

Editor's Introduction

Jeffrey C. Isaac

From its inception this journal has wrestled with an editorial and a disciplinary question that is also a fundamental question facing all political communities—the proper balance between inclusiveness and exclusivity. The journal was conceived as a medium of broad scholarly communication and publication. And we have recently been very deliberate in promoting the idea that *Perspectives* is a “political science public sphere.” At the heart of our editorial policies and our review process is the central question we ask of all authors: *how does your piece speak to the broad readership of political scientists who are our primary audience?*

At the same time, to be “a political science public sphere” is not to be a public sphere writ large. *Perspectives* is a journal of political science and not computer science or physics or English—though it is not indifferent to what those other disciplines have to say. And it is a *scholarly* journal and not a magazine or a journal of opinion—though it reaches out to the broader world of opinion, and promotes research that does the same. While we provide a space in which an “overlapping consensus” about a political science disciplinary core can be nurtured, we are always mindful that such a space must simultaneously allow for this core to be continually questioned and reshaped.

This means that the question of what is “in” and what is “out” can never finally be settled. At the same time, as anyone who has submitted an article to this (or any other scholarly) journal can attest, with each submission, and with the publication of each issue, decisions *are* made about what is in and what is not.

The current issue is a very exciting collection of articles, essays and reviews that place these questions front and center and that demonstrate the various forms that truly excellent work in political science can take.

It opens with a set of articles that raise fundamental questions about the nature of our discipline. Together, these pieces offer a fascinating dialogue about the nature of political science and the nature of a journal of political science such as *Perspectives*. We lead with Rudra Sil and Peter J. Katzenstein’s “Analytic Eclecticism in the Study of World Politics: Reconfiguring Problems and Mechanisms Across Research Traditions,” which offers a bold vision of a broad, eclectic, and yet sharp and analytic practice of political science. Their “analytic eclecticism” is not intended

as an alternative research method or tradition, but rather as an open-minded, problem-centered, and pragmatic approach to research that embraces a variety of methods and concepts depending on the intellectual problem at hand. Sil and Katzenstein do not disparage methodological or theoretical specialization. But they do expose the *limits* of this, and call for something more, in the name of the very kind of knowledge that political science purports to seek. And they demonstrate the “value-added” of such analytic eclecticism in illuminating some core questions of world politics.

Thomas C. Walker’s “The Perils of Paradigm Mentalities” offers a terrific counterpoint to Sil and Katzenstein’s piece. Walker argues that the subfields of political science, and especially the subfield of international relations (IR), have grown dangerously specialized and insulated from one another, and that this has been abetted by the unfortunate influence of two philosophers of science—Thomas Kuhn and Imre Lakatos—whose reception by political science has justified “paradigm mentalities” fostering intellectual rigidity and limiting critical insight. Walker offers a sharp critique of the IR field and of “paradigms” more generally, and draws upon the writings of Karl Popper to support an approach quite similar to Sil and Katzenstein’s “analytic eclecticism.” His conclusion is worth quoting: “As the world grows more complicated and more interdependent, questions regarding politics can hardly fit a single paradigm or a single method. Popper’s fallibilism points out the hubris of believing that one method or one theory is sufficient to address the multifarious questions that students of politics must address. If we are to better understand the complexity of our subject matter, we might heed the advice of Popper to ‘keep the flow of ideas running from all tributaries.’”

Lawrence M. Mead’s “Scholasticism in Political Science” sounds a similar theme, that political science has become *scholastic*—over-refined at the expense of substance—and that political scientists too often address very narrow questions, or are so preoccupied with method and with literature review that they lose sight of important questions and, even more disturbingly, are forgetful of what it means to think about what an important question *is*. Like Sil and Katzenstein, and like Walker, Mead argues on behalf of a more flexible and problem-centered

approach to research design, method, and inquiry, and a more *mindful* approach to the broader purposes of inquiry.

These three pieces are all written in the spirit of openness in which this journal was founded. And sympathetic readers and supporters of the journal will likely read these pieces with a sense of affirmation. Andrew Rehfeld's "Offensive Political Theory" is not likely to encourage such warm feelings—and that is deliberate. For it is at once a bravura intellectual performance and a *provocation*. Proceeding from the recent dustup regarding the status of the political theory subfield at Penn State, Rehfeld presents a strong—perhaps even “offensive”—critique of the political theory subfield for the defensiveness of many of its responses. He poses a sharp question: what makes much of the interpretive work of political theory “political science” rather than “literary criticism” or “historiography?” The question is epistemic but also practical, relating to the claims that can reasonably be made for resources in political science departments and space in political science journals. While Rehfeld—himself a “political theorist,” who presented a version of this paper at the Association for Political Theory's annual conference a few years back—puts this question to the theory subfield, it is a question that is in fact applicable to all subfields, organized sections and factions in the discipline—what makes the work political science and what entitles the work to various forms of “recognition” by political scientists? In pressing these issues, Rehfeld seeks to provoke all of us to be more reflexive about what we do and how it relates to what others do. Does political science have a “core,” and how do its various subfields and subspecialties relate to and contribute to this core, and how much should they be expected to contribute? Rehfeld advances some strong, affirmative, *offensive* claims about political science as a form of inquiry that is distinct from history and comparative literature and rhetoric by virtue of its epistemic aspiration to advance contestable hypotheses about the political world. On his view, such a conception incorporates much of what goes by the name of “political theory” but not all.

Bonnie Honig's extended review of James Tully's *Public Philosophy in a New Key* and Raymond Guess's *Philosophy and Real Politics* expands on similar themes but in a very different key. Honig develops the idea of a “new realism” that engages politics in a multiplicity of ways that exceed, it is reasonable to imagine, the kinds of epistemically-based inquiries endorsed by Rehfeld. On her view, political theory lays claim to the real by “recurring to complex registers of practice . . . [historicizing] in order to animate the unthinkable, the unimaginable, the nearly forgotten, sometimes by recontextualising the past (in the manner of Quentin Skinner) and sometimes by defamiliarization (in the manner of Nietzsche and Foucault).” The “debate” between Rehfeld and Honig is rich and important, for the future of political theory as a distinct genre of political inquiry, and for the future of political science as a disci-

pline in which conceptions of political theory are foundational and will remain so.

These issues about the extent and limits of political science, the nature of political theory, and the force of “the real” have long animated *Perspectives*. One question that follows is a very practical editorial one: why exactly is it that the four subfield division of the discipline looms so large, why have the labels—American Politics, Comparative Politics, International Relations, Political Theory—structured the identification and review of all books (and much else, including much recruitment and graduate examination) for so many decades, and does this practice have any compelling intellectual rationale? This is a question that warrants further discussion, and we hope to feature such discussion in upcoming issues. Indeed, starting with the 2010 APSA Meeting, *Perspectives* will organize an annual theme panel, and this year's panel—featuring some of our Editorial Board members—will address precisely this question. At the same time, for the past four years we have experimented with the Review section, and we plan to continue such experimentation.

One form this will take will be the inclusion of special thematic review sections. Our last issue featured a Gender and Politics section. This issue features a special section on Asia and World Politics. The rationale for this theme was quite simple—the proliferation of books on the topic of Asian regionalism and especially on the growing importance of China in world economic and geopolitical affairs. The theme of “regionalism” has been a major theme of Peter Katzenstein's work and especially of his recent APSA Address (see also Errol Henderson's review of *Civilizations in World Politics: Plural and Pluralist Perspectives*). And the number of books we were receiving on the Asian region seemed to merit special attention. The area is the home to a number of large and important countries—including China but also India, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Japan—and to almost 60% of the world's population. It is the site of many important developments relevant to financial globalization, economic development, demographics, and regional and global geopolitics. When we planned this special section we had intended to feature a review essay on the theme of the Asian region. But the section speaks for itself nonetheless. It also demonstrates, I think, that there are many fruitful ways beyond the standard subfields of classifying and connecting ideas, texts, and themes.

This issue also features a number of terrific contributions which exemplify the range of the discipline.

Kay Schlozman, Sidney Verba, and Henry E. Brady's “Weapon of the Strong: Participatory Inequality and the Internet,” offers a careful and bracing interpretation of a new Pew survey on the internet and participation. Extending their long-standing research agenda on civic participation, the authors challenge rosy accounts of the egalitarian effects of the new internet technologies, arguing that while these media play some role in mitigating the long-

recognized overrepresentation of the middle-aged among political activists, they leave undisturbed the fundamental socio-economic stratification of participation. And Susan Hyde's "Experimenting in Democracy Promotion: International Observers and the 2004 Presidential Elections in Indonesia" offers an interpretation of the results of an interesting field experiment using the random assignment of election monitors to test the effects of election monitoring. The experiment indeed revealed some unexpected results—including the finding that the presence of observers actually benefited the incumbent rather than the challenger. Hyde offers a persuasive explanation. As important, she makes clear how experimental methods can be used, in the field, both to develop and test hypotheses and to generate useful knowledge about the practical effects of "democracy promotion" and intervention.

Each of the two research articles mentioned above deals with some dimension of the structuration of democratic politics. They grapple with racial and ethnic classifications, new forms of communication, and the monitoring of elections to ensure fairness. This issue also includes three superb essays on similar themes in the new "Reflections" section, which will regularly feature programmatic essays that critically reflect on important themes and research traditions and propose new ways of thinking about old questions. In "Ballots and Barricades: On the Reciprocal Relationship between Elections and Social Movements," Sidney Tarrow and Doug McAdam discuss the "contentious politics" research agenda that they pioneered with the late Charles Tilly, reflecting on its accomplishments as well as its disappointments. Their basic argument is straightforward and perfectly suited to this journal—that the study of social movements and political contention and the study of electoral politics have for too long been too separated from one another, to the detriment of both inquiries. They argue for a bridging of these gaps, and conclude by challenging "scholars of electoral and movement participation, especially outside of the US, to . . . examine the links between movements and elections in very different political systems." In "Charles Tilly's Problem Situations: From Class and Revolution to Mechanisms and Contentious Politics," Mark Lichbach also reflects on Charles Tilly's contributions to the study of comparative politics, contextualizing the evolution of his work and its connection to the work of other important scholars, and considering its substantial legacy.

Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel's "Changing Mass Priorities: The Link Between Modernization and Democracy" offers a similar kind of reflection on the authors' long-term research agenda—the study of value change as the key to the study of democratization. They argue that "certain modernization-linked mass attitudes are stable attributes of given societies that are being measured reliably by the large-N comparative survey projects, even in low-income countries, and that these attitudes seem to

play important roles in social changes such as democratization." Their intent, as they describe it, is less to demonstrate the impact of changing values on democracy than "to make a point about the epistemology of survey data with important ramifications for the way we analyze democracy . . . we fully expect that scholars will continue to disagree about the relative weight to attach to the attitudinal variables that loom so large in our own theory of modernization." At the same time, they believe that "the kind of skepticism about mass attitudes shared by many political scientists is unwarranted, and that there is every reason for these attitudes to be considered in theories of democratization and social change."

The awarding of the Nobel Prize in Economics to Elinor Ostrom has made a huge splash, and rightly so. Ostrom is the first woman ever to win this recognition. Perhaps even more important from an intellectual perspective, she is also a political scientist and not an economist by training or disciplinary affiliation. And while she is surely a practitioner of "rational choice" analysis, she has developed this approach in unconventional ways, supplementing formal analysis with ethnographic and experimental methods, and underscoring the ways that individual choice is always embedded in social and cultural contexts. Her widely-cited book *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (Cambridge University Press, 1990) crystallizes this work, and presents an important theorization of how "self-governing" local institutions and forms of social capital can help individuals to surmount collective action problems and sustainably manage such "common pool resources" as fisheries, forests, water resources, and farmlands.

The award recognizing Ostrom's work has thus called attention to a broad set of questions about the nature of the economics discipline, the adequacy of its rationality assumptions, and the proper relationships between economics and political science.

With these questions in mind, I invited a distinguished cast of social scientists to comment on *Governing the Commons* as a work of political science. The response was enthusiastic, and the symposium is the largest one we have run in the past four years, and the contributors make for a really interesting group. Although pointed toward this singular work, the purpose of this symposium is to seize the opportunity presented by this exciting Nobel Prize award to encourage a broad conversation about the political science discipline and its possibilities and trajectories. One way to do this is to publish a range of reviews of this important book, written from a variety of perspectives. While Ostrom, a former President of the American Political Science Association, surely deserves much appreciation and honor, this symposium proceeds from the assumption that in political science criticism is the sincerest form of flattery. It is thus not a "tribute," but an effort to promote sharp and critical discussion of

a deeply important and influential book and of the research program of which it is a part. In the Popperian spirit of “conjecture and refutation” that Ostrom’s work exemplifies, commentators were asked to critically engage Ostrom’s contributions as a way of advancing our collective inquiries into important political questions.

This issue also includes a second symposium, on Carmen Sirianni’s *Investing in Democracy*. Sirianni—a sociologist by profession—has long been a sharp analyst of the complex relationships between civil society and public policy and one of the most nuanced advocates of “civic empowerment.” His book, like *Governing the Commons*, focuses on the requisites of self-governance. But unlike Ostrom, Sirianni regards *public investment* in civil society efforts and public/private partnerships as the central challenge for a revival of citizenship. The symposium on his book also includes a distinguished and diverse group of scholars, including Leslie Lenkowsky, who served as the George W. Bush administration’s first head of the AmeriCorps program. The discussions of the Ostrom and Sirianni books offer a fascinating counterpoint.

Speaking of counterpoint, this issue also includes a “Critical Dialogue” between Bruce Miroff and Thomas Spragens

on the decline of liberal public philosophy in the U.S.. Echoing a number of important books—from E. J. Dionne, Jr.’s *Why They Hate Politics* to Richard Rorty’s *Achieving America*—Miroff and Sprages debate fundamental questions about the enduring power of American liberalism, the significance of post-sixties culture wars, and the very possibility of a thriving liberal democratic public sphere under contemporary conditions. This set of questions is also underscored in Paul Frymer’s review essay on labor in American politics. Proceeding from a discussion of *The State of Working America 2008*, Frymer analyzes the complex sources of the economic and political decline of the US working class and the implications of this decline for the future of democracy. Back when I was a graduate student, in the late 1970’s, the theme of “political power and social classes” was sounded fairly widely and loudly, playing no small role in the important movement in political science to “bring the state back in.” Recent developments in the world and in the academy suggest that it may be time to “bring class back in.” Frymer’s piece is a good start, and we hope to be publishing more on this important topic.