EXPLANATION IN POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

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SUMMARY

The aim of the dissertation is to explore the notion of explanation in political philosophy, given that political philosophy concerns political things, acts and concepts. Features of explanation are outlined with special emphasis on organisation of experience leading to understanding; and include interpretative, expository, ordering, and insight-providing elements. The political sphere is outlined, which provides the subject matter of explanation, by reference to the Socrates/Plato watershed in early Greek thought; and characterised by its concern with order in diversity, patterns, public activity and the search for the good life. It is a created sphere and encompasses autonomous activity, thereby admitting the possibility of philosophy in politics. It contains various sorts of explanation, among them explanation of human action. Consideration of this leads to a discussion of the relation of theory to action, of action to values, and of epistemology to political philosophy itself. The latter provokes an attack on the customary dichotomy between fact and value. The act concept is examined and leads to a discussion of symbolism and other important examples of explanation in political philosophy; myth, political space and time, paradigms and tradition, which are expounded with reference to the presocratic Greeks, Herbert Read's educational theories, and Michael Oakeshott's work respectively. Finally a summary of points emerging from the exploration is presented, pointing out the link between matters of fact and political philosophy, from which the need for explanation springs.
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"Political things (acts and concepts) are not only real, but taken in a broad sense, they constitute the most secure zone of our experience, being even more secure than sense perception, or at least as real: they are sufficiently real to make us happy or sad, to get us killed or permit us to live."

S. H. Rosen.

This dissertation is about political things, the concern of political philosophy. In particular it investigates our explanation of the phenomena we find or place in the sphere of the political, and it goes back to the presocratic philosophers, to find out how these things were put in that sphere.

Explanation is only one of the activities covered by political philosophy, but it is an important one because it results from the picture we have of a particular political society, and it is one of the most important ways of attending to "the eternal problem of order" that has fascinated political philosophers since the presocratic Greeks.
CHAPTER I.

EXPLANATION

Explanation is a generic concept. It varies with its subject matter in an orderly way, because it is connected with understanding.

Explanation is one of the processes that goes on in political philosophy, but explanation is always of something. It is a directed activity in that it works from a given: a matter of fact; an experience; a state of affairs; through a construction we call the explanation itself, to produce understanding, either in the actor or in the listener. If the explanation is written down, the listener may be as yet unborn. When he reads it, some time in the future, his purpose will be the same as the present reader: he will be hoping to increase his understanding of the problem it tackles.

But explanations, to stop talking in capital letters, come in many guises. A nod of the head to the right person at the right moment may convey more than a treatise, but considered as an explanation, it is too context-bound to be counted philosophical. To earn this label it must at least be general. Furthermore a philosophical explanation must be put in a public form. Usually it is written down. It may remain only in verbal formulation but it is then at the mercy of memory and bias, and its availability is limited.

Wanting to trace the origins of explanation, philosophers, psychologists and historians, have picked out demonstration as one of its earliest forms. The most stupid onlooker can pick up practical skills, and the relation between physical objects by watching an action often enough. Abstract ideas, and concepts are much more difficult. Here verbal explanation is needed, but for there to be communication, as opposed to mere speech, between demonstrator and recipient, there must be a common basis of experience and knowledge from which they can work.

I do not mean merely that they must both speak the same language. Indeed they could communicate even if each understood not a word of the
other's tongue, but unless they have relevant common experience, the explanation will never achieve its end. It would be no good explaining to a Martian with no eyes, the function of a pair of sunglasses. With no reference for 'sight', what sense could he make of a device to prevent discomfort caused by glare? Or to take a less fantastic example, it would be pointless to describe your emotional response to a glowing Van Gogh canvas in reply to the question "what makes this picture great?" asked by someone who was colour blind. They might suggest tactile or aural analogies, but these would have to be ratified by you.

Imagination also could help here, but it can only bridge little gaps. Things that are fundamentally outside our experience cannot be explained to us, though some of their flavour may be conveyed by forceful metaphor. However, for the purposes of this inquiry, we may assume common access to a wide area of experience. It is addressed only to earth men in the common use of the term and not to Martians, men in the moon, or horses.

Is the form of explanation in political philosophy affected by its subject matter, or, does it, on the contrary determine its own subject matter? To put the question another way, given an explanation, granted it meant something to us, how could we tell if it was at the same time, political philosophy? At first glance it seems that the form the inquiry takes, makes it philosophical, determines the kind of questions asked; whilst the content makes it political. That looks very simple, but it needs to be unpacked.

We have suggested above the one feature of philosophical inquiry is its generality. B. C. Parekh (1) outlines four others important to the connection between politics and philosophy. By his definition of philosophy he means "a radically and self-consciously critical interpretation of the nature of any phenomenon one happens to be inquiring into."

This implies that a philosophical inquirer must ask the most basic questions that can be asked, never being content to assume things on another authority. In theology or science, for example, the field is predetermined, in that only a certain sort of phenomenon, or kind of explanation is admitted. It is this that gives the inquiry its character.
But the philosopher cannot be content with assumptions. His aim is to remove all presuppositions, and to achieve it his work must be continuously self-critical. A physicist may be happy and productive given a certain picture of the electron. The philosopher must question its ontological status. The theologian may use arguments based on the existence of an all powerful, ineffable Being, whose edicts are law. The philosopher must turn over the arguments, evidence and the implications of this sort of belief, and indeed the epistemological status of such a belief in itself.

All this is not to say that a philosopher qua man cannot also be a scientist, or a believer in God. However, when he acts as chemist or Christian, he is not doing philosophy.

Parekh goes on to point out that philosophy is a fully self-conscious inquiry. At the same time that it investigates its subject matter, it evaluates the investigation that it is performing. In case this should sound like a snake swallowing its own tail, this point arises only because philosophical inquiry can inquire into philosophical inquiry. The process is in itself a discrete activity.

Moreover it is a critical activity. Recently this characteristic has been challenged. People have suggested that philosophical inquiry plays a descriptive or clarificatory role. But whereas most philosophers have challenged the credentials of some activity, or of the prescriptive picture of an activity painted by some other philosopher (and nowhere more consistently than in political philosophy) they have often done so, to replace it by some scheme of their own. It is part of philosophy’s dialectical nature that this scheme is in its turn open to criticism. By publishing it, its author invites criticism. He himself has evaluated what it contains. He wishes to be associated with it. But the enterprise of philosophy takes a wide stage and many actors. Criticism of activity or inquiry must logically itself invite criticism.

Besides the logical point, Parekh makes an interesting comment on the role of understanding, a matter we have seen closely connected with explanation. In his article (3) he states "... philosophers traditionally have argued, and could not but argue, that the concepts one employs embody
one's understanding, and that a different understanding necessarily calls for different concepts and thus for conceptual revision. To philosophise is to offer a certain kind of understanding and obviously the way one sees and interprets an activity determines, among other things, the concepts one employs, the words one uses and the way one relates them."

It seems that the question of form and content is not clear cut, but rather a matter of relation, form and content in some way determining one another. And this is the gist of Parekh's final point about the definition of philosophy. He maintains that it is interpretative. In the particular article I am quoting, Parekh's remarks are addressed to readers of Michael Oakeshott. Oakeshott contends, he says, that explanation is the most important feature of political philosophy, but this is not so. It cannot be considered logically ultimate, because it depends initially, on how one interprets the phenomena. Since the ultimate concern in enquiry of this sort is to understand, it is necessary to offer an interpretation, not just an explanation.

To this end, we start off with chaos or multiplicity, (this is what we call experience), and at the same time with the need or desire to resolve chaos, and reduce the multiplicity to order, we must probe to a deeper level than that of phenomenon to provide it, i.e. to levels of analysis and reduction. Although the process of description ultimately involves interpretation, in that one must first select the significant factors from the chaos of experience the element of interpretation is minimal. Interpretation in contrast to description is concerned with understanding not identification.

The outline of interpretation Parekh presents is intended as a critique of Oakeshott's notion of explanation. But we have defined explanation more widely from the start, and our wider definition includes an element of interpretation that is, if the aim of explanation, the necessary aim, since without it explanation cannot be defined or grasped, is to produce understanding, then Parekh's objection cannot be applied to our definition. Indeed it only illuminates our original point. Both interpretation, and explanation as we use it, in this dissertation, involve understanding.
These observations on philosophy are mainly about the form of questions asked. What about the content of these questions? The nature of the sphere of the political is discussed at length in the next section. It is of great importance when touching on political philosophy. But political activity must itself fulfil certain conditions before it can be the subject of a philosophical inquiry. It must at least be autonomous and distinctive. Why is this? Parekh (4) true to his own scheme here outlines four fundamental assumptions that are made when we talk of anything being an activity.

Firstly, when you ask questions about the activity it must not resolve itself into something else. Then it must be capable of being fruitfully studied in terms appropriate to itself. These must be logically related to one another in a way that they are not related to others, and finally, together they must constitute a complex that has a certain degree of internal unity and homogeneity. Political activity "the conduct of the collective affairs of a territorially organised community" (5) fulfils these four conditions. Or to sum up in Parekh's own words (p. 159)

"the possibility of political philosophy requires that political activity should be distinguishable from non-political activities like religion or economics, and an adequate view of it requires that it should not be identified with any single aspect of politics. Only by drawing these distinctions is it possible to define political philosophy in terms that do not confuse it with, among other things, social, moral, economic or religious philosophy on the one hand, and the philosophy of the state or legal, civil, or legislative philosophy on the other."

There are other standpoints from which to foray into political philosophy. One obvious one is to tackle the question historically and see what has been written on the subject, and considered to be political inquiry to date. Here we are again faced with problems of interpretation, this time akin to those facing the historian. What survives is generally what has been considered important at the time, by those who then had power to enforce their opinions. They in turn were influenced by contemporary happenings, wars, revolutions and tides of public feeling being among the more important, and once the selection was made, little could be done to change it.
Even supposing all this pre-selection could somehow be reversed (and the status of what would then appear, would be somewhat curious) there is still the logical possibility that everyone so far might have been wrong about what tssy called the political sphere, so that their attempts at political philosophy were foredoomed to failure........ or is there?

Surely this will not do. What people choose to call the political is the political in some sense. Or rather, what people choose to see as political becomes the political by being treated in the manner appropriate to the political. Even then the choice is not entirely arbitrary. If it had no fixed limits, we would be able to include anything, literally anything in this sphere, which is nonsense, and besides contravenes one of Parekh's defining characteristics of activity.

It follows that we must have some idea of the sphere of the political before we begin. It has a basis in our experience which we can share and communicate to others. But this does not necessarily mean that we find it already made in the outside world, or that it is straightforwardly 'given' to us. Nor does the opposite, that we make it ourselves follow. Rather the truth lies somewhere between the two. We can get nearer to it by considering for a moment a much bigger question, namely what do we mean by experience?

Experience is one of a number of primitive concepts from which the philosopher can choose to work (he will probably be called an idealist if he does). It is in some way 'given' to us as subjects. The notion of subject depends on there being some sort of experience for him to be subject of. The ideas of a subject and its objects are complementary, because the subject is that which experiences, whilst the object is that which is experienced. So, subject, object experience: if we want to talk about our world we must start with these three.

But the subject may experience in a variety of ways. Taking a description of man as a sentient being, a condition of his being in the world, is that he is aware. But there are many ways of being aware, of experiencing.
Our primary experience is a jumble which always contains more than we can picture in words, conceptual schemes or even works of art. This is the force of much of Merlean-Ponty's work on perception(6). He used the notion of the pre-logical and pre-linguistic sphere to explain many puzzling features of ordinary perception. In a simplified picture we may envisage ourselves, through our openings on the world, eyes, ears, mouth, imagination, fingers etc. soaked in a storm of perceptions. If we did nothing to organise them we would drown or remain imbeciles, because without organisation, we cannot understand them, and understanding is the basis of control.

So, to borrow a simile from Russell, we quickly don a pair of mental spectacles which enable us to perform selective focussing. They might be science spectacles or poetry spectacles or history spectacles, to pick out but three. This reduces the chaos and enables us to come to grips with part of what is impinging on us.

But this picture is rather too simple, because we don't necessarily cut out part of our experience by viewing it from a particular standpoint. We still see all of it, but from one perspective. We could say we switch on a conceptual spotlight which illuminates certain things and leaves others in the shadows. Such a "manner of thinking which tries to explain experience of all kinds in the most coherent and comprehensive way, and to reveal the logic immanent in this experience" (8) is a form of idealism, and has been particularly associated with Hegel and his followers.

Michael Oakeshott (9) has produced a persuasive schematisation of this sort in which he outlines four main ways of systematizing experience, called activities. These four participate in a 'conversation of mankind', i.e. not playing any fixed role, they intermingle with now one predominating, now another. It is implied that if one voice predominates, the conversation as a whole suffers. The four 'modes of experience' Oakeshott has so far concentrated on are activities practical, scientific, poetic and historical.

Politics is part of practical activity which "takes in everything concerning the change and maintenance of existence" and is distinguished
by its instability. It is instructive to note what Oakeshott has to say about the origins of activity, because if activity could be characterised, we might have some sort of answer to the question of the limits of political activity, which we touched on earlier.

"Activities emerge" says Oakeshott, (10) "naively, like games that children invent for themselves. Each appears, first, not in response to a premeditated achievement, but as a direction of attention pursued without premonition of where it will lead. How should our artless ancestor have known what (as it has turned out) it is to be an astronomer, an accountant, or an historian. And yet it was he who, in play, set our feet on the paths which led to these, now narrowly specified actions. For, a direction of attention, as it is pursued, may hollow out a character for itself and become specified as a 'practice'; and a participant in the activity comes to be recognised not by the results he achieves but by his disposition to observe the manners of the 'practice'. Moreover, when an activity has acquired a certain firmness of character, it may present itself as a puzzle, and thus provoke reflection; for there may come a point at which we not only wish to acquire and exercise the skill which constitutes the activity, but we may also wish to discern the logic of the relation of this activity (as it has come to be specified to others and to ascertain its place on the map of human activity.)"

The weakness in such a definition of activity is the assumption that it can have 'sprung' from artless play, for then it would contain no notion of purpose, one of the distinguishing features of activity. The astronomer or historian Oakeshott talks about, (or, we might add, the politician) became differentiated from our 'artless ancestor' precisely when he became aware of an aim and directed his play towards that end.

It is by an end that we characterise an activity. Both an astronomer and an historian may look through a telescope - but according to their purposes they see different things. Both an historian and an astronomer may read an account of a seventeenth century uprising, but they read different things. What they do can be described fully only by taking into account the aim with which they do it, and it is this factor that Oakeshott omits.
Other writers have produced similar metaphysics. John MacMurray (11) concentrates on Religion, Art and Science. These are hierarchically arranged, religion encompassing art and science, and each denoting categories of characteristic human experience. Michael Polanyi (12) also has a hierarchical system of much greater complexity, based on experience.

But in differentiating between kinds of activity, as Oakeshott's formulation of the problem of categorisation has led us to do, there are logical factors which must not be forgotten. Yet, in considering experience as a whole the question is to establish the metaphysical basis from which these logical differences arise. It is here that political philosophy can contribute to political activity by asking questions about political ontology, e.g. what are the ultimate features of political activity in terms of which various forms of it can be explained? because "Depending on how one analyses the structure and manner of existence of the political community, one suggests different criteria of political identity, and offers different philosophical interpretations of civil war and revolution." (13)

A further contribution is made by political epistemology which consists of an analysis of the categories of the political condition. It is in this area that we find some of the most powerful political explanations, and much of what follows springs from epistemological questions.

If we seem to have strayed a long way from experience, it has been to try to connect this treatment of explanation in political philosophy with wider philosophical issues.

Returning now to the notion of an explanation in political philosophy, we may ask what are the formal requirements, and what is it, for something to be considered a political explanation. We have historical sanctions to look on politics itself as an activity concerned with order of a particular kind; the kind that is in the widest sense concerned with the arrangements of a group of people living in a territorially based association, and acts through the medium of government.
Look at Hobbes' political philosophy in this light. His central concern was the safety of the state. Since man's nature was such that he could not live peaceably with man if left to his own devices, we must be rescued from destructive anarchy by the imposition of one will on what was an unruly mass rent with personal feuds. This one will, embodied in the sovereign could and would create order out of chaos.

Plato's vision of the good society is also based on order but here the order springs from the very nature of an ideal form and the society he aims at is a static one; change, to Plato being necessarily change for the worse. Aristotle and Augustine worked in a framework of order when writing on politics, though it sprang from a different source for each.

One of the tasks of explanation in political philosophy therefore, is to make the possibilities of order apparent. This does not mean starting with a clean slate and describing fanciful patterns. The philosophy possible must take due account of the activity it inquires into, and political matters were ever in a state of flux. Rather philosophical explanation serves to draw out the strands of experience amenable to manipulation and explore and evaluate possible arrangements within the political sphere.

It might for instance investigate the connections between education and society by producing a model of the relation between them e.g. seeing society as an educational matrix and identifying the social pressures that go to mould the individual. If this model is accepted as a form of explanation, it may well have political repercussions in that recommendation about the kind of social action needed to provide the best sort of education can take place only when certain political conditions are set up. The institutions of a particular society may need re-arrangement, or people may have to be deployed from one job to another, retrained and so on.

There are all kinds of hidden value premises in an argument such as this one, here indicated in a very abbreviated form. But assuming that these would also be exposed by philosophical investigation,
Another function of political explanation is interpretation of political facts. Remember we are using explanation in a wide sense, to include the notion of interpretation, since it is directed towards understanding. Order is again important here. The breakdown of order is one way to see a crisis in society or government, and there are other situations usefully viewed as attempts to impose, or reach order. Perhaps in a revolutionary context this particular explanatory model has many ramifications directly relevant to political activity, as we shall see.

Besides order, the outstanding example of a political explanation, other conceptual devices are used to good effect, and are investigated in the following sections. Metaphors are employed to explain political facts, and we find several that recur so often that we can safely look for a very close connection with their subject matter. Tradition is a notion beloved of political philosophers. It is a way of viewing the whole field of politics in a historical context, but does not necessarily give us a historical explanation.

To see tradition as an explanatory device, consider the trio experience, explanation (or interpretation), understanding. Experience we have argued is to some extent chaotic. We can grasp that it is happening to us but as soon as we focus on part of it, we are interpreting it. If we did not do this, we would remain imbeciles or be overwhelmed. So we use a conceptual scheme to grasp it. We take up a stance and view our experience from this perspective, and this we do in order to understand it. Thus there is a tripartite relation experience: explanation: understanding. Tradition is a conceptual device belonging to the second term in this relation; experience. If we try to talk of 'a tradition', not a specific tradition, but 'a tradition', abstract noun, we face grave difficulties, but examples of traditional 'this' and traditional 'that' are all around us. Tradition, like metaphor, provides explanation in political philosophy.

In all this we are not talking about carrying on politics
itself, though we are not denying that political philosophy may have practical repercussions. (It is possible to argue, as Parekh does, that it must have such repercussions). But if we are to make a philosophical inquiry, description, explanation or anything else, it must be clear, what the subject matter of this inquiry consists in.

So the uses of philosophical explanation are similar to those of ordinary explanation, which are:

(I) to make things clearer
(II) to examine the extent and implication of existing explanations.
(III) to provide insights into its subject matter
(IV) and in general to provide understanding.

(IV) we recognise as the most important point and one of its implications is that explanation is generic, i.e., embraces many species. J. Yalton has pointed out in an article in British Journal for the Philosophy of Science that the connection between explanation and understanding is often overlooked, and he wishes to argue that what makes e.g. scientific explanation, scientific, is not its form (deductive) but its subject matter. This we take to be rather too simple a view, since form of explanation and subject matter to some extent determine one another, at any rate when explanation is taken in the wide sense of necessity to include interpretation.
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(3) B. C. Parekh op cit.

(4) B. C. Parekh op cit.

(5) B. C. Parekh op cit.

(6) See for instance 'The Phenomenology of Perception' M. Merleau-Ponty

(7) B. Russell 'History of Western Philosophy'

(8) W. H. Greenleaf 'Oakeshott's Philosophical Politics'.

(9) M. Oakeshott 'The Voice of Poetry in the Conversation of Mankind' in "Rationalism in Politics and other Essays".

(10) M. Oakeshott 'The Activity of Being an Historian' in 'Rationalism in Politics and other Essays'.

(11) J. MacMurray 'Religion, Art and Science'.

(12) M. Polanyi 'The Tacit Dimension'.

(13) B. C. Parekh op cit.

(14) T. Hobbes 'Leviathan'.

CHAPTER II

THE POLITICAL SPHERE

To pick out explanation in political philosophy we must be able to identify the area of the political, or we will not know what we are trying to explain.

To investigate explanation in political philosophy we must first solve a two-tiered problem. We have to outline the area of the political, which involves characterising political activity; and then decide what a philosophical inquiry into this activity will involve, or indeed whether such an inquiry is possible.

Characterising political activity is by no means easy, even though political 'this', 'that', and 'the other' are common currency in everyday life. Newspapers and other mass media are bombarding us all the time with images of political activity and its results. If we ourselves decide on a course of action, we sometimes experience these results at first hand, but more often as part of something else, which does not strike us as political in the least; for instance little Johnny's arithmetic.

Little Johnny has been having trouble with his sums. Perhaps, suggests his progressive Father, he would do better at a school where newer methods of teaching are used. Perhaps, suggests his more practical Mother, he is unhappy at school because he can't hear very well, or is short sighted? Let's go and talk to the teacher about it. But just then the teacher goes on strike, about a pay claim, or about using untrained helpers in the classroom. Little Johnny's parents are filled with righteous indignation, when his teacher is not there for them to talk to. "Shouldn't let politics interfere with doing her proper job" they complain. "Why isn't she where she ought to be, teaching our little Johnny?"

But what if anxious Mama takes little Johnny to have his ears or eyes tested? It is a relatively easy procedure and will cost her nothing - unless he does need to wear glasses. What made this possible? Some
politics somewhere along the line. It was surely a political decision of somebody to set up health and welfare services for the community, financed largely by contribution from that community?

So it seems that politics as we know it is very much interwoven with our everyday life. It might, in that case, prove easier to get a clear picture of it, if we go back to its origins. We can then decide how much or how little it has changed and bring our ideas up to date accordingly.

It can be argued, and indeed I shall argue in a later section (Chapter IV) that political philosophy has its temporally ultimate and expressed sources in the thinking of the presocratics. But as a distinct mode of activity, politics and political philosophy are just clearly recognisable at the watershed that is Socrates/Plato.

For in Socrates and Plato the sense of politics as a game among other games is lost. Systematisation becomes the thing, and must be carried out with deadly seriousness. This constitutes a watershed in political thought recognised and expounded variously by writers since that time. Their views differ, but they are united in seeing Plato's work, (especially the 'Republic') as of the utmost significance for the emergence of political philosophy.

Eric Havelock is one of these writers. He sees a fundamental change in the nature of political philosophy after Plato has lived. The change involves choosing one set of possibilities and ignoring another. The set of possibilities chosen is usually called the classical tradition.

Havelock (16) attempts to categorise man's thought about himself. He sees Greek thinkers, especially dramatists and poets, wrestling with the 'given' of the human condition, the subject matter with which they constructed plays and dramas. The given is what they were attempting to portray and to come to grips with, to make manageable by making it understandable. As such their task is difficult because the human condition contains a paradox (expressed by Sophocles in Oedipus Tyrannus') that the human species is subject to chance, yet intelligent, biologically limited, yet creative.
It is from this paradoxical starting point that man, in his wondering, theorises: and it is to the same paradox that he returns. For in it is expressed the ultimate thing he knows about himself qua man. To know what man is, the paradox must be accounted for, the riddle solved.

There is more than one solution, and Havelock contents himself with the two he considers historically dominant. One solution gives us the 'idealist' tradition, exemplified by Plato and Aristotle. The other is reached by a group of presocratic philosophers whom Havelock terms the anthropologists: Anaximander, Xenophanes, Anaxagoras, Archelaus, Democritus.

The difference in views between the classical and the anthropological theorists lies in a difference of opinion about the nature of man. Plato's works assume that man has always existed in his present form or character: he either came into being able to speak, intelligent, morally aware and so on, or he was created so by God. Either way his spiritual nature is assured, by being part of what it means to be a man. That is to say, this view of the origin of man rests on metaphysical foundations.

The non-metaphysical view derives from a historical science which postulates the evolution of man from non-human life forms. Thus moral and social codes follow the emergence of intelligence and speech. Civilization is here an essentially historical process and "can be viewed as both moulding man and being moulded by man" (17). We may call these two views the religious-metaphysical, and the biological-historical for brevity.

Whatever we may think of this interpretation of Greek history, it does lead to some exciting developments when we move from the historical to the political sphere. Havelock argues that in the West morality and law are seen as resting on principles whose validity is independent of time, place and circumstance. They are accounted for either as inherent in the structure of the universe, or as the result of divine will. In Plato and Aristotle these principles originate in the ideal forms of justice and goodness.
"The united influence of Classic Greek philosophy and religious revelation built up the conviction that man has an unchanging spiritual nature which is either itself the source or is created by the source, of a moral law both timeless and complete". (18)

This is the timeless Eden Myth: the view of man's history which starts with a fall from Grace, so that even with the help of God, man is for ever climbing back up, trying, in vain to regain something he has lost. Contrast it with the conception of human behaviour held by the fifth century anthropologists - that replaces principles with conventional patterns of behaviour, the rules of a game by which man finds it convenient to live; and not only are we back with Anaxagoras, but the rules of morals and law have only 'aposteriori' validity. No objectivity can be claimed for them.

This 'human science' outlook also differs from the Eden myth in the kind of pattern accounting for the emergence of civilisation. Eschewing the fall from grace it sees rather a long climb upwards. But this is to assume that human development is a positive thing without postulating the terms in which anything could be considered good or bad. It seems to make nonsense of the idea of choice, yet leaves us with the absurdity of having to make choices. It is akin to existentialist thought at its most dismal.

However it can be made to make sense, if as in Anaxagoras, ordering in any sense of the word - structuring, building, arranging - is regarded as a game. We have then only to look hard enough and we will discern the rules. From then on we can start playing. This is the very temper of Heidegger's philosophy, with the game played out in the shadow of the largest forfeit of all, death, which affects how we play, but cannot affect the rules setting up the game.

The sum of such a view of man is what Havelock terms the 'liberal' temper in Greek politics, which as it emerges can, he says, be traced in Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripedes. In fact at times his theory would seem more relevant to literary criticism than to a theory of politics, if he did not draw out the political consequences of such a position. They are, in a word, opposition to the idealism and authoritarianism inherent in Plato.
Plato, you see, took the anthropologists\' notions, and stood them on their head. He reinforced idealistic and teleological notions of man as he was bound to do if he was to postulate an ideal world of Førms, to which man was to aspire through philosophy. Political theories can thus be categorised according to the kind of goals they set up, which will in turn influence the degree, authoritarianism needed to run any particular state on their particular lines. Havelock assumes that theories postulating external goals or incentives, i.e. the attainment of some higher state; necessarily contain people who will claim, rightly or wrongly to have privileged access to information about this state, and who will thereby claim a larger share of obedience from the unenlightened mass. If this were so, it would indeed lead to authoritarianism.

But he neglects the possibility that authoritarianism may result in a state subscribing also to the beliefs of the anthropologists. Here the forces brought to bear are likely to be more subtle. They may be forces of conservatism or of self interest, but insofar as they are theoretically discoverable by all, perhaps such a compromise state is the most desirable one. It is more difficult to defend from subtle attacks originating in the supposedly enlightened seekers after truth themselves: existentialism is exhausting, and as Fromm has pointed out (19) freedom may be rejected by those people it would most benefit.

Moreover, although these two strands, the idealist and the anthropological both have existed in Greek thought, the reason they have not both been recognised before seems to be more a function of what we were ready for than a case of big bad Plato. The theory of evolution shocked and incensed our Victorian great-grandparents. By bringing in presocratic Greek anthropologists, Havelock may just be continuing the attempt to make Darwinism respectable. Nonetheless, insofar as he points out even the possible existence of a second tradition of political thought in Greek times, he enables us to contrast the two and begin to characterise some of the assumptions of political activity which concerned Plato.

Perhaps we would reach the heart of the matter if we considered what the Greeks were trying to do when they sought to organise their
knowledge of man's nature. Surely in organising, they were trying to "underpin the chaos of their experience", (20) trying to understand, to render their experience intelligible, a role assigned by Frankfort to Myth. This was not a straightforward task.

John Gunnell (21) sees it as a jerky process. The early thinkers would see how some part of their experience was gradually becoming too complicated to fit into a simple overall mythic explanation, and break it off to look at more closely, so to speak. In this context he also has something to say about Plato's position as a political philosopher: in fact the first truly political philosopher. Plato's importance was that he broke off a large piece of experience which we would now call the political, and looked at it, described its boundaries and subjected its content to an analysis whose result was disturbing. It indicated that the ideal order could not be reached among the phenomena of this world, which were to a large extent, the product of illusion and belief. And this meant plans must be drawn up to enable some men, the right sort of men, to win through to the ideal world of Forms. For "In the Republic, myth has been transcended - relation between man and cosmos must be restated, on a level consonant with his new self-consciousness. At this point political philosophy emerges". (22)

So to Gunnell, this is why Plato stands at a critical point on Greek philosophy. He reformulates the problems of explaining the world, and in the area of man's relation with man, sees the role of political man, in the pursuit of the wisdom "which governs the ordering of society" (23). In this pursuit the Dionysiac element, the passionate and poetic is suppressed.

It is this which causes Wolin (24) to remark that in seeking the answer to the problem of order in the immutable world of the Forms, Plato abandons the essential nature of politics. This needs further explanation.

Wolin contends that Plato was the first to outline the area occupied by the political. Where previous philosophers dealt with the undifferentiated phenomena, as they found them in the world, Socrates turned away from nature to man and society, but his concern was primarily
ethical. It was Plato who first saw the possibility of society becoming a coherent whole, directed by the agency of man. To apply his ordering vision, two things are necessary: First, the phenomena dealt with, must be comprehensible. You cannot order what you do not understand unless it be on some completely arbitrary basis. Secondly these comprehensible phenomena must be highly plastic, amenable to human agency. Having recognised and made explicit for the first time in the history of political philosophy, these two fundamental facts, Plato proceeds to build a political scheme whose main feature is its projective quality. It is directed throughout by an imaginative element to a more perfect order in future time.

But despite Plato's acute political vision, he becomes involved in a fundamental paradox: the nature of the political world is one of change, whereas Plato attempts to create a static order, probably here being influenced by the charm of mathematics, and by Pythagorean teaching.

He remained unable to find and establish a satisfactory relationship between the idea of the political and the idea of politics. By attempting to banish the political context, he did away with politics as an art of conciliation. Wolin suggests that political philosophy has on the whole tended to follow Plato in this. Those who have not and who take into account the leading characteristics of their subject matter have generally been judged second rate and seen as apologists (e.g. Locke, Machiavelli). They put before us the question "Does political association have any necessary connection with eternal truth?"

It is not a question that Plato had to answer, assuming as he did, the dominant position of knowledge. But it did pose special problems for him. Knowledge of the Good being extra-political, he had to find someone to administer power. He chose the philosopher for this task, having first selected him from an elite created by training specifically designed to produce philosophers. That is, the rulers were not trained to deal with the existing world of political change, but since they were to be agents of an external Good, only the most selfless could mediate between divinity and society. This meant, in Plato's "Republic", the philosophers.
Only the philosophers, thought Plato, had the necessary mental equipment and training to reach the truth, and so only they could hold the community together. But in a political community it is consensus, not truth that provides the bonds. Political order is not a matter of finding a once and for all solution, as Plato, blinded by the beauties of mathematics, assumed. Rather politics aims at stabilities for the moment, given the material, natural and human, and the problem at hand. Having discovered in the flux and chaos of human relationships in society, the area of the political, Plato attempted to find a solution to the problem it presented by eliminating its characteristic motion and change. He was left with an architectonic theory - but no subject matter.

What Wolin has to say about Plato, has some obvious links with Havelock's thesis, even though Wolin does not go into the ramifications of the fifth century presocratics. In some ways Plato diverts the current of philosophical investigation by standing, like a boulder, in its path. Some streams flow round or even over him and on again, scarcely affected. Others are forced into new channels or even completely doubled back on themselves. After Plato, philosophy, particularly political philosophy, is never the same again.

In an important sense, Plato defines the area of the political. Political philosophy as we know it may be said to start with Socrates and Plato. But the reason for this is not only that Socrates-Plato represents a new kind of thinking and that they introduced new concepts - ordered the 'given' of the social and political in a new way, but also that the Western political tradition has tended to follow Plato's lead and accept his description of the sphere of the political.

This is apparent in a number of ways as we can see by turning now to twentieth century political philosophy. I am going to be selective here because a large number of writers have attempted to outline the 'sphere of the political', or to demonstrate what politics is. Michael Oakeshott's is one of the more well known definition:- "attending to the arrangements of a group of people whom chance or choice has brought together." (26) As it stands this tells us vaguely what to
expect. Oakeshott expands it by describing the activity of politics itself.

It is one of several modes of experience, which together participate in a conversation; not a discussion, note, but a conversation, where each offers a characteristic contribution, but there is no question of any problem being solved, or any decision reached. Of course, the fact that politics contributes to this conversation of mankind, does not mean that in itself it cannot be concerned with policy making, or settlement of disputes, but in describing it as an activity, Oakeshott does not seem to have this sort of picture in mind. Rather he sees politics as the 'pursuit of intimations' about the course to be steered by the 'ship of state'. Pursuing intimation is a skill. It is moreover a hard won skill, resulting only from long and arduous practise.

Describing the political in these categories depends on a particular epistemology, that which makes a distinction between theoretical and practical knowledge, and finds them both necessary, yet to be acquired in different ways. Reading a cookbook won't teach you to cook, remarks Oakeshott, only practising cookery can do that. But then we want to ask, how do we know when we can cook? By the results we produce? We seem to have arrived at pragmatism.

Germino (27) is one of the modern writers on political theory who explicitly take up the definition of it provided by Plato describing political theory as "an experiential science of right order in human society". He urges the rediscovery of a sound ontology and adequate epistemology of political theory. Boyce Gibson and Parekh (26) (29) urge a similar course of action, and it is not coincidence that they do so.

We find the idea of introducing order into a realm of confusion in most if not all the great political texts. Plato's 'Republic' springs to mind at once. Order here is extended beyond the human realm into the superhuman, the immortal. To take a very different example, Machiavelli aimed at civil order. Disorderly states could achieve nothing, and would as like as not, plunge into civil war. Hobbes' sovereign was to establish order by decree and so rescue his subject from the miserable state of anarchy existing in the state of nature.
But Hobbes' vision was largely one of shoring up the river banks of a turbulent stream by artifice. The idea of order leaves scope for creative syntheses also. This is the force of Germino's description in terms of 'right' order. There is moral force behind any attempt at ordering in the political arena, because the outline of a particular state of affairs carried with it the recommendation that this state of affairs be adopted. The description of a right order for society is thus the source of values in the society. In producing the description, the political theorist may produce a creative, overarching theory, or he may limit himself to allowing only enough room to accommodate the most important phenomena in the area. Locke is a good example of a theorist who, whilst dealing with the subject matter immediately at hand, produced a synthesis containing more than he started with, and clearly outlining a particular political order.

Germino shares with Oakeshott the view that experience is the basis of political theory, and that this experience is multi-dimensional. Following the Platonic-Aristotelean formulation of the problems to be dealt with by political means, we are able to characterise the activity of the political theorist, which is one of the contributions to the sphere of politics, and important to political philosophy, as follows.

Firstly, the political theorist seeks knowledge about political reality for its own sake, but this does not mean that such knowledge cannot be put to practical use. Indeed, if it has no practical implications, the theorist has nothing on which to theorise.

Then he bases his understanding on knowledge of human nature. We are getting closer to the subject matter of the political sphere. Germino states (30) that "the natural political order will be a reflection of the order within the psyche of the representative human type". Besides being a clear reference to Platonic theory, this is a claim that political theory is at once creative and not arbitrary. That is, order is to be found in human affairs, where order does not at present prevail, but only certain sorts of ordering will achieve their aim.

There is a temptation at this point to draw parallels with laws of nature which, in science, are supposed to be waiting to be discovered.
But this is misleading. It may be that psychological factors determine the way we 'see' things. But since we cannot get 'outside' and see things in any other way, the acceptance of such a necessity causes us no great hardship. Rather the point becomes one of determining the representative human type.

It is to this end that political theories are often couched in paradigmatic form. Once again a standard has been incorporated in our idea of the political. Germino may want to maintain only that there are certain limitations to the kind of theory we produce if we want it to be an adequate one politically. If, that is, if it is to have even hypothetical practicality. But by describing what human beings are, he is including creatures which do not meet this requirement, and thus indulging - necessarily - in normative activity.

Thirdly and lastly for Germino, we come to the crux of the task of the political theorist, as can be extracted from the works of Aristotle and Plato. I will quote it in full because it is a view that has influenced many political philosophers, and is implicit in most of the traditional works of political philosophy. "In accordance with his experimental understanding of human nature, he will construct a model of the paradigmatic society, or best regime, and will explore the relationship between this 'natural' order and the types of regimes which appear in history, establishing to what degree they deviate from and ignore the principles of natural order, and describing, or at least intimating, the consequences which ensue to the unnatural regimes with regard to their own internal order." (32)

Order is placed firmly in the forefront of political concern. It is the task of the political theorist to seek out natural order and to incorporate this in a paradigmatic description of a political society.

I suspect that Germino here begs a question by introducing the idea of a discoverable natural order. The force of 'natural' in this context is meant to imply that unless the kind of order the theorist builds his system on, fits his subject matter, there will be a serious flaw in his theorising. But talking about natural order implies that there is only
one such order, and further, that it is evident in the world, waiting only to be recognised.

However one of the striking features of political subject matter is its diversity. We call certain actions of men 'political' and certain motivations. These two things, actions and motivations are usually very complex, and so are the relations between them in an individual human being. To put a large number of human beings together in a society, and then search for a natural order to encompass them, seems an impossible task.

It has, however, been attempted many times. There are certain philosophical tools available to assist the seeker after natural order; these are generalisation, model building, thinking in analogies and so on. But it is I think, misleading to construe 'natural' here as similar to 'natural' in the physical sciences. 'Natural' in that realm tends to have the status of an established fact about the physical world: Something that could not be otherwise, and that is established by correct theory.

In politics it is not possible to arrive at this sort of certainty. (Even in the physical sciences such a view would be taken as a gross oversimplification of the actual relationship between theory and 'matter of fact'). The subject matter of politics precludes it.

Is it possible to give an outline of this subject matter? It is easier to point to the things that are considered to comprise political activity. But before we take even this step there are assumptions to be made plain.

B. C. Parekh in his article on "The Nature of Political Philosophy" (33) spells out some of these assumptions. To recapitulate, he maintains that before any political philosophy can be undertaken, political activity must be shown to be autonomous and distinctive, i.e. not to be confounded with other kinds of activity.

The claim to autonomy has various features. When you ask significant questions about the activity, for instance, the answers must be able to be about the activity in question, and not resolve themselves
into answers couched in terms of another activity, sociology or economics spring to mind here. Other indications of autonomy are more closely linked with the possibility of having a philosophy of the activity. No philosophy would be possible, however, if these features were not present. That is to say the autonomy of an activity shows itself in certain ways when we begin to think about it in philosophic terms, but unless it is an autonomous and distinctive activity, such philosophic investigation will be impossible.

Thus for politics to be such an activity, it must be capable of being fruitfully studied in terms appropriate to itself. These terms must be logically related to one another in a way in which they are not related to others, and together they must constitute a complex that has a certain degree of internal unity and homogeneity. These requirements of Parekh's make clear in very broad terms, the characteristic of an activity that open it to philosophical inquiry.

Does politics show these characteristics? Whilst not denying that talk about political activity can be carried on at many levels, and for many different purposes, Parekh considers that it does. There are activities that we can describe only as political: such things as making policy decisions, deciding what constitution to adopt, or even starting a revolution. And although starting from such subject matter, we can produce pamphlets, literature, ideology or morality, such literature etc. will be distinctively political, and will not fit into any other category without spilling over, so to speak.

Parekh makes an appeal to experience in a certain way. It emerges as activity, autonomous and distinctive activity and as such is amenable to philosophical treatment. Can we say anything further about the sort of activity, or the experience we call political?

In an important way, politics is a public activity. We do not call the internal debate with our conscience over whether to go and visit our aged grandmother political activity. But if Grandmother lives on the other side of a frontier, then the action of paying her a visit may have political repercussions. These will not, however, affect merely me and my conscience. If they did they would be moral, or spiritual or something.
No, the action becomes political when it affects the public sector: when as a result of my carelessness in crossing frontiers, all the citizens of the state to which I belong have their passports revoked, or their right of entry removed. And a right of entry itself is not a private thing. It does not belong to me as an individual of this or that disposition or character, but to me as a citizen of a certain state, with relations with other states.

Bernard Crick carries the implications of this point further in a discussion of "freedom as politics". Politics as an institution is the conflict of differing interests (whether ideal or material) in an acknowledged mutual context. Politics as an activity is the conciliation of these differing interests in the public context created by a state or maintained by a government. Politics as a moral activity is the creative conciliation of these interests. (34)

Crick carries the description of politics a stage further with the inclusion of the phrase "created by a state or maintained by a government" for this is the feature of public activity that makes it political. It is for this reason that Oakeshott's definition of "attending to the arrangements" etc. is too vague to be useful. It provides general background, a sort of primary orientation against which to sketch out our subject matter, but there are many sorts of arrangements and an equal number of activities to take care of them. Public arrangements they must be to be political and linked more or less directly with government or the state.

But governments and states are not natural phenomena. They are not just there, but are essentially created. This is not to say that they are entirely arbitrary, because if they were not suitable or expedient, or in some other fairly direct way related to the individual members that constituted them, or who looked to them to administer justice, provide money etc. they would not last long. But created means more than that. They are not in the world in the same way that the stars are, or the mountains, or the way human beings have two legs.

In Wolin's words: "the field of politics has been, in a significant and radical sense, a created one. The designation of certain activities and arrangements as political, the characteristic way that
we think about them, and the concepts we employ to communicate our observations and reactions — none of these are written into the nature of things but are the legacy accruing from the historical activity of political philosophers."

This passage makes points at two levels. It first of all points to the traditional nature of political thought, a point that will be explored in greater detail in Chapter VI. Hence the importance of historical appreciation of political thought. But whoever we decide first formulated the framework in which political theorists have worked, or against which they have reacted, did so in demand to certain exigencies of his achievement. He saw that in the activities of men there were certain eternal problems, to which an answer must be found. The only possible answer was one which he could produce. It might be based on his reflections of the state of affairs in the natural world — witness the effect of Aristotle's biological interests in his politics — but in the end it must be appropriate to a particular area of purely human phenomena.

It is the peculiarity of the thinker in a situation such as this, to be one of the phenomena with which he is wrestling so that whilst having a special sort of insight into them, he may also, in his reactions to outside events, determine the events that will in the future take place. This is also what Wolin means by politics being a created sphere.

Moreover remembering the suggestion we adopted earlier that political theorists aim to find the right order for society, we gain an insight into the nature of this order by reflecting that it is not an order to be picked out by mixing up ingredients and seeing what result comes about. Unlike a kaleidoscope we know it will not fall into a pattern when we stop agitating it. It will go on in a ferment and we will be forced constantly to rearrange our particular plans to deal with contingencies of the moment.

These rearrangements may include varying areas in the sphere of human activity, so again the area we designate by political is created. It is as if we have a moveable and flexible fence. We put it down, enclose certain phenomena, which are then seen as a 'field', but we may at any time be forced to pick it up again, lengthen or shorten or
distort it in response to pressures from the field in which we are engrossed.

One of the outstanding features of the Aristotelian/Platonic notion of political theory, is the search for the Good. It is not enough to establish order, it must be right order or the only Good order to enable its citizens to lead the good life. Such an aim includes action in the political sphere and understanding and this dual aim is typical of politics as a whole.

Particular political decisions may only achieve compromise. They do answer the need for action at that moment in time, under those circumstances. But a political decision has a much more general connotation, in that it or its consequences are aimed towards greater understanding of the political features under scrutiny. By making a particular political decision, we hope to gain an insight into the situation or predicament in which we are plunged, and so to see more clearly where the next action lies.

By acknowledging this wider aim of political theory; we can see how there comes to be such a topic as political philosophy.

Parekh describes philosophy as "A radically and self-consciously critical interpretation of the nature of any phenomenon one happens to be inquiring into". (36) Adopting such a definition firmly grounds philosophy in experience and at the same time explains the possibility of political philosophy. As long as the sphere of the political can be identified and is autonomous, and I think the preceding argument has shown that it is, it can be investigated in a philosophical manner. Such an investigation will lead to results, in the form, Parekh thinks, of interpretations.

This is not a statement of the relativity of all critical appreciations of subject matter, but an attempt to make explicit the ground from which philosophic inquiry must start. It is important to be aware of the ground because otherwise a philosophic project may be foredoomed. If we think we are doing something which is impossible, intrinsically impossible and ruled out by the nature of the project in hand, we are unlikely to succeed in our enterprise. The point is really one that is familiar in history, i.e. that contemporary historians are
themselves part of the history they relate, and that we, reading their writings, must do so from our own century, from our own stance in the historical procession. There is no such thing as a 'pure historical fact'.

Similarly, there is no such thing as a 'pure philosophical fact or value'. Fact and value are all wrapped up together and trapped in the interpretation of the subject matter we move to.

Michael Oakeshott wants to make explanation the most important feature of political philosophy. An explanation is some way of ordering our experience. But Parekh argues that explanation cannot be taken as logically ultimate; there is a further step we can take, and see that interpretation is the ultimate counter in the game. It is interpretation that yields understanding, and this in its turn is what political philosophy is aiming at.

That is, political philosophy is not essentially a descriptive exercise. In it you start off with chaos, or at least multiplicity, (this is one of the recurring factors in characterisation of the political sphere) and attempt to reduce the chaos to order. You do not just say here is .... and count off the elements of the multiplicity, but produce some theory relating them to one another, and in turn to phenomena of different sorts: understanding can demand no less, and the justification of philosophy is arrival at an understanding, however incomplete.

So fact and theory are interdependent. The kind of theory produced depends on the sort of facts the theorist finds when he looks, but the theory scoops up only the sort of things it can hold as facts. The two are part of a single process out of which can emerge understanding, which is at the same time the aim and the result of the original inquiry.

To sum up then, it is useful to regard political philosophy as concerned with the problem of order, arising from our multi-dimensional experience. Plato realised the problem in this form, though other, earlier elements of Greek thought contribute to the way we see the political sphere today.

This sphere is autonomous and grounded in our experience. By
investigating it philosophically we aim to interpret it and so increase our understanding of the world. It is besides, a public activity aiming at knowledge of the good, and to some degree a created field.
(16) E. Havelock 'The Liberal Temper in Greek Politics'
(17) E. Havelock op cit.
(18) E. Havelock op cit.
(19) E. Fromm 'The Fear of Freedom'
(20) Frankfort 'Before Philosophy'
(21) J. Gunnell 'Political Philosophy and Time'
(22) J. Gunnell op cit Chapter V.
(23) J. Gunnell op cit Chapter V.
(24) S. Wolin 'Politics and Vision' Chapter III
(25) S. Wolin op cit.
(26) M. Oakeshott 'Political Education' in 'Politics, Philosophy, and Society' second series ed. P. Laslett.
(27) B. Germino 'Beyond Ideology'
(28) A. Boyce-Gibson 'Creativity, Politics and the 'a priori' in F.A.S. Supplementary Volume XII (1933)
(29) B. C. Parekh 'The Nature of Political Philosophy' in 'Experience and Theory' ed Parekh and Preston King.
(32) D. Germino op cit.
(33) B. C. Parekh op cit.
(34) B. Crick 'Freedom as Politics' in 'Politics, Philosophy and Society' series 3 ed. P. Laslett
(35) S. Wolin op cit.
(36) B. C. Parekh op cit.
CHAPTER III

HUMAN ACTION

(*Once the political sphere has been picked out it becomes apparent that there are various spots of explanation that are the concern of political philosophy. Among this are explanation of human action.)

Explanation takes various forms in political philosophy, some of which will be indicated in the next section, but throughout it is concerned with the political activities of human beings. Description of a 'sphere of the political' helps us to pick out these actions, and the events, institutions and other 'things' they involve, from human actions in general. But as a species of explanation of human action, explanation in political philosophy shares some of its characteristics.

A great deal has been written about 'action' and whether it can be distinguished from mere behaviour. Or more accurately, because as a matter of brute fact, we do treat some behaviour as purposeful, directed and some not, about the theoretical distinguishing characteristic of each. I think it is true to say that the problem, although not inconveniencing us in our everyday lives, remains philosophically puzzling and that no one has yet established, beyond a doubt, where its solution would lie if it could be found. The question remains open.

But, to take an impersonal standpoint, people do exhibit political behaviour, or to be more daring, they perform political actions, which afford the subject matter of political philosophy.

Clearly, there is a difference between the activity of politics and political philosophy. Politics involves settling disputes, setting up committees of investigation, speaking out on public matters, arguing for or against a certain course of action, and so on. Political philosophy on the other hand, is an intellectual activity: it isn't intrinsically involved in going anywhere or even talking to anyone. But this is not to say, as some recent philosophers have done, (notably Weldon) that political philosophy is entirely a second order activity, that all political philosophy can do is sort out linguistic tangles involving political terms.
Or, in Weldon's own words

"the purpose of philosophy ..... is to expose and elucidate linguistic muddles, it has done its job when it has revealed the confusions which have occurred and are likely to recur in inquiries into matter of fact, because the structure and use of language are what they are." (37)

Saying that philosophy is a second order activity involves thorough grounding in matters of the first order, but is supposed to make it clear that political philosophy is of no direct relevance to the decisions of politicians. It may be that the results of philosophy can have a psychological effect on the beliefs a politician comes to hold, but these results do not constitute a set of persuasive arguments in favour of one course of action. They only expose the degree of internal consistency of any such cause.

Such a standpoint assumed a number of things about language, one of which is the possibility of treating linguistic muddles and muddles about matter of fact, separately. True, one can make an arbitrary decision to do so, but it does not follow from this academic move that a particular muddle will thereby be solved. The existence of a mode of speech or a word often reveals a certain line of thought, and if there is no alternative mode of speech, not only is our vocabulary limited, but so also is our thinking curtailed. Since new words and concepts do appear in a given language from time to time, this restriction on thought is not necessarily permanent, (or even primary) but it is a consequence of close connection between thought and language; a connection does enough to undermine the sort of close restriction on the scope of philosophy Weldon wants to uphold, probably for historical reasons.

A strongly contrasting view of political philosophy is held by J. G. A. Pocock who, concerned with the relation of theory to action, maintains that philosophy is found when "a thinker mobilises the principal moral and metaphysical ideas known to him with the intention of bringing political experience under their control and explaining it by their means." (38) Can two such disparate views of the nature of political philosophy be reconciled or even explained? It seems an important question particularly for this inquiry.
S. H. Rosen, in a paper in 'Philosophy and Phenomenological Research' (39) argues that conflicting opinions on the nature of political philosophy, like those of Weldon and Pocock, can be maintained only by ignoring the essential circularity of the search for meaning. It is neglect of this circularity that has blinded philosophers to the solution of the epistemological quarrel between logical empiricism and classical rationalism (Weldon and Pocock respectively), which exists only as long as the two sides do not realise they are involved in a paradox, which logical empiricism refuses to recognise.

For when we try to solve a problem, perhaps by setting out the primitive rules of inference of the new system we are going to build up, we start off in the ordinary idiom. We formulate the problem in common sense language, because if we did not, it would be incomprehensible. We start to formulate extraordinary languages in this idiom. But then we must face the question of the meaning of ordinary language. It must have a meaning, or we could not express our problem in its terms. Where do we discover this meaning?

The answer is that we do not discover it anywhere. We decide on it. Except in the widest terms we do not cull it from experience, because to do so we must make a previous decision as to what to include in experience. Nor can we appeal to reality, for here the same argument applies. We just prefer our epistemology, our system of meaning, because we prefer it. This assumption of a starting point, Rosen calls 'magic' and he finds it very important when he goes on to the task of political philosophy. Epistemology and political philosophy are inextricably connected since "our explanation of how we know is reciprocally connected with our explanation of what we know" (40) This is a more general statement of the connection between thought and language touched on above.

Its implications are worked out in terms of Popper's distinction between 'open' and 'closed' societies. Popper characterises 'open' societies by their concern with empiricism. Empiricists maintain that 'closed' societies, have opposite tendencies, should be characterised by fascism, and antipathetic attitudes towards science and mathematics.
But this does not follow, either from Popper's definition or from a glance at America and Russia, supposedly paradigm cases to the two kinds of society.

Rather, says Rosen, "One way of putting the political teaching of Socrates is to say that all societies are "closed"; the serious question is which form of magic we are going to accept." (41) The empiricists, who pride themselves on their openness to all stimuli, have in fact adopted a particular doctrine of human nature, in which the emphasis on perception means primarily sense perception, and abandoned all other starting points for philosophical systems. Their notion of the "commonsense" world, available to us all, is a good example of what Rosen calls magic. Another important example is the criterion of meaning or significance. To make the notion of magic clearer, I will quote at length from the article.

"...... the "commonsense" world ...... is a magical notion which no one has ever succeeded in satisfactorily locating or describing. It is not the world of logic and mathematics for it is concrete and riddled with inconsistency; logic and mathematics are not observed but make our observations coherent. As Hume pointed out, no one has ever observed a necessary connection. Nor is the "commonsense" world an abstraction from the sum of particular experiences, because (i) it makes these experienced possible, and (ii) particular experiences (thought and sensed) seem to cancel each other out by contradiction rather than to combine in an intelligible pattern ...... it is ...... a magical world in that we do not really understand it, yet see it at all times and everywhere. And without it we would be totally lost: it serves as a container or matrix for all our experiences, thought or sensed. In a phrase of Heidegger's, we are 'in-der-welt-sein'". (42)

Thus all societies are 'closed' but some are aware of the magic they employ and some are not. Other magical constructions are 'state' 'nation', 'city', together with their entailed values. The importance of such magical notions is the part they play in establishing the way in which we live, the political order we adopt. To achieve harmony Rosen sees three alternatives (1) thought control, (2) freedom and (3) judicious use of magic. So adopting the last involves us in a search for a society which is aware.
It also outlines an important role for political philosophy. Through his analysis which seems to me substantially correct and moreover fecund, Rosen has hooked political philosophy onto the world of real things. "Political things (acts and concepts) are not only real" he says, "they constitute the most secure zone of our experience, being even more secure than sense perception, or at least as real. They are sufficiently real to make us happy or sad, to get us killed or permit us to live." (43)

This in itself is of paramount importance, but he has further underlined the importance of explanation in political philosophy, and defines its epistemological role "Our explanation of how we know is reciprocally connected to our explanation of what we know." Adopting Rosen's description of political philosophy enables us to see the explanatory role of values.

The sort of blurring of distinctions have been discovered between thought and language, and language and meaning suggests that we should take another look at that between fact and value, especially since in politics the two are closely connected. One important question in political activity is the kind of life a particular course of action will lead to.

Traditionally philosophers have searched for the good life, in political philosophy particularly it has been their concern to outline an order for society that would enable the values for which they argued, to find expression. That they described this order according to their view of human nature can be seen by contrasting Locke's idea of the role of government with the sovereign of Hobbes' 'Leviathan' for instance. But values concern us here in a rather more general way.

Through the use of values we are able to describe behaviour in terms of action. So bearing this in mind we can understand political activity a little better. Since, as Rescher points out "Values do not enter descriptions of human affairs as disruptive influences; rather, they allow us to describe human behaviour in terms of action" (44). We must see if values have a role to play in explanation.
Rescher contends that to explain the behaviour of a person, we presume that he endorses a certain "way of life" and that he believes his behaviour will forward his achieving it. This seems a little tortuous, and the notion of belief is a problematical one where actions are concerned, at least from the observer's point of view. However, there is no doubt that political action is intimately connected with a vision of a "way of life", and many intractable political arguments are based on 'a propri' adoptions of different visions.

In the explanation of political actions, values are imparted to characterise the good life, and used to describe and account for behaviour, individual and collective. Human action is one of the things that political philosophy tries to explain.

Now politics and political philosophy could both be called activities, and anyone indulging in them could be said to perform actions, strictly, once we had settled on our definition of that term, but trivially as well. To gain further insight into the connection between politics and political philosophy, take Sussanne Langer's analysis of the act concept. (45)

Miss Langer describes concept as 'fecund and elastic'. It has three phases; and takes place where there is already some fairly constant movement going on. Movement here refers to conceptual break and change, or activity as a whole, not the merely mechanical.

The first phase is a build up in tension. Secondly the tension is released, in one of a variety of possible ways. Finally the tension is resolved. The three phases provide the general description of an event we call an act. But they are more than a way of describing it, for they constitute its formal requirements. It follows that any one of them may encompass other acts, or itself be so encompassed.

Thus an act is organic in character. It is an event that takes place where movement is already going on, and it results in a change of pattern. The change in pattern marks the end of the second phase, and heralds the third phase, which is usually the most valuable in form.
Miss Langer has worked the theory out with respect to works of art. The organic character of any good work of art is seen in terms of its semblance of living form. There are echoes of this in the preoccupation of philosophers - and scientists - with what is 'natural', but the affect of this analysis carried into the political sphere is more general than this.

Some such pattern of build up, release, and resolution of tension is peculiarly appropriate to interpretation of political thought through the ages. This is not merely because such interpretation is historically based. It has to do with the concern of politics with resolution of tension in society, or at least an attempt to minimise it by balancing out opposing forces.

Political tension can be located in popular unrest, expression of dissatisfaction with contemporary government, demand for electoral reform, and so on. Once this unrest has come to a head, we could study its discharge, which might or might not be successful. Revolts which were curbed might subside, or force concessions from overlords. Successful revolution could change social conditions, or bring in electoral reform. The second stage would be concerned with the mechanisms of articulating the revolt, or other form in which the tension was manifested.

The third stage, in the political sphere would be the political solution which was arrived at, the 'changed pattern'.

Now political writers, it seems, can assist at any one of these three junctures. They can contribute to the build up of tension, by pointing out difficulties or anomalies in a system, and these need not be real ones. They can argue about the ways the change should be metered out, although qua writers they have no 'prima facie' say in the actual process of which this is done, and finally, they can describe, or even determine the form the resolution of tension shall take.

They do this by providing motives and reasons. Insofar as these motives and reasons are historically based political philosophers are necessarily justifiers, they write after the event, as Oakeshott pointed out. But insofar as they detect a radically new pattern in
political affairs, a pattern which may make it impossible to return
to the old state of affairs, and they explain this and make their audience
aware of it, they are innovators.

The beauty of this model of action is that it fits in with
the contingent nature of political facts. The equilibrium reached at
any one time in politics may itself become the old pattern from which
a new one can emerge, when the tensions inherent in it have built up
to a sufficiently high pitch. These tensions may be augmented by
parallel events in other spheres. Hence the elasticity of the notion
of act.

To expand this point: Revolution in fashion, in art or in a
completely private sphere, may all contribute to a change in the political
or public sphere by changing behavioural patterns. These changes
contribute to tensions in the political sphere. The notion of a tension
here is something which disrupts a pattern of living, which perhaps
introduces new factors into public decision making. It may even alter
the area in which we consider the decision making to apply.

Consider the changes in attitude involved and caused by
nineteenth century poor law legislation, factory or education acts.
Hence Suzanne Langer's analysis of the form of an act explains why we
see both Wolin and Hannah Arendt employing the notion of 'political space'.
Different patterns contain or define different spaces. Tensions create
these patterns.

Within the sphere of politics too, the notion of a tension is
a fruitful one. There may be tension between the values a society
endorses, made manifest in its legal system, or the publicly expressed
views of its politicians, and the means it provides for realising them.
The political philosopher in his writing may point these out, and pressure
of public opinion may result in the act which changes them, changes the
pattern, and results in a fruitful conclusion.

Politicians on the other hand can be regarded as active in the
second phase: meting out the charge resulting from the build-up in tension.
It is their job to detect the extent and direction of the tensions
and either counter them with some opposing force, or provide the means
to resolve them. In either case they must act, and as Aristotle rightly
saw, must provide means, as the first step towards the realisation of aims.

The political philosopher's task differs from the politicians.
If the politician is primarily concerned with the second phase of action
the political philosopher is concerned with all three. The tensions he
is likely to produce are in the world of ideas, in making people more or
less aware of their political situation, and of the results of political
action on a large-scale.

Another analysis of the field of politics arising from a discussion
of action, is performed by Hannah Arendt. Her view may be contrasted with
that of Wolin. She characterises politics as action in the public sphere,
and sees the development of political theory since Plato as series of
attempts to curtail this sphere of action.

"Escape from the frailty of human affairs into the solidity of quiet and
order has in fact so much to recommend it that the greater part of
political philosophy since Plato could easily be interpreted as
various attempts to find theoretical foundations and practical ways for
an escape from politics altogether." (46)

Plato started the process by setting up a ruler and subjects.
This in effect substituted making for acting. His Republic outlined
a society which could be made, fabricated, not one which allowed for action
within itself, for constant resurgence, for the possibility of a man
achieving his own set of aims. Instead it is the ruler who must be
followed.

Aristotle, as Wolin points out, located the true end of political
society in action, but saw also that action is fraught with change,
contingent events, and general uncertainty. Although he did not make
Plato's mistake of confusing unison in society with social harmony, the
picture of the good society he presented was also a static one. Each
was to pursue his individual end.

However, if each produced his own end, unless he is a genius
he can never transcend himself. He thus becomes his own jailer. This
needs expanding in Arendt's terms to become intelligible. Only the work of genius transcends its human agent. Other men when they make things, do not surpass themselves. Thus they cannot be said, in the true sense of the word, to act. They merely substitute fabrication for action and never reach out beyond themselves.

If the ruler hands down laws, and is sovereign in his country, the labourer is condemned to remain within himself in the political sphere also. He has lost another opportunity to realise his human uniqueness, his plurality. Since politics is concerned with this plurality, with maintaining a fruitful tension, politics also has been destroyed. Wolin makes a similar point with special reference to Plato. Plato's deep mistrust of opinion led him to exclude provisions for its expression in political society. This leads to a paradox. The society thus created can no longer be considered political because there is no exchange of expressions of opinion going on within it, so the subject matter of politics has been removed completely.

Arendt is entitled to see this as a catastrophe because of her general stand on speech and action as the true sources of humanness in human beings.

"In acting and speaking, men show who they are, reveal actively their unique personal identities and thus make their appearance in the human world, while their physical identities appear without any activity of their own in the unique shape of the body and sound of the voice." (47)

Expression in the form of action and speech, reveal the unique "whoness" of someone, or to put it more elegantly, point to agency. Politics is this agency in action.

Wolin takes a more limited view, though this does not preclude his adoption of some such epistemological standpoint as the one we have just seen. He states simply that by drawing a static utopia, Plato has caused the realm of the political to stagnate. Such was the force of this Utopia, that it has silted up the main spring of political thought ever since. The uncertainty in politics is not something to be got rid of. It springs from the nature of the subject matter.
This nature, spelled out in the 'Human Condition,' is that of the web of relationships between men. Because men can act, and revoke the consequences of actions and promises, by forgiveness, they can break out of the mechanistic world, where there is no agency, therefore no action. No action means just process without the possibility of agency or of politics. There exists a web of relationships, an interpersonal sphere, which must of necessity, differ from the causal and other relationships existing between things. Wolin makes the point that a political society is simultaneously trying to act, and to remain a community. This can be compared with Miss Arendt's point that there has been an erroneous identification of sovereignty with freedom. Anything which postulates freedom, and at the same time denies plurality, the essential plurality arising from human freedom to act, is mistaken.

Sovereignty is just such a denial of plurality. Cashed out in political terms this again lays stress on participation in public matters by the public (Crick's point: freedom is public decision making). It is no good building a Utopia ruled over by philosopher-kings, if they in their so-called wisdom, rule, by law or any other means. Such rule imposed from never so rarefied a realm, means that the ruled are cut off from the web of interpersonal relationships, where the subject matter of politics is to be found.

So the political society functioning as a community, cannot do so unless the individuals within it are free to act. It seems there can be no guarantee that having gained this freedom, or since they have it qua men, and keep it as long as they do not become downgraded to mere fabricators, having gained this freedom they will not act in such a way that their society of the moment will disintegrate. This can be attacked another way from Wolin's remark that "a political judgment is "true" when it is public, not public when it accords to some standard external to politics.*"

However, attaining some sort of order though not necessarily uniformity, pace Miss Arendt, has its advantages. It diminishes the need to expend energy in the area. It allows exploration of areas of 'give' where people's views can be influenced, and it is a necessary precondition of the political skill of knowing when not to act.
Aristotle, in contrast to Plato, saw that unity would be death to the political community. Instead he proposed that the aim should be uniformity, but a uniformity in fruitful tension. That is everyone should be pursuing their own ends, and this should be the basis for social harmony. It is, not a static notion, but it is influenced by the historical factors of the nature of the 'polis' its size and method of organisation, and Aristotle's preoccupation with Marine biology.
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SYMBOLISM.

Examples of explanation used in political philosophy

So far all that has been said about explanation in political philosophy has been general. Now I am going to explore three particular kinds of explanation that assume importance in political philosophy: the symbolic, the paradigmatic and the traditional. Throughout the history of political philosophy these kinds of explanation occur again and again, the reason is not fortuitous. They are all concerned with order. And order, as we saw in Section II, is one of the prime concerns of politics.

Symbolism is more often thought of as a literary or artistic device, than a philosophical one. Perhaps this is because of its association with the fanciful side of man's nature when politics is a topic calculated to make grey-beards shake their heads. Still if we look at symbolism as it emerges from myth we shall see that it has played an important part in political thinking. The way a topic is presented, the categories and kinds of image used to actuate it, all have a strong effect on its constitution.

It is difficult to find examples of mythic thought, because to present them at all, we are forced to take up a certain angle of view. This may give a perspective over the complete subject matter, but it is only one perspective of the many that mythic thought, or a mythic explanation necessarily includes. So we could disentangle the philosophical elements of the creation myth, for example. Or we could follow Fraser, who in 'The Golden Bough' interprets myths in an anthropological way, in terms of social institutions of the prehistoric past (as Cornford succinctly observes (48)). But in neither case would we have received, all in one go, the full impact of the mythic explanation we started from. We are so far limited by our intellectual tradition.

This is not to say that no one today can produce a myth. But we cannot understand by an ancient myth the same thing as its ancient
originator and his hearers. Our background is different, so that, if you like, the same myth sounds different harmonics in our ears, from those it sounded 2,000 or more years ago. However, we can still attempt mythopoeic thinking. We can attempt to face the world with the whole of our being, and not just with our rational faculties. Perhaps if we did so, more and richer political philosophy would be the result.

But this is speculation, and the main topic of the section is examples. If, as I have suggested, there are difficulties attached to a purely mythic explanation, for the twentieth century philosopher, is there a remedy? I think so. Let us look at the development of presocratic thought up to the watershed of Socrates/Plato; the watershed where we have already located the birthplace of the political sphere as we know it (section II).

Presocratic thought is much closer to mythic thought than our own, yet it contains ideas on which much of our present thought is based. It seems, therefore, eminently suitable for our purpose.

Tradition located the twin birthplaces of modern science in Miletus, and in Southern Italy. But the presocratic thinkers who lived there did not speculate on their physical environment alone, and they did not separate the phenomena of the world into categories, as we do. Collingwood for instance (49) has produced a persuasive analysis of the changing content of the world picture through history. The Greeks attributed to the physical world, properties we would limit to the realm of the mind. But we can recognise the areas that engaged their interest. They set up the game. We still use the same counters, even if we are more fussy about keeping the different colours separate.

In studying philosophy, philosophy of science in particular you are aware that most of the ideas you meet 'have their roots in' or 'go back to' some ancient Greek or other, so that it is a shock to realise how little of their work survives in its original form. It is also sad, because there is always the possibility that an important and exciting idea rotted away with an ancient parchment, or was burnt by a barbarian horde. But ideas live not only, or not principally in books, but in the imagination of the people who encounter them. The very insouciance that
prevented such philosophers as Heraclitus, Anaxagoras and Parmenides from ensuring the safety of their written work, argues for an awareness that ideas are common property; arising from experience essentially personal, but becoming public in communication.

So let us investigate the presocratic philosophers. What they said is important, but how they said it is much more so. The expression of their ideas still fires our imagination and the imagination of philosophers, historians and poets.

Nietzsche may be said to belong to all three of these categories, and he is one of the people whose views on the presocratics in relation to Plato throws most light on political philosophy, in his book "Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks" he uses ideas in general rather than ideas in any specific category.

For instance one of his themes is the opposition of the Dionysiac to the Apollonian elements of thought. The former is dark and chaotic, characterised by frenzy and orgy while the latter stands for order, measure, form and civilisation. The Dionysiac element stands for the need to shed personality and individuality and plunge into the world in all its chaos, whilst this is opposed in the Apollonic genius; plastic and architectonic.

They are united in the spirit of tragedy exemplified by the works of Aeschylus and Sophocles.

In explaining in terms of two archetypes, Nietzsche is using a literary technique, but one that is very relevant in political philosophy. It underlines the shifting nature of the subject matter of politics, and presents schematically the possibility of reaching some, however, impermanent, synthesis.

The two elements here employed delineate aspects of man which any political theory must take into account, and the tension between the two is that which first caused man to see politics as a subject at all. The removal of this tension by building an ideal system or by sublimation has been the concern of all political philosophers.
If all men wanted the same thing, had the same ambitions, reacted in the same way to the vagaries of life, politics would be reduced to a search for the best way to gratify these wishes. A large area of what we now consider its subject matter i.e. the definition of aims, would become redundant, and political science truly would have taken over from political philosophy. Indeed the whole area might be covered by political technologists and engineers churning out more and more of the stuff to satisfy infinitely predictable man.

It could be objected to this that even if all wants and ambitions were known thereby reducing the problem of ordering society to one of techniques of manufacture and distribution, the politician would still have a place as a manipulator, whose job was to secure the best possible distribution patterns, and that because he was still concerned with the 'best' his job would in some way involve searching for norms. Norms in turn imply standards and so political philosophy is reinstated, albeit in abbreviated form.

This is pure hypothesis. Historically we can see that one of the main problems political philosophers have had to grapple with has been the definition of ends and the distribution of the means of gratifying them, which usually involves adjustment of the tensions within a society. Nietzsche's literary vision makes it plainer what some of these tensions are. To remove the tensions altogether, as Wolin recognises, (50) results in annihilation of the political sphere. When the relationships man has, exert no pressures on him and set up no tensions one with the other, politics as the art of keeping these pressures in productive equilibrium, has no subject matter.

In fact a solution which achieves this would be alien to man's nature, for as Sartre says, he is the only creature who is stretched towards the future whilst forced to live in the present, and his attempts to deal with this predicament are the raw material of the sphere of the political.

Nietzsche traces development of ideas through Thales to Anaximander, Heraclitus, Parmenides, to Anaxagoras via Xenophanes and Zeno. His choice of philosophers is revealing of his own bias. (Compare it for instance with that of Russell (51)) and at the same time a masterly development of the history of ideas.
For Thales, water constituted the basic stuff of the universe and gave it its unity. This was a simplification of the many to the one. Anaximander took this up, but in order to account for the self-contradictions in the character of the many, posited 'apeiron' - the indefinite - in place of water.

The influence of these two on political philosophy lies in their implicit recognition of a problem that is later to be made explicit, and which they attempt in a rudimentary way, to solve, by the postulation of first substance. It is characteristic of the presocratics that they should turn to metaphysics to answer the problems of physics and philosophy indiscriminately. They both formulated principles, thereby using inductive rather than deductive reasoning. The kind of principles they considered adequate for explanation had very different contents from what we should expect in philosophy today. They were much broader and not abstract. That is they did not try to isolate in their formulation facts about the world, from abstract thought, although they are couched in terms which go to the root of an abstract problem, that of the order of the universe and man's place within this order.

Thales simplified the many to the one whilst Anaximander widened this to accept the self-contradictory character of the many. In some sense Thales may be seen as the forerunner of Utopia-builders whilst Anaximander had a stronger grasp of the fundamental diversity of all things.

However these tendencies were, as far as we know, not explicitly stated in the works of these two writers. It is in the works of Heraclitus and Parmenides that the two different approaches crystallise.

Heraclitus' famous dictum about not being able to step into the same river twice shows his emphasis on becoming. Nothing is. Everything is coming to be or ceasing to be and we are caught in a constant state of flux. A theory of politics developed from this starting point could only attempt to maintain equilibrium. It might even tend to conservatism and the theory that it is useless to attempt to implement a grand system. The most one can hope to achieve is a temporary solution for a particular time or place.
The other line of thought leaks from Heraclitus to the pragmatism of Machiavelli, with its emphasis on good statecraft rather than on implementing grand schemes. Philosophers of this school tend to appear as apologists for ongoing events. In fact they are not chiefly apologists as much as possessors of a lively sense of the limitations imposed by their subject matter.

Parmenides, in contrast to this, taught that whatever is, is; what is not, is not. He demoted sense experience as a source of reference since something that is becoming, is not, and therefore has no being. (This is such a solid, uncompromising statement it is hard to see what politics could flow from it.)

But the person Nietzsche really gets excited about is Anaxagoras. (Russell dismisses him as 'not in the first grade' thus allowing his cool scientific consciousness to interfere with and suppress his imagination.)

Anaxagoras held that primal matter is composed of elements of all things. Like attracts like, and a thing is made of, or is, what it is because it has a preponderance of one sort of element in it. Animating this matter is 'nous' - a problematic concept. It is eternal spirit moving among a chaos of essences and, most important, it is free. Free that is to choose to move these essences in some way, which Anaxagoras envisages as a spiral.

It has to be a spiral to account for the physical arrangement of the universe (on an all-embracing centrifugal principle, various sorts of things separate out to form the cosmos as we know it) On another level, it has to be a spiral or else the motion engendered by 'nous' would not be eternal, and we are supposed to be constantly moving towards that state where all the original elements separate out and join up with their similar elements.

Apart from the marvellous architectonic nature of this vision, which is the epitome of political theory, seeing as it does an order engendered by the nature of the things to be ordered, and yet achieved in the simplest and most elegant way; the exciting thing about it is its
status. This, Nietzsche suggests, is that of a game. 'Nous' has been criticised as a notion because it appears as an uncaused cause, but is not supported by a supposition about any sort of divine being, or supernatural agent. This however is to miss the point of the description, which is that 'nous' enters on its ordering activities as if playing a game. There was no compulsion on it to act in a certain way. Events are not linked in causal chains of uncompromising regularity, and this is in fact our political experience. Anaxagoras was a genius to combine both this and the simplicity of the helical movement in one theory, for it possesses a stark simplicity and necessity combined with an appreciation of the diverse nature of its subject matter.

The theory of Anaxagoras is akin to a myth. Its logical counterpart in more self-conscious theorising of modern times is Hobbes' theory which, starting from mechanical motion, moves through psychology to political theory. But by the time Hobbes is writing, mythic overtones have been entirely abandoned, and consequently his theory says at once less and more than Anaxagoras'. It says more because it goes into details of particular fields, in a sense defining their subject matter and prescribing methods of reducing it to coherence. It says less because it has forfeited, for depth, the marvellous simplicity of the earlier explanation, tracing surely the unity of all things, and making the very mode of explanation expressive. In Nietzsche's words (52) "Nous has no duty and hence no purpose or goal which it would be forced to pursue. Having once started with its motion, and thus having set itself a goal, it would be ........ a game."

The question of the wherefore of motion and its reasonable purpose thus just do not arise. Exemplification of this motion is Pericles, in his robes as statesman and citizen. He moves calmly and fully through and in the realm of human experience, accepting and transforming it according to the rules inherent in its material. Anaxagoras with his description of 'nous' and its ordering of chaos draws a picture of the whole of the whole that human activity is directed towards, and a part of. In contrast to this, Hobbes' plan is disjointed at best.
In Socrates and Plato this sense of the game of politics is lost. Systematisation becomes the thing and must be carried out in deadly seriousness. The watershed in political thought thus reached has been dealt with variously by political philosophers. Their views differ, but they are united in seeing Plato's work, (especially the Republic) as of the utmost significance in the history of political thought.

It is almost a cliche that thought in presocratic times was universal: no distinction as we know it was made between such things as science and philosophy. There were further differences in the extent to which 'mind' and 'will' were utilised. The Greeks applied them much more liberally than we do now, investing nature, as well as people with mental attributes. It follows that their explanations of certain events were different from our own.

However, this lack of differentiation was not due to simple-mindedness on the part of the Greeks. Far from it. It was an attempt to produce, in the area now labelled philosophy, an explanation which contained a good deal of poetry.

Now why should this occur? It is something which Plato, at the birth of conceptualisation, avoids; and which we, following Plato have also avoided. The characteristic which above all others in presocratic thought seems strange to thinkers in the western philosophic tradition, is not its lack of selectivity, but the kind of explanation used, and its depth.

Wolin and Gunnell attempt to explicate this phenomenon, by introducing the notions of political space and political time (respectively). The history of political thought can then be interpreted as an exploration and extension of one of these ideas. At certain points, the old explanation cannot account for the phenomena experienced, so a new explanation is called for. This is produced by unravelling a previously disordered part of our experience, and grafting it on to the ordered part, in accordance with certain rules, supplied by consideration of the nature of the material in use.
At certain times the whole structure becomes too cumbersome to be workable, and at such critical points, a radically new pattern is created, still taking account of the kind of material being ordered. Plato stands at one such critical point. Both Wolin and Gunnell see myth as a fundamental part of material to be ordered; experience existing in some primordial state. Frankfort says that "myth underpins the chaos of experience."

It does this by forming a theoretical bridge between human order and the order of nature. For instance, the Mesopotamian Ziggurats were built to close the physical gap between the earth, home of men, and the heavens, home of gods. The King, whose palace they formed, by perpetuating the kingship, closed the temporal gap between men and gods and so fused the universe.

The creation of political order implies "a return to the principles of foundation or a regeneration of time by the imposition of structure on a chaotic condition." (53). Gunnell goes on to say, with specific reference to early Greek thought, that the breakdown of mythic thought pitched man into 'historical time', and that in attempting to deal with this he, man, realised the importance of political philosophy as never before.

"Political philosophy was an attempt to find a home for man in the world once it became apparent that his time was not primordial time and the course of society did not coincide with the course of nature."(54)

Plato plays a pivotal part in the rejection of mythic thought, for when we reach Plato, this particular direct opening on the world is already lost. By discovering conceptualisation, we clamped down a grille between our soul and the wide world that ever since we have been unable or unwilling to remove.

So we see as mythic thought breaks down, the emergence of thought about politics in terms of time. From here on begins the loss of the idea of the political as a means of sustaining the individual against the time-ridden and necessitous realm of society. Time is used to explain certain features of political society, and it is a component, or to use
jargon, a variable in the search for order, which is a main preoccupation of political activity.

In much the same way, space, political space, crops up as an explanatory device, as myth begins to fragment. Space in the political sphere can be considered in two ways. There is the personal space of appearance; and the space of political influence with its intrinsic connection with action.

Hannah Arendt sees the space of appearance as the space of the human condition. Our appearance is in the interpersonal space in the web of human relationships. Man qua man appears and confirms himself in action. That is, we understand what man is when we see what he does (as opposed to what he makes).

Governments can affect the boundaries of this personal space, and it is an image that points out the difference between, for instance, a liberal and a totalitarian regime. In the former, the individual space is maximised, whereas the latter is concerned with a general space and not with the small contributions to it made by its members. In fact individual space may be minimised in a totalitarian regime to make room for the space of some artificial or 'magic' body such as the 'state', though this is an oversimplification, and by no means a necessary happening.

"The only character of the world by which to gauge its reality is its being common to us all, and commonsense occupies such a high rank in the hierarchy of political qualities because it is the one sense that fits into reality as a whole our five strictly individual senses and the particular data they receive." (56) This passage describes on the individual level, what the Romans were trying to achieve on the level of nations and empires, and brings us to the second sort of space, the space of political influence. By stressing that there was something common to all their diverse subject peoples, they succeeded in unifying the particular in the whole.
The notion of a political whole is one which unites the dimensions of space and time in action, as Gunnell, talking of the Roman Empire, echoes. "The need of an ordered space within which to act, create and give play to the power of the mind and the potential of action became important, and as with the Greeks, the very creation of such a space, a cosmos that would emulate the constancy and stability of nature, became a problem of human action." (57) He argues that these threads converge in Machiavelli, who put himself firmly in the world of action and devised symbols to explore it. Because he believed human passions could be directed, he investigated history and change, in order to create a permanent order, in a world conspicuous in its disorder.

This attempt to extract the principles of human action, to discern patterns in past actions and to synthesise them in a single creative act which will establish a permanent political space, is directed towards stability. Once again mythic symbols flood in. Hobbes on the other hand, tried to devise a science of order, but also had to deal with the flux of history.

We have seen the symbolism of space and time emerge from mythic thinking, all in an attempt to solve the problem of order, which we have argued (Section II) is a constant feature of the political sphere. What is the explanatory force of this symbolism?

Well, symbols are themselves forms of explanation, and they are frequently used in explanation. Symbolism carries meaning. It therefore contains an interpretative element, and explanation, we argued, is always in some sense interpretation (Section I).

Does symbolism have a proper place in politics, or should it be relegated rather to the literary and artistic world? This question is particularly pertinent to Nietzsche's account of the presocratics. But explanation must be in terms of human experience, and must appeal to human experience. It can have no other basis.

Plato saw this when he invented the myth of the gold, silver, and bronze people - a myth current at least as far back as Hesiod -
to play a part in his Republic. The part was not that of a brainwashing device, but an appeal to something familiar, as a ground for the introduction of something unfamiliar; an attempt to get the citizens to accept the necessity of different people doing different jobs for different rewards, and being ruled by philosopher-kings. The myth was an explanation.
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CHAPTER V.

PARADIGMS.

We have argued above (Section III) that explanation in political philosophy necessarily concerns explanation of human action. This argument involves us in problems about the connection between explanation in the physical and the human sciences. Special difficulties arise in trying to apply a concept of explanation derived from thought about the physical sciences, to explanations of human action.

Here A. R. Louch (58) detects a tendency in theorists to assume the problem takes the form of a dilemma. Either we accept that the appropriate account constitutes bringing the phenomena under some general law or other, discoverable perhaps by induction. This case meets the need for wide scope and the possibility of prediction. Or else we must resort to some sort of 'hidden springs account', whereby a factor, such as the "will", not available to so-called 'scientific' investigation, accounts for the source of the action. Those who assume the problem can be couched in these terms, assume, as a matter of course, that the alternatives offered exhaust the possibilities.

But neither alternative accounts satisfactorily for the often 'ad hoc' nature of the explanations of action we often given, and further, fully accept. For instance, the reply to the question "why are you humming a tune?" could be, "Because I'm happy", "Because if I don't I'll say something I'll regret", or "Oh! was I? I didn't notice". We would accept any one of these providing it was plausible to us at the time, and in the context of which we asked the question. But they cannot be sustained under a general law, unless it is of astonishing complexity. The need for a very complex general law, with many exceptional clauses, as this would have to be, attacks its own foundations, because instead of simplifying, it makes the thing we want to explain, more complicated.

Is there any other possibility? Louch argues that there is. The theorists who put forward this dilemma, have overlooked a third possibility, that "explanatory terms are frequently given a use, not by role or criterion, but by paradigm". (59) Paradigmatic explanation
enables us to see, not merely what happens, but also why it happens, which in human action is one of our main concerns.

Do we meet with paradigmatic explanation in political philosophy? Indeed we do, in more than one form. Curiously enough, considering Louch’s complaints about importing models of explanation from the physical sciences, one of the most interesting and instructive accounts of the use of paradigms in political philosophy is written by Wolin (60) on the basis of T. S. Kuhn’s description of the structure of scientific revolutions. Wolin puts the theme of his investigation in this way: "Are there other conceptions of science and scientific progress (than the standard empiricist account) which present more striking analogies, not with scientific political inquiry as it is now understood, but with traditional political theory as it used to be practised?" (62)

Kuhn disputes the customary view of scientific progress as incremental advance made possible because scientists adhere to certain practises governing theorising. This, he says, is not what really happens. Communities of scientists are formed, each of which subscribes to a paradigm. They see their work in terms of this paradigm, and they defend it by excluding from their circle, anyone with 'heretical' views. Thus their main work consists in exploring and applying the paradigm the community has adopted. This work is dubbed by Kuhn 'normal science!' But the cost of 'normal science' is the supression of novelty and investigation outside the defined fields, to be seen in the wide use of text books. Scientific text books generally present the views of only one scientific community, which may at a given time, be very large, and they present it authoritatively. It is, and is not to be questioned.

But from time to time anomalies do appear. The close 'fit' between theory and fact which characterises 'normal science', is seen to break down, despite the tendency to concentrate on the puzzles for which an answer should be forthcoming. The anomalies accumulate, until finally they cannot be ignored and provoke a crisis. 'Normal science' disappears and 'extraordinary science' takes over. A new paradigm is adopted and in time institutionalised, and so in its turn becomes 'normal'. The old paradigm is discarded.
The account of paradigm change given by Kuhn is somewhat arbitrary. He says it can only be made on a basis of faith. When Wolin takes the notion of paradigm into explanations in political theory however, he proposes that a new paradigm appears in answer to a crisis in the world. Plato is a good example. He just wanted to enter public life as a politician, but seeing what happened when his friends came into power, despite their previous theorising, he was convinced not only that there was something wrong with the world, the way things happened, but that the crisis it provoked was immediate. Others who have had this sense of strategic crisis and produced paradigms to account for and remedy it, include Aristotle, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau.

"In each instance," remarks Wolin (63) "the theorist's response was not to offer a theory that would correspond to the facts, or 'fit' them as snugly as a glove does the hand. Derangement in the world signified that the facts were skewed. A theory corresponding to a sick world would itself be a form of sickness. Instead, theories were offered as symbolic representations of what society could be like if it could be reordered." Plato's 'Republic', Hobbes society under its sovereign, Rousseau's, ruled by General Will, all these were visions of the possibility of political order.

Where do the anomalies Kuhn refers to, arise in political society? Wolin suggests we view political society itself as a paradigm, that we see it as a coherent whole constituting customary political practices, institutions, laws, a structure of authority and citizenship etc. This ensemble of practices and beliefs, and one might add, values, is a paradigm in that the society carries on its political life in accordance with them. That is to say in newspapers and other media, society is pictured in terms of the paradigm. Arguments in parliament are directed for or against aspects of society seen in terms of the reigning paradigm, and laws in turn, refer to its structure, by enforcing certain types of conduct; the conduct which conforms to the particular view of society presented by the paradigm.

From time to time however, strains result from e.g. the emergence of new social classes or new racial patterns. Then the society either repressed the strain causing factor, which may die down for a while, only
to boil up again, or else it produced a new paradigm. Now traditional political theory, in particular political philosophy, has always been interested in possible rather than actual worlds. So it is generally from this source that major political theories spring. They correspond to the phase of extraordinary science Kuhn describes, and produce paradigm revolution.

'Normal political theory', on the other hand, is concerned with the actual arrangements, of a political society, and is a matter of dealing with contemporary problems, often from necessity, in an 'ad hoc' way, but in terms of the dominant paradigm. Wolin hypothesises that when the 'normal' phase is going reasonably well, it tends to be impatient with philosophy, which by its nature re-opens 'closed' questions, and to lay much more stress on behavioural theory, in an attempt to understand what 'is' in terms of the current paradigm.

This is a very interesting thesis and enables us to look at major political theorists as promulgators of paradigms, giving us a new way of looking at the political world; specified distinctive methods of inquiry into this world; provided new definitions of what was significant for our understanding of that world; and provided an implicit or explicit statement of what should count as an answer to certain basic political questions. It may be summed up in Wolin's own words. (64)

"In pointing to the unique status of certain major political theories, I am not suggesting that the latter writers merely borrowed from them or were influenced by them. The point is more substantial, namely that major theories have served as master-paradigms enabling later and lesser writers to exploit them in a manner comparable to 'normal science'."

The investigation of the paradigm at the root of a particular society's organisation and view of itself, is something like Rosen's concept of 'magic', although its adoption is not nearly so arbitrary. The two concepts play a similar role in explanation, because an important role of explanation in political philosophy is to expose these important and often only implicitly formulated concepts, so that their role can be evaluated; or perhaps, just so that we can understand the roots of a particular society.
The use of paradigmatic explanation depends on the possibilities of comparison between given facts and the paradigm itself. That is, a paradigm is an explanatory device insofar as it helps us to understand the way things happen in the political sphere. It has generally been the hope of the theorists who produced the paradigms that they have shown what should happen in that sphere.

For instance, Plato's 'Republic' contains assumptions about the abilities of human beings which we may substantiate from our own experience. It points out basic inequalities and adds the maxim, with which the Greeks of that period were familiar in the form of a myth, that potential is similarly and unequally distributed. We are born 'gold', 'bronze' or 'silver' and cannot change.

Given this assumption, and the goal of attaining the Good insofar as it is possible, Plato proposes an operative paradigm of political society - the Republic. We are swept on from psychological generalisations, to a view of what ought to be. Hobbes works in the same way, though being more fearful than Plato, arrives at the best we could hope for given the facts as they are. Still both paradigms entail presumptive views of society.

We have detected paradigm change in the political sphere. Can we find any other of the features of the Wolin/Kuhn model? Wolin suggested that strain in society corresponds to the anomalies that are detected from time to time in scientific world. An argument that present day American society is experiencing strain in the educational field is put forward by Maxine Greene (65).

Advances in the application of technological discoveries are making great and constant demands on the adaptability of contemporary society. It is no longer reasonable to expect to spend one's whole life doing the same job in the same way. Change in this field is becoming more and more rapid, and it is the educational influence exerted by society that can do most to enable people to adapt to this, to see in it a challenge and opportunity, and not a threat.

This is apparent in current thought on education, throughout which two motifs are repeated. Within the profession teaching is 'Treated more
and more frequently as the deliberate, intentional activity many of us have conceived it to be: an activity entailing or promoting the learning which generates thinking." (66) This motif is recognised outside the profession also, where it expressed in awareness of the current social emphasis on specialisation against a background of rapid change it results in demands for the creation of a 'learning society'. A society, that is, concerned with practical matters, which sees the need to stress the place and power of education in equipping people to meet the challenge of change.

Thus the first motif Miss Greene identifies is an expanding one. It grows from the notion of education as an activity to produce ramifications in the world of thinking. The second motif is one of constraint.

Rapid change at any time leaves us with what Hobbes described as the "eternal problem of order"; and education is often seen as the solution to this problem. Here we move into the sphere of the political, into the necessarily turbulent world of demand and counter-demand. Politics has to resolve conflicting interests with reconciliation or compromise, in the interests of action. To control all this Hobbes required that power should be vested in the sovereign, and thus used to maintain the safety and peace of the state.

As a means of ensuring this safety, the sovereign should inspect the curriculum, and act as censor. "It belongeth therefore to him that hath the sovereign power, to be judge, or constitute all judges of opinions and doctrines, as a thing necessary to peace thereby to prevent discord and civil war." (67)

This is an example of the repressive, second motif, to be found in educational thought, with its main concern consolidation rather than extension. It is present in doctrines which counsel the maintenance of the status quo, rather than advance to new ideas.

Depending on whether a society adopts one or other of these motifs, its administration will give different weight to the several principles that could be adopted in running a school. In other words, the prevailing paradigm affects, or even determines, the kind of educational institution provided by a society. This does not, however, enable us to evaluate them,
since their effect can be judged only from an existing ethical standpoint. One is therefore led, in any discussion relating society, education and politics, to a consideration of values and ultimate moral principles.

This is because educational issues cannot be decided without at the same time, implementing educational values, and these values arise from the nature of the society in which we live; a society which we see in terms of a paradigm.

Consider, for instance, the changes in the British educational system wrought by successive governments on the basis of reports produced by committees the governments themselves set up. The members of those committees lived in the society they themselves were investigating. Before a committee is convened, there must be some feeling or awareness that it is needed, that the issue it is about to debate over a period of months or even years, is arousing interest or causing concern; in short that it constitutes an anomaly to the reigning paradigm. Their recommendations should reflect their personal convictions on the basis of discussion, and within their terms of reference it is true, but convictions and terms of reference are socially based. Thus, at its source, education is enmeshed in society, and thereby in its paradigms.

Now, as a counter argument to the explanation just given, of the work of a government committee, Michael Oakeshott might argue that, rather than a departure from a paradigm, the awareness of a problem sprang from a recognition of 'incoherence' in the tradition of that society. The terms are different, but is Oakeshott putting forward the same argument as Wolin? Is an 'incoherence', the same thing as an anomaly?

In this case it is not. A paradigm we have argued, is prescriptive, it purports to be picture containing all the desirable elements relevant to its subject matter. It is a source of values. A tradition, on the other hand, although it may be the vehicle of values, they may be embodied by it, is only an 'ad hoc' justification of these values. It is not enough to describe something as 'traditional' and leave it at this in political philosophy. Moore's open question argument applies: we can still ask "But is it good?"
We have outlined two differing motifs, both of which may be found in contemporary educational theory. If we regard the strain their existence places on our view of education in a social context, as anomalies, is there any paradigm which can account for the anomalies, or explain them in a new way, i.e. can we find an educational paradigm that resolves this strain?

We started to discuss the necessary connection of education with social aims. These aims are directed towards producing a certain measure of conformity, so that each person may live in society, may even benefit from it.

But how is this degree of conformity to be established? Hobbes argued that the criterion is the safety of the state and thus justified censorship. But safety is itself a derivative concept. Is political stability at the cost of intellectual stagnation safety? Or does safety include some notion of the total well-being of the citizens of the state? In the latter case, vigorous ongoing discussions of all kinds of issues could be construed as safety, even if this led in some cases to civil disobedience or violence.

The anarchist argument, formulated by Herbert Read, (68) constitutes a paradigm which resolves the difference between Maxine Greene's two motifs in education. It is couched in terms of man's 'social nature'. As long as man in society can act in accordance with his "essential biological nature" a harmonious society can reasonably be expected. As soon as the constraints of society act against this nature all sorts of psychological tensions are set up in the individual, and society, a group of individuals, becomes sick.

This is an interesting viewpoint and throws light on Maxine Greene's paper referred to above. She too, employed the concept of a 'strained' society and made the observation that this state of affairs existed at the present moment. Holding this opinion, she formulated the recommendations for educational policy that result from it. They are largely a plea for more participation in government decisions which involve educational questions by people who have studied the philosophy of education, or at least know of educational theory. This is to extend the relevance of
Read's concept of man having an essential, discoverable biological nature is at least as old as Aristotle. Besides further underlining the connection between theory and practice in education, its interest lies in the way it is employed to introduce the social dimension of education. Moving away from the value-laden concept of the 'natural' thing, he considers the effect education has on the ability of individuals to live in groups, to participate in social activity, and concludes that this depends on how far they are able successfully to conduct their own lives. From this conclusion, he recommends the incorporation of an aesthetic element into educational theory. All this uses the social aspects of education as a starting point of overwhelming importance, enabling us to focus on man's distinctive qualities.

The aesthetic element of education is introduced during a consideration of social organisation. Having pronounced that the western world at least is in a state of strain and tension, Read produces a strain - relieving recipe, a paradigm whose main ingredient is education. Much as Plato relied upon myth to organise the social forces within his ideal state, education is to aim at "creation of group discipline, of group unity or unanimity, a living together in brotherhood." In case this seems too Utopian, or alternatively appears as totalitarianism veiled in net curtains, consider the aims of public school education that concern social rather than academic ends. Read is in no way creating an elite. Everyone is to benefit from the introduction of conscious consideration of social ends, which he thinks will be achieved through art.

As the child develops he is influenced by his environment. If this is as harmonious as possible, and in the theory we are considering, the appreciation of harmony around us can be accomplished fully by increasing the child's awareness of social phenomena, the child will develop 'in tune' with himself, and therefore more likely to be in tune with his nature in both self-regarding and other-regarding matters. Hence the emphasis on what there is to be learnt from art.

Perhaps Read takes too simple a view of the relationship between aesthetic appreciation of harmony in the arts, and harmony in the social
sphere. If so, this too was Plato's mistake. But whereas Plato used it as an excuse for censorship to protect a static system, what may be termed anarchy, Read sees in it the justification of individualist values.

The essential social change here advocated is the acceptance of the idea of mutual aid. If help were freely and unstintingly given, it would be equally freely asked for and the need to set up official bodies to mete out would diminish. There are all sorts of practical objections that could be made to such a simple theory, but if it were adopted, educational theories and values would certainly undergo great change. Perhaps the nearest approach to such a situation is that of certain African countries, where the tribal basis of social organisation means that everyone lives in a very extended family, and social inhibitions are overcome by ties of kinship, however remote.

However, the discovery of the need for the inclusion of an aesthetic element in education is not the only answer to the question of why the social aspect of education is important. Returning to Wolin (69) we find that "each of us, as members of societies dominated by organized units, is part socialist, part reactionary, part managerialist, part sociologist. Organisational man is a composite".

Organisational man is a phenomenon identified by the sociologist. Our belief in his existence entails our consideration of his bearing on educational theory. If one becomes organisational man during and after leaving the institutionalised part of the educational system, there will surely be repercussions on the institution itself, not necessarily in terms of recommendations for producing such wonders. No, it is possibly more relevant to consider the traditions such men embody and pass on and the values and principles they emphasize in paradigm form in order to ensure education is wide enough, stretched to cover all aspects of the social.

This width in education should encompass both the constraining, and the expanding motif in educational thought. Moreover the emphasis on the social nature of education running through Read's paradigm underlines a further function of paradigmatic explanation: highlighting the connections between theory affecting various aspects of the political society.
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These are often seen in a tradition, which notion itself explains the way we arrive at some political decisions, and embodies change in the area of the political.

The various sorts of explanation in political philosophy are often seen as part of a tradition. So we may speak of 'the Greek tradition', or 'the Western tradition' of political thought, and mean by these phrases a certain set of ideas, values and justifications of action. To speak of a tradition in this way imputes a common world view to those who build it up, or by participating in political activity, reinforce the idea of the political, current in their society.

To designate a particular thing, event or object, 'traditional' is in itself to offer an explanation, or more correctly a justification of that thing. Most often it is political attitudes that are justified in this way. Thinking back to the description of explanation as attempting to increase understanding, the idea of a tradition is an explanation in this sense too.

But to be told, in answer to a question "why do that?" that it is traditional, or that people always have, may not prove a satisfactory explanation. It may indeed be the reason for performing that action, at that time and place, but it is not necessarily a good reason and there is the possibility that it is not the real reason for the action. Many things go on in the name of tradition which would horrified someone who really looked at their implications.

But explanations become embodied in a tradition because of its nature. It is built up over time, and is a gradual accretion. So a collection of beliefs and practices sanctioned by custom and convention can be traced in all but the newest societies. And the newest societies such as Kibbutzim in Israel, or indeed that whole country, deliberately set out to create a tradition, in terms of which they can describe their corporate identity. This is particularly so in the political life of a community,
for with its preoccupation with order, it must have images, verbal and
pictorial, in which to describe the order, which are common to all members
of the society, and which point to the values it pursues. All this a
tradition provides.

A persuasive account of political tradition has been provided by
Professor Oakeshott in criticism of the 'ideological style' of politics.
By this term he means an attempt to deduce the direction of forthcoming
political activity from abstract general principles, an attempt based on
confusion about the nature of principles, which must, he says be 'a posteriori':
They are meaningful only after the event has taken place. They are
generalisations from our experience. The only legitimate way to discern
the trend of a political activity is to participate in it; to immerse
ourselves in a tradition and so be able to pick out 'intimations' of its
future course, with which current activity is necessarily pregnant.

He describes the way a tradition grows up, with the formalisation
of rules, which then acquire a privileged status. Since he maintains
that articulating a political theory involves abridgement of tradition, the
role of a political philosopher is of less practical importance than that
of the politician. The politician's job is to detect and resolve the
incoherencies that from time to time disturb the fabric of tradition,
and threaten the 'ship of state'. The politician is seen as a pilot.

The incoherencies are very widely defined, which gives this account
of politics some of its credibility. The resolution of any of them may
call for new laws, or new methods of administration, or even total revision
of an area of government, amounting almost to a revolution. But the
incoherencies must first make themselves felt. One could examine the
proposed revision of the functions of the House of Lords in this light,
or even more immediately, trades union reform, where incoherencies, in the
form of unofficial strikes are only too apparent.

There are various implications of Oakeshott's view of the political
tradition for politics and politicians. They spring in the main from his
attack on Rationalism in politics. Rationalism in Oakeshott's view reduces
knowledge to something that can be acquired by technique alone. It omits
the element of what would be called 'skill' if he were discussing a ball game, and which cannot be taught or formulated in rules, but which must be acquired by practice.

In politics the skill comes from being immersed in a tradition; from getting a grasp on the ramifications of tradition almost instinctively. Only then can the erstwhile politician see where incoherences have sprung up. And, equally important, only then can he discover the means to resolve them, that at the same time repairs the tradition's damaged fabric.

Political philosophers are left the role of apologists, since in Oakeshott's view they can write after the event only. So Locke, for instance is stuck with a viewpoint of the glorious revolution, and must see politics in these terms. It is hard at this point to decide whether this is merely a point of historiology, in which case it does not affect Locke's standing as a philosopher, or whether because he can only perform abridgement, the philosopher is necessarily thwarted in some way. Perhaps it is meant as a warning to Utopia builders, and empty headed impractical theorists, not to meddle in something they are not equipped to deal with. But in this case, hasn't the role of philosophy as persuasion been overlooked? Articulation of a part of a tradition at a particular historical juncture may have profound effects on the tradition itself, and the same applies to the introduction of elements foreign to a tradition.

If this should all seem destructive, the philosopher can surely articulate, and perhaps save parts of the tradition for the next generation. I think Oakeshott underrates the effect of rational argument on behaviour which may not itself be fully rational.

His work is open to other criticisms, expressed by Benn and Peters, which should act as a deterrent to over-frequent and ill-considered use of traditional explanation. The faults of this mode of explanation spring in part from hypostatization. As soon as we start talking of 'a tradition', we are tempted to look for a thing and characterise it, instead of limiting ourselves to the adjective traditional, and contenting ourselves with characterising the events and activities it describes.

With specific reference to Oakeshott, Benn and Peters say that if the term 'tradition' is to embrace all possible sources of change and
influence on the political sphere, it has been so widely defined as to become meaningless. And to say that all political decision must be understood as taking place within a tradition, is to state a truism. In Benn and Peter's view, Oakeshott's opposition to acting on principles springs solely from apprehension about the effect of introducing sweeping changes, and a preference for gentle, piecemeal reform.

Moreover, Oakeshott maintains that general principles such as, one might guess, Barker's (72) Liberty or Equality, yield no specific prescriptions. True, say Benn and Peters, but this merely makes the point that rules do not determine the limits of their own application. It has the disadvantage that, having made a rigid distinction between applying principles (bad) and pursuing an analogy (good) argument is discouraged. Analogies made explicit by the pursuit of intimations are not the sort of things one can discuss in a rational fashion, and so are beyond the pale of argument.

The way we are to go forward to political action, Oakeshott tells us, is by the resolution of incoherencies which from time to time occur in the fabric of the tradition. But how are we to recognise the incoherencies? Benn and Peters rightly conclude that "Oakeshott's suspicion of principles inhibits moral discussion because it rejects its procedure. But in refusing to appeal to principles he does not abolish them. He only leaves them inarticulate and immune to criticism".

The most damning indictment of such a traditionalist view of politics is that it can produce no rational claim for pursuing one course of action rather than another. It may work in a society that is already a reasonable one, but this is contingent. It gives us no grounds whatsoever on which to criticise an unreasonable society, and thus "removes political authority and institutions from moral criticism and assessment." (73)

For instance it would mean justifying the introduction of votes for women, on the grounds that so much agitation had been made over the issue, that it was in the interests of political stability to introduce female suffrage. Now, though this might be a very good argument for giving women the vote in England at that particular date, it is not the reason for giving women the vote, which rests on the implications of adopting a
representative democracy, the role women have to play in society, and other such consideration, including strong moral arguments.

To adopt this strong traditionalist, or we might say conservative view of politics, with consequent rejection of the role played by principles, is to rule out the possibility of evaluating political actions. It means we cannot have any moral explanation of action in the political sphere, and this is surely not only incorrect, but morally wrong.

Be this as it may, traditional explanation, in a more limited sense, certainly describes how we do arrive at certain political decisions, in particular the ones that are not wholly rational. And since politics often concerns equilibrium between two opposing points of view, and has to provide a solution for the moment, it is often concerned with irrational elements.

Tradition also embraces irrational elements, so that when we come to discuss a political tradition, we may do so in a variety of ways. The way we choose depends on what we intend to do as a result of the decision and so we use an appropriate language. As J. G. A. Pocock (74) has pointed out, we discuss political facts in several languages.

These may be more or less rational, and more or less coherent. In a tradition, they may be all tangled up, and if we approach politics from a traditional standpoint, we accept that (i) there is an indefinite variety of these possible approaches, (ii) there is no 'a priori' reason for preferring one of them to the others, and (iii) we can never hope to rid ourselves of the simultaneous presence in our thoughts of more than one approach.

This does not mean, however, that we should not try to disentangle the approaches as far as possible. Some of the languages of political discussion are political reporting, commentary, literature, normative ones that we could call political morality, and manufacture of political ideology, theology and science. But political philosophy, as philosophy is different from all these.
Yet particularly in a tradition, to take up Pocock's point, philosophy in politics and history of politics tend to merge, in the attempt to make history of politics more intelligible. The abstraction from tradition this leads to, is an intellectual activity, aimed at understanding experience and environment, but it can never be complete, or the subject matter of history is lost: the relationship between experience and thought can no longer be investigated.

Philosophy provides one language in which to discuss this relationship, and to understand political experience. It is a rational language, and to employ it we must disentangle the threads of a tradition as far as possible. Insofar as the threads are temporally related, we may use historical explanation in untangling them.

The emphasis in Pocock's account of tradition is on the possibility that theory can bear more than one relation to action, from which it follows that any abstraction we do make from a tradition is an arbitrary one with respect to the tradition itself. It is possible to abstract at many different levels. But the decision is not arbitrary in terms of its end. We will not do philosophy by tracing the historical growth of an idea, but only by tracing its conceptual growth in a historical context.

On the intellectual level, the tradition does not itself provide the tools with which to find its inherent patterns. We must make a prior selection of the area from which we are abstracting. This constitutes the weakness of the traditional approach, because only by deciding on something, anything, can we begin to grapple with traditions tangled threads. And only by encountering an indissoluble muddle can we tell that the intellectual tools we started with were too blunt or the wrong shape.

Its strength lies in its ability to provide a context for political philosophy, which is not an activity within itself, but a way of bringing political experience under control, by defining it if necessary. Political philosophy, that is, does not provide its own terms or its own subject matter. It discusses things such as 'state' or 'government' that are in the 'real' world, even though it may discuss them in the abstract.
If the sphere of the political did not have an autonomous existence, there could be no political philosophy.

Such philosophy is found when "a thinker mobilises the principal moral and metaphysical ideas known to him with the intention of bringing political experience under their control and explaining it by their means." (75) Now we have already looked at some of the ways this mobilisation of ideas is carried out in political philosophy. We may symbolise parts of our political experience, or incorporate it in myths. We may produce paradigms to make our point, or couch our political philosophy in principles.

Is the 'mobilisation of ideas' the same thing as providing an explanation? There are points of similarity. The use of ideas is not arbitrary. We select them with the end of increased coherence in view. We wish to make things more intelligible, and may do this by setting up correspondence between something we do not know and something we do know. We may attempt to describe, using metaphor and analogy. We may analyse into constituent ideas. All these devices are employed in the intellectual process of political philosophy.

But in the organisation of experience always an intellectual process? If we must understand political philosophy in the context of a tradition, which is therefore open to many approaches, what other processes can we employ that impinge on the intellectual one? At what other levels do we attend to our political experience?

We develop techniques and increase our skills in using them. This follows from a wide definition of 'political action'. We arrive at prescriptive statements, and issue them in the form of imperatives. We increase our insight into political matters by discussion and persuasion. We persuade and are ourselves persuaded. We increase the area covered by the tradition and assume it to apply on a wider scale, by seeing possibilities of understanding other things in terms of it. We are constantly amending our appreciation of the political.

Yet despite the great variety of ways of understanding experience a tradition supplies us with, there are other ways of envisaging the sources of society. The existence of these ways are a necessary condition for the tradition to retain its meaning and significance of a source of change. When behaviour comes to be seen as a complex series of interactions arising
from other different modes of behaviour "the social framework begins to appear the result or product of human actions instead of merely its matrix; a historical mode of understanding begins to replace a traditional one, and what may be the most far reaching of changes in a society's style has begun to appear." (76)

Pocock's observation (above) is paralleled by Gunnell's description of the drop into historical time that follows the disintegration of myth. Time now becomes a complex matter. It may stress either the continuity of the process of tradition or, on the other hand, the creative and charismatic origin of what is being transmitted. So now challenging traditions may arise within the same society and engender further political conflict on their own behalf.

The need for a vision or world view becomes apparent, in terms of which the tradition can be justified. The explanations one tradition provides may be balanced against those in another, and different approaches to political philosophy spring up, traditionalism being only one of them.

Thus, the area of the political changes from age to age, tending to include more or less of our lives. We tend today, for instance, to legislate on matters which Aristotle would have considered man's private domain, whilst what to his eye, would seem only a very small proportion of the members of a state actually participate in government.

The area we include in the political sphere is enshrined in tradition. When something is designated 'traditional' we are inclined to put up with it (unless we are a revolutionary in which case our response is to do away with it) for far longer than we might do otherwise. The tendency is to resist change in the political sphere and thereby to promote order in the hope of safety and security, as Hobbes acutely divined.

But when change does come about, in political philosophy, it is not contingent change.
REFERENCES CHAPTER VI

(70) M. Oakeshott. 'Political Education' in P.P.S. 2

(71) Benn and Peters 'Social Principles and the Democratic State'

(72) E. Barker 'Principles of Social and Political Theory'

(73) Benn and Peters op cit.

(74) J. G. A. Pocock. 'The History of Political Thought - A Methodical Inquiry' in P.P.S. 2

(75) J. G. A. Pocock op cit.

(76) J. G. A. Pocock op cit.
Since the aim of this dissertation has been to explore the notion of explanation in political philosophy, there are no conclusions as such. So instead, the main features which emerged are here summarised, with reference to Wolin's remark that "Political philosophy is not an arbitrary construction because its concepts are linked at several points with experience."

1. The area of experience to be explored was first outlined by the personage of Socrates/Plato, and western political thought has tended to follow the outline despite the fact that in writing about it, Plato proposed conditions in which it would be destroyed. Philosophy concerning the sphere is preoccupied with the search for order in diversity, and for the good life, and has for subject matter man's public activities and quest for patterns of living.

2. Explanation plays a multiform role in such political philosophy with the general aim of organising experience and making it understandable. Thus it may appear prescriptive, justificatory, expository, clarificatory. It contains an interpretative element, and often involves conceptual model making. But in its most general aspect, it is concerned with understanding.

3. The connection between epistemology and political philosophy is highlighted by the need to find a starting point for philosophical thinking. This is always to some extent arbitrary, because of the way we start with the known and move on to the unknown, but the starting point is in the world of political facts, concepts and values, and so linked with political experience.

4. With such a starting point in experience, some of the usual distinctions, e.g. between fact and value, form and content and explanation and its subject matter, are blurred in the search for meaning. Our experience is chaotic, as we receive it and to some extent determine it, by participation in 'the world', it can be variously interpreted, but not subjected to hard and fast distinctions. To make these rigid distinctions ignores our own participation in 'the world'.
5. Thus change in the sphere of the political, and the explanation found in it, is not arbitrary. It takes place with the aim of order in view, often order in the eyes of a political philosopher who is immersed in a crisis of his time. The order may be expressed in an explanatory paradigm, which connects matters of fact with philosophy. Change in the created sphere of the political is linked with this connection, and from it springs the need for explanation in political philosophy.
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