life in order to enable citizens to achieve human excellence? What practices and institutions are most conducive to the achievement of the human *telos*–the highest and best form of human existence?

As a person interested in the comparative study of politics, Aristotle knew full well that such questions could be answered at two markedly different levels: at the first level, by citizens within a political community who were actively shaping their collective life; at the second level, by a political observer comparing the responses of various political communities to the same questions. In collecting hundreds of constitutions, Aristotle gained impressive evidence of the extent to which engagement in politics enabled determinate peoples to express their freedom. Reflecting the varying values of particular polities, diverse constitutions embodied alternative conceptions of the good life.

Aristotle did not believe that documenting alternative forms of political organization required a relativist endorsement of differing modes of life as equally beneficial. On the contrary, he was convinced that systematic political inquiry could provide an authoritative and final answer to the question of the

highest form of human existence. Operating at the second level, political knowledge could afford definitive answers to the central political questions. Investigation of particular constitutions would make it possible to extract the essence of politics.

Aristotle's conceptions of politics and of political knowledge are intimately connected to a specific research strategy and a particular model of explanation. His strategy requires a preliminary gathering of diverse instances of a phenomenon and particular attention to received views about that phenomenon. Examination of similarities and differences then allows careful classification according to essential properties, which are inherently teleological. Methodologically,

> political inquiry requires a move from partial perspectives to an integral view, from opinions to a grasp of the thing in its wholeness. It proceeds by taking a variety of viewpoints into account, weighing them against each other and seeking the comprehensive view that can withstand criticism. In the course of inquiry, there is a growing awareness of the shape of things as a whole and this awareness gradually reveals the partiality and distortion of the original perspectives.
>
> (Miller 1979:167)

Comprehension emerges from a sustained engagement with experiences whose meaning initially appears vague or inchoate. Use of this method produces *aletheia,* truth, that which remains when all error is purged.

Aristotle's technique for the acquisition of political knowledge presuppposes that reason can distinguish essence from appearance, actuality from potentiality. His research methodology suggests that the attainment of truth is possible, even if the process is arduous and demanding. His distinction between the activity of politics and the second order activity of political theory also illuminates a critical disjuncture between freedom, power and truth. For it acknowledges that citizens may exercise their freedom, act in good faith and use their power to institutionalize values that fall short of the achievement of the human *telos*. Within politics, freedom and the power of people to realize their shared values may eclipse truth. Political theorists who systematically investigate the nature and purposes of political life may grasp the truth about human possibility. But the possession of truth remains at a great remove from the power to institutionalize its precepts.

In contrast to the Aristotelian conception, twentieth-century definitions of politics have intentionally eschewed any reference to the human *telos*. Informed by empiricist assumptions, political scientists abandoned consideration of what might be in order to concentrate upon description and explanation of what is. Thus, they attempted to devise value-free definitions of politics grounded squarely upon the empirically observable. A brief examination of the definitions most frequently invoked by political scientists suggests, however, that each

definition subtly structures the boundaries of the political in a thoroughly value-laden fashion.

For the first half of the twentieth century, the 'institutional definition' of politics dominated the discipline of political science. On this view, politics involves the activities of the official institutions of state (Goodnow 1904; Hyneman 1959). Established by tradition and constitution, existing governmental agencies constitute the focal point of empirical political research. Typically adopting a case-study approach, political scientists examine constitutional provisions to identify the structures of governance and the distribution of powers within those structures in particular nations. Great effort is devoted to the interpretation of specific constitutional provisions and to the historical investigation of the means by which such provisions are subtly expanded and transformed over time. This approach often tends to be heavily oriented towards law, investigating both the legislative process and the role of the courts in interpreting the law. Foreign policy is typically conceived in terms of the history of diplomacy, and domestic policy is understood in relation to the mechanisms by which governments affect the lives of citizens.

While the focus on the official institutions of state has a certain intuitive appeal, the institutional definition of politics can be faulted for sins of omission. If politics is to be understood solely in terms of the state, what can be said of those societies in which no state exists? If the constitution provides a blueprint for the operations of the state, how are states that lack constitutions to be understood? What can be known about states whose constitutions mask the real distribution of power in the nation? If governments are by definition the locus of politics, how are revolutionary movements to be classified? The institutional definition of politics provides neither a neutral nor a comprehensive account of political life. It accredits a particular mode of decision making within the nation-state by stipulative definition. In so doing, it subtly removes important activities from the realm of the political.

Concerns such as these led many scholars to reject the institutional definition of politics as underinclusive. By structuring the focus of political analysis exclusively on the institutions of state governance, this definition fails to encompass the full range of politics. It cannot account for political agents such as political bosses, political parties and pressure groups operating behind the scenes to influence political outcomes. It excludes all modes of political violence, except those perpetrated by states, from the sphere of the political. It thereby delegitimizes revolutionary activity, regardless of precipitating circumstances. And in important respects the institutional definition of politics narrowly construes the range of human freedom, identifying constitutionally designated mechanisms for social transformation as the limit of political possibility. In addition, the institutional definition of politics fails to do justice to international relations, leaving altogether unclear the political status of a realm in which there

exists no binding law and no authoritative structures capable of applying sanctions to recalcitrant states.

To avoid the limitations of the institutional definition, many political scientists have argued that politics is better understood as a struggle for power (Mosca 1939; Lasswell 1950; Catlin 1964; Morgenthau 1967). Within this frame of reference, individuals participate in politics in order to pursue their own selfish advantage. The central question for political research then is 'who gets what, when, how' (Lasswell 1950). Such a research focus necessarily expands political inquiry beyond the bounds of governmental agencies, for although the official institutions of state constitute one venue for power struggles, they by no means exhaust the possibilities. Within the struggle-for-power conception, politics is ubiquitous.

In an important sense, the struggle-for-power definition of politics not only expands the sphere of political research beyond the institutions of state, it also extends political analysis beyond the realm of the empirically observable. The exercise of power often eludes direct observation and the effects of power are more easily inferred than empirically documented. Thus it is not surprising that many political researchers working with the conception of politics as power-struggle ground their investigations upon a number of contentious assumptions. Perhaps the most fundamental of these is a conception of the person as a being actuated primarily by the *libido dominandi,* the will to power. Precisely because individuals are taken to be governed by an unquenchable desire for power, politics is said to be essentially a zero-sum game in which competition is unceasing, and domination for the sake of exploitation is the chief objective. But the posited will to power, which constitutes the explanatory key to the inevitable nature of political life, is lodged deep in the human psyche–wholly unavailable for empirical observation. Although proponents of the struggle-for-power definition have claimed simply to be 'political realists', it is important to note the circularity that informs their cynical 'realism'. Politics is defined as a struggle for power 'because' human beings are driven by the *libido dominandi;* but the evidence that people are driven by the *libido dominandi* is inferred from their involvement in politics.

An unacceptable degree of circularity also infects the response of political 'realists' to their critics. Critics have objected that the struggle-for-power definition fails to explain the full range of political phenomena: If politics is merely a competition through which individuals seek to impose their selfish objectives on others, why have values such as equality, freedom and justice played such a large and recurrent role in political life? With its relentless emphasis upon the pursuit of selfish advantage, the struggle-for-power conception of politics seems unable to account for this dimension of politics. Political 'realists', such as Gaetano Mosca, have suggested that appeals to noble principles constitute various forms of propaganda disseminated to mask the oppressive character of political relations and thereby enhance the opportunities for exploitation. According to Mosca

(1939), no one wants to confront the naked face of power. Political leaders do not wish to have their selfish objectives unmasked because it will make their achievement more difficult. The masses do not wish to confront their own craven natures. So rulers and followers collude in the propagation of 'political formulae'– noble phrases that accord legitimacy to regimes by masking the ruler's self-interest. Whether the appeal be to 'divine right of kings', 'liberty, fraternity and equality', or 'democracy of the people, by the people and for the people', the function of the political formula is the same: a noble lie that serves as legitimating myth. Thus political realists discount the role of substantive values in politics by unmasking them as additional manifestations of the will to power, a will that is posited and for which no independent evidence is adduced.

Although such a degree of circularity may impugn the logical adequacy of the struggle-for-power conception of politics, it does not mitigate the unsavoury consequences of the widespread dissemination of the definition by political scientists. When 'science' asserts that politics is nothing more than the struggle for power, the moral scope of political action is partially occluded. If people are convinced that politics necessarily involves the pursuit of selfish advantage, then the grounds for evaluating political regimes is severely circumscribed. In an important sense, the distinction between a good ruler (i.e. one who rules in the common interest) and a tyrant (i.e. one who rules in self-interest) ceases to have meaning. For if all politics is by definition a struggle for selfish advantage, then what distinguishes one ruler from another cannot be the divergent ends pursued by each. All that distinguishes a 'noble statesperson' from an 'ignoble oppressor' is the nature of the political formula disseminated. A 'good ruler' is simply an excellent propagandist. What distinguishes regimes is not the values pursued, but the ability of the political leaders to manipulate popular beliefs. Within the frame of cynical 'realism', it makes no sense to denounce the systematic manipulation of images as an abuse of the democratic process, for manipulation is a constant of political life. What cynical science must denounce is the illusory notion that democracy could be anything more.

Pluralists have advanced a third conception of politics that has had an enormous influence upon the discipline of political science. Devised to avoid the shortcomings of both the institutional and the struggle-for-power definitions, pluralists conceive politics as the process of interest accommodation. Unlike the cynical insistence that power is the only value pursued in politics, pluralists argue that individuals engage in politics to maximize a wide range of values. While some political actors may pursue their selfish advantage exclusively, others may seek altruistic ends such as equality, justice, an unpolluted environment, or preservation of endangered species. Without preemptively delimiting the range of values that might be pursued, pluralists suggest that politics is an activity through which values and interests are promoted and preserved. In contrast to

the institutional definition's focus on the official agencies of government, pluralists emphasize that politics is a process of 'partisan mutual adjustment' (Lindblom 1965), a process of bargaining, negotiating, conciliation and compromise through which individuals seeking markedly different objectives arrive at decisions with which all are willing to live. On this view, politics is a moderating activity, a means of settling differences without recourse to force, a mechanism for deciding policy objectives from a competing array of alternatives (Crick 1962).

The pluralist conception of politics incorporates a number of modernist assumptions about the appropriate relation of the individual to the state. Pervaded by scepticism concerning the power of human reason to operate in the realm of values and the concomitant subjectivist assumption that, in the absence of absolute values, all value judgements must be relative to the individual, pluralists suggest that individuals must be left free to pursue their own subjectively determined ends. The goal of politics must be nothing more than the reconciliation of subjectively defined needs and interests of the individual with the requirements of society as a whole in the most freedom-maximizing fashion. Moreover, presupposing the fundamental equality of individuals, pluralists insist that the state has no business favouring the interests of any individual or group. Thus, in the absence of rational grounds for preferring any individual or value over any other, pluralists identify coalition building as the most freedom-maximizing decision principle. Politics *qua* interest accommodation is fair precisely because the outcome of any negotiating situation is a function of the consensus-garnering skill of the participants. The genius of this procedural conception of politics lies in its identification of solutions capable of winning the assent of a majority of participants in the decision process.

Pluralists have ascribed a number of virtues to their conception of politics. It avoids the excessive rationalism of paternalist conceptions of politics that assume the state knows what is in the best interests of the citizenry. It recognizes the heterogeneity of citizens and protects the rights of all to participate in the political process. It acknowledges the multiple power bases in society (for example, wealth, numbers, monopoly of scarce goods or skills) and accords each a legitimate role in collective decision making. It notes not only that interest groups must be taken into account if politics is to be adequately understood, but also that competing interests exist within the official institutions of state; that those designated to act on behalf of citizens must also be understood to act as factions, whose behaviour may be governed as much by organizational interests, partisanship, and private ambitions as by an enlightened conception of the common good.

Despite such advantages, pluralism, too, has been criticized for failing to provide a comprehensive conception of politics. In defining politics as a