

## **IN SEARCH OF AUSTRALIAN POLITICAL SCIENCE<sup>1</sup>**

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## **Introduction**

This paper comes from a project on the Australian contribution to the study of politics funded by the Australian Political Studies Association (APSA). The aim was to provide the first comprehensive reference work on the history of political studies in Australia. Because the academic study of politics in Australia is largely a post-war phenomenon, the contributors focus on developments since the 1939-45 war, although the project also explored the historical roots of each major subfield. One of our central concerns was the contribution of political science to the study of politics. However, because political studies encompass disciplines other than political science, we also included contributions from historians and philosophers.

There are only two other book-length surveys of the study of Australian politics; Aitkin 1985, and McAllister, Dowrick and Hassan 2003. Neither is comprehensive and the former is now out-of-date. Neither provides an authoritative history. Although there are an increasing number of volumes on the history of the discipline in the USA and the UK,<sup>2</sup> there is nothing similar on Australia. So, the project and ensuing book (Rhodes 2009) not only fills a gap in the Australian literature, it also contributes to a growing area of inquiry in political science internationally

For the most part, the book adopts the conventional approach to national histories of political science. It describes the discipline's development and focuses on the main subfields: for example, political theory, political institutions, political behaviour, and public policy and administration. However, we also moved beyond the mainstream paradigm, exploring the competing traditions in political studies and the themes or approaches that cut across the usual subfield organisation of political science; for example, radical approaches to political science, indigenous politics, feminism and the

politics of gender. We sought to capture the breadth and diversity of subject matter and the varied debates in Australian political studies. We eschew, therefore, any limits stemming from notions of disciplinary purity (cf. Sharman 1985).

This paper similarly surveys the development of both mainstream Australian political studies and alternative approaches. I start by surveying the post-war traditions in Australian political science. I tell three stories about the development of Australian political science: the humanities heritage; the arrival of modernist-empiricism; and the public intellectual tradition. I then describe the plurality, diversity and distinctiveness of Australian political science and discuss dilemmas and developments in the discipline. Finally, I discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the discipline, its standing nationally and internationally, and the reasons for its patchy and late development.

### **The traditions**

In Australia, as in Britain, it is possible to tell the story of a discipline that emerged after the Second World War and, under American influence, became autonomous and more professionalised (see Crozier 2001, 11-14). Chapter 2 describes the post-war growth and institutionalisation of political science in Australian universities. Chapter 4 documents the growth of the discipline's professional association – the Australian Political Studies Association (APSA). The survey of the discipline's subfields in Part 2 assumes there is a shared empirical domain that we study (on Britain, see Hayward, Barry and Brown 1999). As Adcock, Bevir and Stimson (2007b, 3) argue, this is the conventional form of disciplinary history that describes the development of an autonomous discipline and charts the evolving intellectual agenda.

Internationally, this interpretation of the history of political science has been put most strongly by Goodin and Klingemann (1996, 4, 6, 22, 11-13, and 20). They claim that political science has an overarching intellectual agenda and is increasingly mature and professionalised. They claim ‘a “common core” which can be taken to define “minimal professional competence”’ and ‘an increasing tendency to judge work ... in terms of increasingly higher standards of professional excellence’. Above all, there is a shared intellectual agenda. In essence, political science ‘has taken lessons of the hermeneutic critique on board’ and there is rapprochement on all fronts (on hermeneutics and the cultural turn see Johnson, Chapter 23). They can only mount this argument for a common core by believing there is ‘a theoretical framework which can straddle and integrate all these levels of analysis.’ That theoretical framework is rational choice analysis and the new institutionalism (and for a similar attempt to construct a shared paradigm, see Katznelson and Milner 2002).

The argument does not apply to British political science. Barry (1999, 450-5) claims there is ‘little evidence in Britain for the kind of integrative tendencies that [Goodin and Klingemann] ... have claimed to find’. There is no shared intellectual agenda based on the new institutionalism, no shared methodological toolkit and no band of synthesisers of the discipline. Goodin and Klingemann’s argument is ‘an idealisation of the situation in the United States’. Barry’s conclusion is also valid for Australia. As I will show, there has been no trend to a scientific profession with a shared intellectual agenda. Instead, we find diverging and at times competing traditions.

A tradition is a set of understandings someone receives during socialisation. The relevant beliefs and practices have passed from generation to generation. The traditions embody appropriate conceptual links. The beliefs and practices that each generation pass on display

a minimal consistency. At the heart of the notion of tradition lies the idea of agents using their reason to modify the beliefs they inherit. Dilemmas explain how people are able to bring about changes in beliefs, traditions, and practices. A dilemma arises for an individual or group when a new idea stands in opposition to existing beliefs or practices and forces a reconsideration of the existing beliefs and associated tradition. Political scientists can explain change in traditions and practices, therefore, by referring to the relevant dilemmas. Traditions change as individuals vary them in response to any number of specific dilemmas. The key characteristics of the Australian discipline stem from the dilemmas posed when its traditions bump into one another, when beliefs collide (for a more detailed account see, Bevir and Rhodes 2003 and 2006).

Disciplines are contested. There is no given or 'natural' intellectual agenda because disciplines are 'unstable compounds'; they are 'a complex set of practices' and any unity is a function of 'historical accident and institutional convenience' (Collini 2001, 298; see also Adcock et al 2006; Dryzek and Leonard 1988; and Farr et al 1995).

Australian political science is a complex compound of traditions. I illustrate the argument by describing briefly, the humanities and modernist empiricist traditions, with the associated public intellectual tradition. I also explore the dilemmas between political studies and political science, and radical critic and servants of power. I make no pretence that these traditions and dilemmas are the sole ones. My aim is to show there is no dominant tradition, but a diverse, contested arena

### The Humanities Heritage

The roots of Australian political studies lie largely in the British humanities, notably history and philosophy. It was the dominant tradition both between the wars and up to the 1970s. As both Judith Brett (Chapter 3) and Ian Tregenza (Chapter 5) show, it can be

characterised as an interpretive empiricism laced with idealism. Looking back, J. D. B. 'Bruce' Miller, Professor of International Relations at the ANU and 'just about the last God Professor', thought 'the British example was what counted most in the 1950s and 1960s'. He taught 'the sort of curriculum that you'd find in London or Oxford' (Interview with J. D. B. Miller, 5 February 2008). Indeed, the commitment to teaching came before research. This generation taught small classes over three, short Oxbridge terms and small numbers of PhD candidates in one-to-one tutorials. There was not much pressure to publish. The majority wrote mainly textbooks, overviews, and opinion pieces. Teaching notes and essays were circulated to students but rarely published. The exceptions found their way into the early Mayer readers; an eccentric, eclectic collection of gems and odd-and-sods (see Mayer 1967 and subsequent editions). Such texts were valued, speaking to a general readership and not, narrowly, to first-year undergraduates. This generation is known mainly for such textbooks, not its primary research, fieldwork or surveys.

Dean Jaensch (Chapter 4) observes Australian political science began as a 'family'. Unfortunately, this cosy metaphor does not convey accurately the state of the discipline. For Sawyer (1950, 323), Australian political science shortly after the Second World War was 'derivative in character', and 'relatively backward'. In a similar vein, Davis and Hughes (1958, 107 and 132) described the previous forty years of Australian political scholarship as 'wandering in the wilderness'. They argued that 'interest is still almost exclusively centred in the study of Australian political institutions'. Goldsworthy (1990, 27) claimed the first generation of political scientists 'tended to think and teach in a distinctively British-derived mode; literary, human sceptical, analytical of the past rather than speculative of the future, individualistic rather than team-minded. Even after the advent of modernist-empiricism in the late 1960s and 1970s, Galligan (1984, 85) highlighted the 'pragmatic British tradition of description and analysis'. Aitkin (1985, 9

and 32) also referred to the empirical tradition in Australian political studies and noted the importance of specific institutional links between Australia and the UK; for example, the London School of Economics and Political Science, and the Royal Institute of Public Administration. A significant proportion of Australian political scientists were trained in the UK (see Weller, Chapter 2). Crozier (2001, 16-17) considers these summary, critical assessments misleading because they focus narrowly on 'the pragmatic British tradition of the description and analysis' of political institutions. Nonetheless he accepts that the common beliefs about the 1940s through to the 1960s were that Australia produced no significant contribution to the study of politics; and if there was any contribution, it was derivative.

The authors of Chapters 2 through 7 do not share these harsh judgements about either then or now. They do not see an exclusive focus on Australian institutions. Both Brett (Chapter 3) and Tregenza (Chapter 5) identify the influence of idealist political thought. Both see John Anderson (Challis Professor of Philosophy, University of Sydney, from 1927 until 1958) as a major political thinker in his own right and founder of a significant Australian school of thought. Walter (Chapter 7) documents the extensive contribution to political biography. These authors offer a different judgement of the humanist, British heritage. Brett (Chapter 3) sees a subject that is socially constituted and historically determined. The ultimate test of knowledge is its capacity to provide 'good hard-headed analyses of political life in particular contexts' (Dryzek and Leonard 1995, 28). A good deal of work is descriptive and historical because, for much in politics, 'the particular is the reality' (Davis 1995, 21). Political life continues to disrupt our settled traditions of thought and the orderly accumulation of knowledge. We respond to these dilemmas, trying to create shards of meaning from the ever-changing beliefs and practices of political actors. Moreover, the tradition evolves. If its roots lie in British interpretive empiricism and idealism, it now

draws on the cultural turn of European human sciences and the work of post-structuralists and anti-foundationalists (see Tregenza Chapter 5 and Johnson Chapter 23).

### The modernist-empiricist tradition

There was no behavioural revolution equivalent to the changes in the USA but gradually, during the 1970s, the American influence grew to rival that of British political studies.

There was a call for more attention to methods (see: Sharman 1985, 111; Aitkin 1985, 32).

As Zetlin (1998, 194-5) observed, empirical methods gradually became more sophisticated.

The Australian Consortium for Social and Political Research Incorporated (ACSPRI)

provided a focal point for survey work and quantitative analysis. It was, however, a

modest dose of methods that attained nothing like the technical sophistication

characteristic of American political science. Indeed Sharman (1985, 111-12) pined for the

behavioural revolution and criticised an incoherent discipline as 'a cluster of semi-related

individual enterprises'. In place of these clusters he wanted the epistemological and

methodological beliefs and practices of the natural sciences that underpin much North

American political science. Galligan (1984, 86) offered a more balanced assessment.

Australian political science had 'a pluralist, interest group orientation' and 'restrictive

boundaries were drawn around the subject'. Political science focused on 'political

institutions and processes narrowly conceived'. The 'dominant paradigm' saw a polity of

'diverse elites and powerful groups all freely pursuing their interests in a political market

place'. American pluralism was there for all to see.

The pragmatic, empirical roots of the humanities heritage aligned easily with the

modernist-empiricist, pluralist beliefs of American political science. Bevir (2001, 470)

suggests the label 'modernist empiricism' captures such core beliefs as atomisation,

classification and measurement. Thus, institutions such as legislatures, constitutions and

civil services are treated as discrete objects that can be compared, measured and classified. Bryce's claim (1920 Vol. 1, 19) that 'it is Facts that are needed: Facts, Facts, Facts' would resonate with many Australian political scientists. Modernist empiricism has much in common with the positivism underpinning mainstream American political science; both believe in 'comparisons across time and space as a means of uncovering regularities and probabilistic explanations to be tested against neutral evidence' (Bevir 2000, 478).

The main characteristics of Australian political science in the 1970s and 1980s were empirical research on such topics as parties, elections, pressure groups, the bureaucracy, and problem-solving, or what we would now call evidence-based policy making. There were few 'schools of thought' and those that existed were 'accidental' (Aitkin 1985, 8-9; see also Sharman 1985; Zetling 1998). Chapters 9 through 16 in this collection belong to this tradition. There is little to be gained in paraphrasing the relevant chapters. Ian McAllister's account of elections and electoral behaviour (Chapter 12); Murray Goot's account of political communication and the media (Chapter 13) and Sean Scalmer's survey of the work on pressure groups (Chapter 15) provide many examples of work in this tradition.

Of course, modernist-empiricism exists in opposition to other tradition, notably the British inheritance. Sharman (1985, 112) took up the gauntlet asking whether political science is 'national and expository, or international and analytical?' His language is loaded – who wants to admit they are not analytical? The influence of the British inheritance versus American theories and methods is more conventionally expressed as 'political studies vs. political science' (Crozier 200, 11). But, and it is an important but, there has been no ineluctable trend from political studies (the British heritage) to political science (the American influence). Rather, we have a bifurcated, eclectic profession that draws on ideas

and methods from both the humanities and social sciences. The traditions coexist and on occasion contest. But whether political scientists openly disagree or simply work quietly within their preferred tradition, there remains a recurring dilemma at the heart of the Australian discipline where the beliefs and practices of the two contending traditions can always bump into each other. So, if the methods of survey research have been adopted widely in Australia, as in the USA and the UK, the formal analysis of rational choice has not. This dilemma is most evident in the debates about training PhD candidates, where the Oxbridge model of the novice scholar sitting at the feet of the God professor contends with the American graduate school model of two years of formal instruction in theory and methods. As the chapters in this book amply demonstrate, there is little evidence the dilemma will be resolved any time soon.

### Plurality

If the dilemma posed by political studies vs. political science is pervasive, it must not distort our understanding of the Australian contribution to the study of politics. There are also significant challenges to modernist-empiricism from other quarters. For the 1960s and 1970s, Carol Johnson (Chapter 23) notes the critiques from socialist and Marxist forms of radical political science (see also Galligan 1984; Irving 1985). Latterly, the major contributions have been in 'the cultural turn' with its focus on the constructed nature of knowledge claims. In Chapter 26 Chappell and Brennan describe the substantial national and international contribution to feminism by Australian political scientists (see also Sawyer 2004). Other chapters also comment on this feminist contribution for specific subfields; for example, Ian Tregenza's account of Carol Pateman's work (Chapter 5) and Marian Simms' account of Louise Overacker's work on political parties (Chapter 14). For proponents of modernist-empiricism, these diverse approaches would be interpreted as

evidence of weak professionalism. In contrast, I see them as evidence that a discipline with a bifurcated tradition, rather than a dominant paradigm, provides greater scope for theoretical and methodological pluralism.

The most prominent form of postmodernism in Australia draws on Foucault's later work on governmentality. Thus, Dean (1998), Hindess and Dean (1998), and Dean (2007) use Foucault's notion to understand neo-liberalism and the new managerialism (see also Hindess 1996 on power).

### Public intellectuals

Australian political studies have a long-standing tradition of civic engagement. As Brett (Chapter 3) shows, the Workers' Education Association not only linked town and gown but also recruited some of the first university teachers and professors; for example, it was Bruce Miller's path into higher education (Interview 5 February 2009). Those who seek out civic engagement are often described as 'public intellectuals'. Here I discuss whether there is a public intellectual tradition in the study of politics. I do not examine the practice of public intellectuals in Australia society or the extent of anti-intellectualism in Australian political history. My question is whether the ideas around civic engagement constitute a distinct tradition and the answer depends on the various understandings of this phrase.

Collini (2006, 46-7) identifies three uses of the 'intellectual' in English. The first 'sociological' sense refers to a socio-professional demographic category of individuals with a primary involvement with ideas or culture. The Academy is the obvious example. The second or 'subjective' sense refers to a 'commitment to truth-seeking, rumination, analysis, argument, often pursued as ends in themselves'. Nowadays, some commentators argue we have lost these free spirits of radical thought. The third 'cultural' sense refers to those who 'deploy an acknowledged intellectual position or achievement in addressing a

broader, non-specialist public'. Collini concludes that in Britain the term is now widely used in its cultural sense.

There is a public intellectual tradition in Australia, although of course it is not confined to political science (see Head and Walter 1988). For example, the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Australian* publish their annual list of public intellectuals. Political science is usually represented and the lists are often headed by Robert Manne, who works in the Politics Department at La Trobe University. Nor is this a new role for political scientists. One of the discipline's founding figures was also a public intellectual. Henry Mayer, wrote a fortnightly column, 'Speaking Freely', for the *Australian* from 1968 to 1976 (Murray Goot, personal communication). There is the Australian Public Intellectual Network (see: <http://www.api-network.com>). It publishes its list of 'Top 40' intellectuals, which includes two of our contributors (Stuart Macintyre and Glyn Davis). There are accessible journals encouraging public debate; for example, *Quarterly Essay*, in which one of our contributors also publishes (Judith Brett).

Despite these several, long-standing contributions, there is a debate on whether public intellectuals are in decline. Head (1988, 1) believes Australian public intellectuals 'have often been reluctant to adopt a high public profile'. Brett (1991, 521) asks 'why so few academics are public intellectuals' and argues the institutionalisation of disciplines in bureaucratic universities work against both public engagement and good writing. This debate mirrors a larger debate about the decline and fall of the public intellectual (see Ignatieff 1997; Small 2002).

When public intellectuals opine there are too few public intellectuals in Australia, they are deploying a restricted notion. We need a broader notion of the public intellectual than the radical critic writing elegant essays. It is not a question of whether students of politics

engage with the polity and civil society but how they do so. We need to distinguish the several forms of intellectual engagement. The instant we do so, it is clear the commitment of Australian political scientists to civic engagement runs deep and is closely related to the traditions of Australian political science. The 'subjective' notion of the public intellectual as radical critic writing elegant essays grows out of the humanist tradition. The 'cultural' notion of the public intellectual has its roots in the professionalisation and specialisation associated with modernist-empiricism and covers the ubiquitous political commentators on the ABC or SBS, the defence and security expert interviewed on news radio, and contributors to commissions of inquiry.

Whichever notion of public intellectual is used, it seems clear the Academy is a ceaseless contributor to public debate. The subjective intellectual may dress in 'radical chic', but the cultural intellectual provides an endless parade of talking heads for the media. How one judges their respective merits and contributions is not the point at issue. Rather, public intellectuals exist within both traditions and whether measured by 'Top 40' lists or league tables of media 'hits', both are alive and well. Both are a prominent feature of Australian political science.

To talk of a bifurcated public intellectual may sound painful but it also draws attention to the dilemmas around speaking truth to power. Both forms of civic engagement can incur costs. The radical critic may have a high local profile but there are costs when international benchmarks are the measure of standing. International refereed journals do not publish essays, and essays for local readership attract few citations in international scholarly journals. The cultural intellectual courts the danger of becoming a servant of power. It is not as crude as telling the government what it wants to hear and legitimating their actions, although that can and does happen. The deeper danger arises if we let the government set

the agenda for debate and respond to that rather than identifying our own independent set of intellectual concerns.

### **A pen portrait of the discipline**

This brief survey of the main intellectual traditions in Australian political science presents a picture of a bifurcated profession, comprising scholars from the humanities and social sciences, writing for both academic journals and a general Australian readership (Brett, Chapter 3). Indeed, APSA institutionalised the difference; I am a member of the Australian Political **Studies** Association and I publish in its *Australian Journal of Political Science*. Compared with the USA and the UK, this bifurcated profession is small. For most of the twentieth century, it was derivative in its ideas and methods. Davis and Hughes (1958, 132) comment that Australian political scientists 'In their conception of politics and their manner of writing about it ... have generally followed the fashions current overseas'. Fifty years later, a more nuanced picture emerges. The influence of the USA and the UK continues (see for example Scalmer, Chapter 15; and Simms, Chapter 14). There is evidence the European human sciences exercising an influence in some subfields (Tregenza, Chapter 5; Johnson, Chapter 23). There are pockets of local excellence.

Allied to its small size, the profession has been criticised for weak professionalisation, pluralism, and eclecticism in its methods. Thus, Aitkin (1985, 30-31) expresses concern over the profession's failure to be accepted in Australian universities. This portrait is more accurate for the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s than it is of the 1990s and the 2000s, which have seen both institutional recognition, a plurality of approaches, and growing professionalism. Weller (Chapter 2) documents the discipline's acceptance. There is a caveat. The institutionalisation of the discipline is increasingly stymied by the recent faddish

preoccupation of university management with reorganising departments, creating large units and setting-up interdisciplinary research centres. In 1957, there were 36 political scientists in Australian universities. In 2008, there were 361. APSA also grew, although its membership did not keep pace with the growth in universities. Nonetheless, it offers more services and publishes a journal of growing international standing. In sum, in the post-war period, Australian political science has gradually become institutionalised and professionalised.

The scope of Australian political science is also much broader as can be seen by comparing earlier surveys of political science with this one. By the late 1950s Davis and Hughes (1958, 132) noted that political science publications were becoming 'more substantial, specialised and professional'. Since then the *Australian Journal of Political Science* has expanded to four issues a year and won a respectable ranking for its citations and impact. There are more political scientists who publish more books and articles based on primary research. If Davis and Hughes (1958, 132) could not identify any area of strength other than Australian political institutions, the contributors to this volume identify national and international strength in several areas. Thus, public administration and public policy (Chapter 16) and executive studies (Chapter 9) are among the stronger subfields nationally and surface internationally on occasions. Political theory (Chapter 5) and international relations (Chapter 20) command high international standing. Australian political science now has a significant minority of internationally recognised scholars. Other subfields remain derivative with useful studies of no great distinction (see for example Scalmer, Chapter 15 on pressure groups). One subfield – political psychology (Chapter 28) – was once a shooting star but is no longer to be seen in the night sky. All the authors essay an overall judgement of their subfield. I will not summarise every chapter. If there is one overall generalisation, it is that most subfields surface internationally only

intermittently but specialisation has borne fruit with Australia developing several subfields and scholars of international excellence.

With specialisation came a plurality of approaches and an eclecticism of methods. There is a 'passive pluralism' or 'patterned isolationism' that allows the new subfields to sit alongside the established subfields and departments (Collini 2001, 299). So, for example, the study of indigenous politics and of gender thrives outside the political science mainstream. Specialisation translates into cadres. However, before we get carried away with this picture of growth, institutionalisation, specialisation, professionalisation, plurality, and international standing, I must sound a note of caution. Leslie Holmes's (Chapter 18) assessment of comparative politics is widely applicable; Australian political science is not uniformly excellent and the task is to explain the patchiness and late development of many subfields.

### **Explaining Australian political science**

Many explanations have been offered for the characteristics of Australian political science described in the previous section. I consider: the small size and geographic dispersal of the discipline; the cultural cringe; the legacy of God professors; dependence on state funding; and local traditions and their recurring dilemmas.

#### Size and dispersal

It is hard to see why the small size of the Australian profession and its geographic dispersal should have had a decisive or even a major influence on the development of the discipline. All the Scandinavian countries, or if you prefer, The Netherlands, are smaller than Australia, but few would judge them inferior to Australia in standing or productivity.

There is an argument that some departments do not reach the critical mass necessary to sustain research specialisation; that too is a hard argument to sustain. The Australian National University, Melbourne and Sydney are universities with international reputations but not all have a world-class political science department. Yet regional universities of lesser standing internationally have excellent political science departments. Size might influence the number of specialist subfields that can be supported but it does preclude either specialisation or excellence.

Size rears its head in the argument that the teaching demands on small units drive out the space, or at least the will, for research (Bourke 1988, 66). The demands of the undergraduate curriculum are for generalist subjects that are deemed 'relevant' by students. Both factors work against a research intensive culture in departments. For some colleagues, these points will resonate but as a general argument it will not do. There is frenetic competition for government funding and most universities have found ways of releasing staff from teaching and creating and funding separate research centres. Whatever the preferred explanation for the way political science developed, size and dispersal are not central to it. To this outsider, the argument from size is an excuse.

### The cultural cringe

According to Brian Head (1988, 1-2) Australian academics display 'excessive deference', believing that 'Anglo-American internationalism provides a continuing lodestar for standards of excellence'. Crozier (2001, 14) rephrases this argument as 'a lack of self-confidence and belief'. Before the 1990s, commentators saw Australian political science as derivative, provincial, even backward (see above p. x). Both the humanist and the modernist-empiricist traditions have their roots respectively in the two distant metropolises. There is, therefore, some mileage in the argument. The cultural cringe hangs around in the

stress on international benchmarking; for example, we are enjoined to publish in the ‘best’ journals, which means Northern hemisphere journals and the old university presses. At the government’s request, APSA prepared a ranking of all political science journals and academic publishers (Rhodes and Hamilton 2007). The overwhelming majority of the A\* journals and many A journals were American. But these journals rarely published academics from non-American universities; in effect they are American domestic journals (Sharman and Weller 2009). Their high standing is a function mainly of the size of American political science and their insular reading and citation habits. At the Australian National University, promotion to the most senior professorial level requires ten international (that is non-Australian) referees. At Berkeley, the equivalent promotion also requires ‘international referees’, but they mean from American universities like Harvard, Yale, Columbia, Princeton, Stanford and so on.

So, is the cultural cringe still relevant to political science today? The short answer is, ‘no’. The longer answer is that everyone is influenced by American political science. At least Australia is also influenced by British interpretive empiricism and European human sciences. Also by the 2000s, there are both established local traditions and distinctive subfields. The cultural cringe is yesterday’s explanation, although perversely, as the profession matures, the Australian government continues to look to the Northern hemisphere for new policy ideas for the governance of higher education.

### God professors

One explanation recurs in several chapters; a few key leaders exercised a disproportionate influence on the development of Australian political science and its subfields. Initially, their standing came from holding the only chair in a department. They were the heads of department, controlled the resources, and exercised much influence over people’s careers.

God professors ruled alone; ‘the academic world was monotheistic’ (Murray Goot, personal communication). Among the founding figures, it is hard to underestimate the formative influence of Henry Meyer on both the professionalisation of the discipline and on media studies and group theory. But he was not the only one and I provide a few examples. Pre-war, Francis A Bland *was* public administration in Australia. Post-war their numbers included Perce Partridge followed by Dick Spann (Sydney), Gordon Greenwood and Colin Hughes (Queensland) and Bruce Miller and Fin Crisp (Australian National University).

As professorial appointments grew and as heads of department were no longer necessarily professors, God professors passed away. But key individuals still exercised disproportionate influence over developments in the study of Australian politics.

Of this second wave of pre-eminent scholars, T. H. (Harry) Rigby shaped Soviet Studies. Alan Davies and the Melbourne School of political psychology were distinct and distinctive group for 40 years, although the school exists now, at best, as a Diaspora (‘t Hart and Walter, Chapter 28). And that is the fate of many specialisations; too many disperse and decline with the passing of their figurehead. So, many subfields were dominated by one individual with whom there was little or no critical engagement over either their entire lifetime or over an extended period of their professional lives. The clusters that grew around an outstanding individual dispersed and declined when he or she moved on or died. For example, studies of the politics of the Australian states have declined with retirement, emigration or death of lead researchers (John Wanna, personal communication). The pattern continues to this day. For example, Parkin and Hardcastle (Chapter 25) describe James Jupp as the pre-eminent figure in the study of immigration and multi-culturalism; and Rhodes and Wanna (Chapter 9) accord Patrick Weller the same

status in executive studies. God professors and their successors account for several of the diverse and fluctuating specialisations in Australian political science.

### State funding

Of course, God professors do not act in a vacuum. Michael Stein (1995, 190) emphasises that: ‘the most important overall explanatory factor accounting for differences in the pattern of disciplinary legitimation and institutionalisation is the structure of higher education in the different countries.’ There are many possible influences. Of late, political science’s legitimacy and identity is threatened by the managerial fashion for interdisciplinary research and consequent merger of departments into larger faculties, schools or whatever. As Weller (Chapter 2) shows there has been a tsunami of mergers with criminology, social enquiry, even tourism, as well as the more congenial history, humanities, and international studies. The single most important factors shaping Australian political science, however, are the scarcity of funding, and state funding.

Research requires financial support. Australia does not have a tradition of private sponsorship of social science research or large foundations. Indeed, the emphasis on teaching rather than research means that for many political scientists the idea that they should undertake funded research is recent. Nowadays, most researchers rely on state funding. The social sciences are the poor relations of the natural sciences in funding from the Australian Research Council and funding for large projects is noticeably difficult.

State funding can introduce its own distortions. The state has its priorities; it sets the research agenda. In Australia, that agenda is now explicit. The application form for the Australian Research Council asks every applicant to identify the project’s relevance to the government’s four national research priorities: an environmentally sustainable Australia,

promoting and maintaining good health, frontier technologies for building and transforming Australian industries, and safeguarding Australia. The government targets research funding and influences the direction of research; for example, funding its interest in security studies in Australia's 'backyard'. It also imposes a natural science research epistemology, creating in the opinion of some commentators a 'slave social science' (Donovan 2005).

### Local traditions and recurring dilemmas

Living traditions shape people's beliefs and practices but are, in turn, reinvented to deal with new challenges or dilemmas. Australian political science is strong where it has a long-standing engagement with the international political science community (for example, international relations); where it regularly engages with Australian government priorities (for example, public administration); and where it engages in a conversation with the larger community (for example, public intellectuals). As Judith Brett points out, there is public demand for our services in interpreting the history, conflicts and events of our polity and region, with the consequent potential readership for non-disciplinary writing in the press, journals of affairs and trade books (personal communication). I would add that both the 'subjective' and the 'cultural' intellectual are important for the standing of political science nationally (not internationally) but they have different ideas about their target audience, the nature of good research, and its dissemination.

It is not just local traditions that characterise Australian political science. It is also the dilemmas posed by conflicting traditions. Australian political scientists look to the humanist tradition with its mix of British interpretive empiricism and European human sciences modified, of course, for local conditions. There may be an aversion to American 'scientism', but there is a growing amount of survey based quantitative work. The political

studies versus political science debate has not subsided, as it has in Britain, or been resolved in favour of political science as it has in the USA. It is ever-present, even if political scientists just get on with it in their preferred tradition most of the time. The divide rears its head in the debate about training PhD candidates and in the differing ideas about what constitutes good research. Head (1988, 44) notes the contending polarities between reflective critique and seeking power and authority; between seeking a wider audience and peer group approval. Such dilemmas give Australian political science its distinctive local colouring, even confusions.

## **Conclusions**

The development of Australian political science does not fall into neat and tidy periods. The years to the 1970s were the heyday of the humanities inheritance. The 1970s onwards saw the advent of the American influence and a plurality of approaches. The 2000s saw a more mature profession with a toehold on the international stage. Social science disciplines are often engaged in a perennial search for their 'core', and political science is no exception. The search encourages its protagonists to impose, even invent, coherent intellectual patterns and impose periods. So, the traditions cease to be 'unstable compounds' and turn into a chronological account of Australian political studies with each wave succeeded by a newer, better political science. But a debate about a discipline's core is usually a sign there is no such thing, only contending intellectual influences and traditions. I prefer the metaphor of the veins in a block of marble. Each tradition marbles the block that is present-day political studies. Earlier traditions still have their proponents; for example several members of my editorial board winced at my unthinking use of the epithet, 'political science'. They have a point. Many colleagues write political biography

and political history (see MacIntyre Chapters 6 and Walter Chapter 7). They are as much a part of the disciplinary family as those colleagues who aspire to the professional and scientific standing of American political science. Quickly I learnt to use the more cumbersome but less contentious 'political science and political studies'.

The humanist heritage persists in several ways. Many Australian political scientists continue to be trained in the UK, with relatively few in the USA (see Weller Chapter 2). So, the link with the British heritage remains, although it broadens to marry British interpretive empiricism with European human sciences. The American influence persists in survey work, electoral studies and the persistent call for better methods in training for PhD candidates. This call is reinforced by the need to be competitive in the international PhD market. One person's aversion to quantitative analysis is another person's transferable skills for the job market.

To offer the portrait of a state-dependent, bifurcated profession with no disciplinary core, only a plurality of approaches and eclecticism of method, could cast a shadow of despondency. That is not my aim. There are areas of excellence in which we can take pride and promote. We can confront such weaknesses as the formal training of postgraduates. We do not have to accept the dominance of American beliefs and practices about what is best in political science. We can take the lead in developing suitable benchmarks to measure our national and international standing. We can resist the natural science publication model of journal publication by devising measures of excellence for book publications; citations are not the only measure. Protecting Australian political science presupposes, however, that we know what we are protecting. This chapter, and the book of which it forms a part, is a contribution to the process of building a self-aware profession, confident with its local traditions.

We are careless not only with our own traditions but in our present-day understanding of the state of the discipline. For example, at the workshop to discuss the draft chapters, there was much concern over the Australian contribution to the study of comparative politics because it was seen as insignificant. In fact, once we moved beyond the American model of cross-national quantitative studies, it became clear there were many contributions, with pockets of international excellence. We need to record, decentre and debate our traditions so we can hand them down to future generations, and explain ourselves to the wider world. We need to be aware about the ways in which these traditions shape our thinking about the history of the discipline, about PhD training, about the strengths and weaknesses of the discipline, and about its development. Those colleagues who search for a disciplinary core, for a shared intellectual agenda, are arguing from within a particular historical development narrative. In effect, they mean Australian political science ought to be more like American political science. Those colleagues who argue for a conversation with an Australian audience and for critical engagement with local issues do so largely from within the humanities traditions. They mean Australian political studies should be more like British interpretive empiricism and, increasingly, the European human sciences. There are larger intellectual communities with which we engage not only to guard against an inbred parochialism but to learn from their different, even challenging, intellectual agenda. The challenge is to foster regional distinctiveness **and** to engage internationally. For bodies such as APSA, this mission translates into developing international benchmarks that do not treat American political science as the only relevant yardstick of performance. The worldwide web killed geographic isolation and intellectual solipsism is no longer an option.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For a recently arrived émigré Brit to organise a project and edit a book on Australian political science (Rhodes 2009) might seem presumptuous. I think it is an advantage because, as an outsider, I bring not only a fresh pair of eyes but I also have no old scores to settle, no position to defend. But I could not have done it without the encouragement and support of my Australian colleagues. I owe a great debt of gratitude to all the contributors to this volume. Much of what I know about the development of Australian political science comes from reading their work. I am also grateful to them for allowing me to draw on their chapters for an understanding of the distinctive characteristics of Australian political science. I owe a special debt of gratitude to the following: Judith Brett (La Trobe) for advice on public intellectuals; Leslie Holmes (Melbourne) for advice on the development of Australian political science; Murray Goot (Macquarie) and Patrick Weller (Griffith) for advice on God professors; and Murray Goot and John Wanna (ANU) for advice on both the decline in the study of state politics and the standing of textbooks; and Ian Tregenza and Carol Johnson for advice on radical and postmodern approaches. None is responsible for the views expressed here but each made a significant contribution. I am also grateful to the Mark Bevir (Berkeley) and Jenny Fleming (UTas) for their advice and comments.

<sup>2</sup> See for example Adcock, Bevir, and Stimson 2006a, Farr, Dryzek and Leonard 1988, Finifter 1983 and 1993, Goodin and Klingemann 1996a, Hayward, Barry and Brown 1999, and Katznelson and Milner 2002. There are even comparative volumes; see for example Easton, Gunnell and Graziano 1991, Easton, Gunnell and Stein 1995. Finally, there is the

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magisterial *Oxford Handbook of Political Science* under the general editorship of Robert Goodin.