Political Theory
and
Social Science

Cutting Against the Grain

John G. Gunnell

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Preoccupied with what you rather must do
Than what you should, made you against the grain
<div align="right">—Shakespeare, Coriolanus</div>

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Preface

The formulation of this book has, for the past five years, been a persistent focus of my work. It builds significantly on the analysis of metapractices and the theory of conventional objects presented in my *The Orders of Discourse* (1998), and like that volume, it reflects an orientation that is rooted in my understanding of the work of Ludwig Wittgenstein, which, in terms of both issues and approach, I take to represent a challenge to the contemporary spirit of much of both political theory and social science. My immediate intention, however, is neither to pursue a systematic and comprehensive interpretation of Wittgenstein's work nor to explore fully its implications for thinking about the conduct of social scientific inquiry, but my goal is to move significantly further, but selectively, toward the latter goal.

There are several individuals I wish particularly to acknowledge but whom I do not want to saddle with any attributions of agreement with the arguments set forth in the following chapters. I have discussed much of the content of this volume with my brilliant colleague Peter Breiner (at the State University of New York at Albany) whose comprehensive knowledge of political theory is matched by his knowledge of politics. Although I was familiar with Linda Zerilli's outstanding work in feminist theory and her judicious and creative application of Wittgensteinian analysis, we were not personally acquainted until three years ago when we began a conversation from which I have gained a great amount of insight and encouragement. Linda read and generously commented on the penultimate version of the manuscript. James Farr and Mary Dietz are models of academic citizenship, and I have benefited, among other things, from Jim's objective and original scholarship on the history of political science and from Mary's dedication and skill as the editor of *Political Theory*. Ever since I was a Fulbright lecturer in Denmark in 1993, I have been engaged in a dialogue with Henrik Bang about issues in social science and democratic theory, and his work has provided a wider perspective on these issues. Gavin Kitching, in Australia, kindly read a late version of the manuscript and offered helpful comments and corrections. In the course of writing the manuscript, I gained confidence from the work of the English philosophers Rupert Read, Phil Hutchinson, and Wes Sharrock

whose interpretations of Wittgenstein, Peter Winch, and Thomas Kuhn correspond very closely to mine.

There are three former students to whom I am particularly indebted. The most venerable is Sanford Schram who supportively commented on an early version of the manuscript and who not only has been exceptionally successful in bringing political theory to bear on empirical research but also has uniquely succeeded in actually making political science matter. Christopher Robinson not only provided a very detailed commentary on a draft of the manuscript but also, for many years, has been a consistent interlocutor in a conversation about Wittgenstein and political theory. Brian Schmidt's work has realized my hopes for encouraging scholarship on the history of subfields of political science and for applying political theory to these areas—in his case, the study of international relations. I am also indebted to conversations with graduate students in a series of seminars at the University of California at Irvine and especially to Michael Jensen and Michael Latner.

It will be evident that I have diverged significantly from the perspective on political theory into which I was introduced at Berkeley a half-century ago, but I remain deeply indebted to that introduction. If, fresh out of the navy, I had not naïvely stumbled into Sheldon Wolin's advanced seminar on late modern liberalism, I might not have encountered the mystery of "the political," which I have sought for so long to, in more than one sense, unravel. Although it may appear at times that I am picking a quarrel with Hanna Pitkin, I deeply respect and have gained from an encounter with her scholarship. I would never have become so involved with the work of Wittgenstein and J. L. Austin if she had not urged me, several years after we had both left Berkeley, to secure, by interlibrary loan, Stanley Cavell's already dog-eared Harvard doctoral dissertation and if she had not written *Wittgenstein and Justice*.

While on "permanent sabbatical" during the past couple of years, I appreciate having been allowed affiliated scholar status and access to university facilities by the Department of Political Science at the University of California at Davis, and participation in the Political Theory Reading Group has kept me textually grounded in the classic literature.

I thank both Sage Publications and Cambridge Publications for allowing the incorporation of revised portions of material originally published in their journals.

Finally, as always, I have been the recipient of Dede's constant support for what sometimes distracts from the larger scheme of things.

References to Wittgenstein are to the *Philosophical Investigations* and to numbered remarks rather than to page numbers, unless otherwise indicated by "p."

Introduction

> This sort of investigation is immensely important and very much *against the grain* of some of you.
>
> —Wittgenstein

THIS BOOK PIVOTS ON THE ISSUES OF THE CHARACTER, status, and role of academic political theory. At the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, these matters continue to be significant not only for the practice of this subfield of political science and for assessing its place in the discipline but also for thinking about the nature of social scientific inquiry in general. I reject the assumption that political theory is sui generis. Political theory as a specific academic field was an invention of American political science, and many of the issues that are endemic to political and social science continue to surface most distinctly in the literature of political theory. The past and future of political theory are inextricably linked to those of the social sciences as a whole, and in turn, these disciplines must be understood and judged more broadly as species of what I refer to as metapractices. The latter are, most simply stated, those practices of knowledge that are defined by the fact that they speak about, and to, other human practices.

The inherent problematic of metapractices is etymologically represented by the ambiguity of "meta" as a prefix, which, because I use it so extensively in this work, requires some clarification. Exactly what this term meant in ancient Greek language depended a great deal on the grammatical context, where it diversely signified beyond, above, with, among, next, and changing. It was typically both spatial and temporal in its connotation but later began to take on a sense of superiority when Andronicus redacted Aristotle's discussion of first philosophy and titled it "metaphysics." This sense of "meta" as qualitatively "higher" persisted into the nineteenth century and beyond, but it is best to construe it simply as indicating that metapractices consist of derivative discourses that presuppose an "other." One theme running through this book is an exploration of how many metapractices had their origins in their subject matter. The social sciences as a whole sprung from the practices of social and political life, and the philosophies of both natural and social science began as

elements of those discourses. Significant portions of this volume are less about political theory per se than about generic dimensions of metapractical inquiry and the general problems of the *cognitive* and *practical* relationship of social science to its subject matter. My concern is with what might be understood as a philosophy of social science applied to problems of political inquiry, and it is what I categorize as primarily a third-order form of analysis in that it is about the nature of second-order studies such as social science and philosophy, which are directed toward the first-order claims of fields such as natural science, politics, ordinary language, and religion. The philosophy of social science is, however, ultimately inseparable from the history of social science, and although the latter is not, for the most part, directly the subject of this work, the chapters in many ways presuppose this background (Gunnell 1993, 2004).

Recent controversies in American political science, such as that revolving around the Perestroika "revolt," are actually perennial in character and reflect many of the issues encountered in the following chapters, but these controversies have often achieved little in the way of significantly new conceptual traction. Despite all the recent emphasis on interpretive and qualitative approaches to inquiry as an alternative or complement to what is often characterized as positivistic social science, these claims remain theoretically and epistemologically unredeemed, and they are often wedded to the assumption that such approaches are different ways of accessing a common object of inquiry. What is crucial, however, is a confrontation with the theoretical issue of the nature of that object and with what this entails for the conduct of inquiry. This work does not, for the most part, deal directly with substantive issues in political theory such as democracy, justice, citizenship, liberty, authority, and so on. The focus is on the character of political theory as a scholarly enterprise, the nature of its subject matter, and its relationship to that subject matter. A reader might very reasonably complain that I talk about political theory rather than doing it, but this is also what might be said about the relationship between political theorists and politics. My distribution of emphasis derives in part from a persistent skepticism about the degree to which social science possesses any special capacity to make normative judgments about politics. Dilemmas arising from the relationships between inquiry and its object are much of what this book is about. It will be increasingly apparent that while I advance no definite prescriptive arguments about these relationships, I resist some of the claims and assumptions that political theorists make regarding this matter, and I tend to think that more attention should be given to achieving clarity about the thinking that goes on *within* politics rather than to what theorists think *about* politics.

Although each chapter pursues a distinct theme, they are thematically contiguous and move from an examination of the past and present of academic political theory to a consideration of social science as a form of metapractical interpretive analysis and then to an extended consideration of what Wittgenstein's work entails with respect to confronting the complex problems involved in the relationship between social science and its subject matter as well as the question of what constitutes the nature of that subject matter.

The first chapter, "In Search of Political Theory," presents an overview of the evolution and current character of academic political theory. Although framed against the background of a general historical account of this subfield of political science, the basic purpose of this chapter is to penetrate the surface of that history, to locate the identity of the basic genre from which this literature originated, and to explore the residual problems that are manifest in the contemporary practices of political theory. Although the continuing estranged relationship between mainstream political science and much of political theory has been properly attributed to developments during the last half of the twentieth century, the roots of this alienation are historically deeper. Many of the conversations of political theory are the progeny of a discursive form that attended the birth of modern social science. This genre was a legitimating rhetoric situated in the interstices of social science, philosophy, and politics. The study of the history of political thought originated as such a rhetorical vehicle, and it constitutes a paradigm case for examining the extent to which such a discourse can be transformed into an authentic practice of knowledge. The study of the history of political thought has succeeded to a greater extent than certain other elements of political theory, which, transfixed by the tension between their practical aspirations and academic context, have become anomalous appendages to the social scientific study of politics. To understand the condition of political theory requires, however, a yet deeper grasp of the fundamental character of metapractices.

The second chapter, "Social Scientific Inquiry and the Metapractical Voice," pursues the idea of political theory, and social science in general, as a necessarily interpretive enterprise. Through an examination of two paradigmatic arguments, those of Max Weber and Michael Oakeshott, this chapter explores the character of metapractical analysis and what is fundamentally involved in a practice of knowledge that is devoted to investigating conceptually preconstituted phenomena. Discussions of Weber's essay "The 'Objectivity' of Knowledge in Social Science and Social Policy" and Oakeshott's reflections "On the Theoretical

Understanding of Human Conduct" have seldom included a detailed textual analysis of the arguments. Such an analysis is important because these essays not only thoroughly address the issue of the nature of social scientific inquiry but also uniquely confront and illuminate the paradoxes that have been particularly prominent in conversations about the identity and role of fields such as political science and political theory. These paradoxes, however, are not eliminable and arise from the very nature of metapractical investigation. Although to some degree both Weber and Oakeshott sought to defend the authority of metapractical claims, they were more sensitive than much of contemporary critical social science to the problems of the practical relationship between social science and its subject matter.

Political theory and social science, in their search for epistemic privilege as a path to practical purchase, have consistently attempted to posit a foundation of judgment and reason that is deeper than the conventional artifacts that constitute their subject matter. The third chapter, "Fear of Conventions," critically examines two recent, and often entwined, attempts to establish such a foundation for social scientific explanation and to demonstrate the epiphenomenal character of social phenomena. The turn to various forms of philosophical realism as a social scientific metatheory represents an attempt to posit a transcendental basis of explanation and assessment, while the recent popularity of the application of cognitive science to political theory, and to social scientific investigation in general, is a manifestation of the search for an empirical foundation. While the specter of relativism is often posited as a threat both to the objectivity of metapractical inquiry and to the integrity of its subject matter, the issue of relativism really springs from the epistemological anxiety of metapractices regarding their claims to know and judge their subject matter. Although the uses of both philosophical realism and cognitive science in social science deserve more discussion than I undertake here (Gunnell 2007, 2009b), my focus is on how the embrace of this literature contrasts with what Wittgenstein insisted was the autonomy of conventional or social phenomena and the character of interpretive inquiry.

The fourth chapter, "Engaging Wittgenstein," is devoted both to a critical discussion of certain aspects of the past reception of Wittgenstein's work by political and social theorists and to a preliminary exploration of some of the more positive implications of his work for thinking about the nature of social scientific inquiry. Because political and social theorists have typically turned to philosophy when suffering from cognitive insecurity, the work of Wittgenstein, arguably the most influential philosopher of the twentieth century, has been no exception. Although

there have been astute applications of his philosophy to the analysis of both substantive and conceptual issues in political theory, a prominent, if not the dominant, motif in both positive and negative engagements with Wittgenstein has been an attempt to validate prior commitments. While some have taken Wittgenstein to be the primary exemplar and author of relativism, others have desperately sought in his work new bases of metapractical certainty. And while some have attempted to enlist his work in a defense of radical democracy, others have viewed his writing as inherently conservative. What is paradoxical, however, is that both Wittgenstein's view of the relationship between philosophy and its subject matter and his account of language imply a subversion of these various agendas. For more than a generation, social and political theorists have sought to adapt Wittgenstein's work to their purposes, but what most theorists have attempted to do is recreate Wittgenstein in their own images rather than boldly confront the implications of his work. In seeking to move further in the direction of considering the relevance of Wittgenstein's philosophy for social inquiry, there are certain existing intellectual signposts, and a significant one, but still not sufficiently acknowledged, is the work of Peter Winch.

The fifth chapter, "Social Science and Justice," argues that Winch's work remains the best guide for thinking about what a Wittgensteinian approach to social scientific inquiry would involve. The basic question posed is how political theory, or any form of metapractical inquiry, can do justice to its subject matter in terms of providing both a descriptive account and a normative assessment. This chapter revisits Winch's work as a bridge to a renewed consideration of the importance of Wittgenstein's philosophy for thinking about the idea of a social science. Despite the extensive commentary on the work of Winch, there has been inadequate recognition of the extent to which he discerned the significance of Wittgenstein's philosophy for confronting issues regarding the nature and interpretation of social phenomena. Winch's concern with the field of anthropology demonstrates the manner in which the issues in this field put into relief many of the fundamental problems of social science, and I argue that his analysis can be further illuminated by examining one of the most contentious contemporary debates in this field. This case concretely illustrates the paradoxes involved in metapractices such as philosophy and social science seeking to explain and judge various forms of life, and it further indicates the limitations of philosophical realism and other philosophical doctrines as a basis of social scientific inquiry.

Chapter 6, "Interpretation and the Autonomy of Concepts," is devoted to examining Wittgenstein's account of words, concepts, understanding,

and interpretation. If, in fact, social science is an interpretive enterprise and, as Wittgenstein insisted, philosophical or metapractical investigations are conceptual investigations, it is necessary to elaborate what this involves and to untangle some of the confusions that typically attend discussions of these matters. Although philosophy and social science may in many ways represent quite different forms of research, they are, as Winch emphasized, logically comparable endeavors with respect to both their interpretive character and the nature of their subject matter. Wittgenstein stressed both the theoretical autonomy of conventional phenomena and the distinction between the cognitive character of an interpretive enterprise and the forms of interaction involved in the practices that constitute its object of inquiry. One of the most pervasive analytical failures in the literature of political theory and political science is a tendency not to distinguish adequately between words and concepts, and this is closely allied with a conflation of the concepts often referred to as understanding and interpretation.

In the final chapter, "Political Theory and the American Scholar," I return to the historical background of the study of politics as well as to the contemporary tension between political theory and mainstream political science, but I also suggest that some of the dilemmas of political theory are rooted less in the field itself than in the more general relationship between American politics and American scholarship. From the beginning, there has been a tendency to exoticize both politics and the role of those who study it, and this has added significantly to the problems that still inhabit and inhibit the field of political theory.

A friend once suggested, and at least facetiously complained, that while I had begun, many years ago, to wield an intellectual "chainsaw" in the battle against the scientific pretensions of behavioralism in political science, I lost control of that critical tool and allowed it to cut into the very roots of political theory from which my criticisms had derived. And others, such as Sheldon Wolin, George Kateb, Richard Flathman, J. G. A. Pocock, and Quentin Skinner have made similar claims but in a much more serious manner (e.g., Nelson 1986; Skinner 1988). The dissenting views expressed in these chapters are, however, not intended to suggest either that contemporary political theory is as a whole lacking excellent scholarship but only that significant elements of the literature are still haunted by persistent mythologies and conceptual muddles. To continue the metaphor, my aim has not been to clear-cut the terrain of political theory but to eliminate some of the intellectual deadwood and underbrush with which it has become entangled and that have sometimes prevented it from fully flourishing as a significant and authentic academic

contribution. Although this work is admittedly critical in tenor, a positive argument flows from each of my quarrels with various dimensions of the literature. My experience has been that the reception of the kinds of arguments advanced in the following pages has been characterized less by frontal challenges than by intimations that the arguments are uncongenial and somehow depreciate the basic spirit and aspirations of practitioners of political theory. One's professional academic identity is, however, often more sensitive to criticism than one's political identity.

Among the debris that still clutters the literature of various aspects of political theory are the remnants of the belief that the classic canon, from Plato to Marx and beyond, represents an actual historical tradition that is holistically infused with indigenous meaning; that the genealogy of political theory is fundamentally different from that of the discipline of political science; that there can be a theory of politics that construes politics as a natural kind and that lends universality to the vocations of those who study it; that the philosophy of science represents a descriptive account of natural science and yields the criteria of scientific explanation; that epistemology, historically and logically, precedes theory; that there is a philosophical answer to the theory/practice problem and issues such as relativism; that it is possible to pose and answer the question of how, in general, thought and language make contact with the "world" and to posit an unrepresented datum that is the metaphysical basis of our representations and the ground of empirical and normative judgment; that our conventional practices can be explained biologically or in terms of other subconventional claims; and that the meaning of words is either the expression of mental representations or the reflection of theoretically untainted objects.

I have, on past occasions, attempted to dispel elements of these myths and offer an alternative vision regarding the past and present of political theory and of its character and subject matter (e.g., 1975, 1979, 1986, 1998), but cutting against the grain inevitably leaves some rough edges, which I hope, in some measure, to smooth over in the following pages. It would be far too pretentious to suggest that what I wish to accomplish for political theory is the kind of thing that Wittgenstein did, or wished to do, for philosophy, but that is my model, however deficient this effort may certainly be.

Chapter 1

In Search of
Political Theory

A picture is conjured up which seems to fix the sense *unambiguously*.
—Wittgenstein

More than 40 years ago, Sheldon Wolin famously evoked the image of "political theory as a vocation" (1969). The initial context was the inaugural panel of the Conference for Study of Political Thought, which took place at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association. Wolin summoned those who believed that, in the midst of the social and political turmoil of the 1960s, mainstream political science not only had become quiescent (at least by its inaction, as Leo Strauss and others had also claimed) but also was implicated in abetting the crises of the time. Although intellectual and ideological issues were indeed involved, Wolin was implicitly also giving voice to a professional identity for a large segment of the academic subfield of political theory that was increasingly defined by its estrangement from the parent discipline. The conference would eventually become primarily a forum for scholars who were devoted to the study of the history of political thought and whose work would eventually serve in some respects to undermine the vision of epic political theory to which Wolin subscribed. Wolin's image of the vocation was, however, as mythical as what much of political science had believed to be the method of science, and it was only the latest entry in a long history of mythologizing this academic practice. The opposed hegemonic legitimating myths of tradition and science that defined, and divided, the literature of the behavioral era of American political science ultimately could neither withstand critical scrutiny nor suppress the latent differences within both political science and the subfield of political theory. The demise of the bipolar character of political science during the 1970s and the intellectual exodus of much of political theory brought an

end to the sense of unity that had accrued to the image of the "vocation." Although this image would persist, it was difficult to sustain as the sub-field of political theory became increasingly diverse and as the discipline from which it wished to differentiate itself also became more method-ologically and ideologically diffuse. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, literature devoted to examining the identity of political theory attested to the persistently pluralistic, and ambiguous, character of this intellectual enterprise and to the problem of its anomalous relationship to both political science and politics.

In 2000, an edited book (Frank and Tambornino) pointedly posed, for a new generation, the question of what had become of the "voca-tion." Although sometimes ambivalent about whether the reference was to Wolin's image or to the actual character and condition of political the-ory as a professional academic activity, the concerns specified as "animat-ing" the volume were "the character and status of contemporary political theory, its place in the academy and its role in public life" (x). Although the book was clearly intended less as a critical analysis than as a search for the identity and significance of political theory, the editors claimed that there were now, in effect, many vocations of political theory and that while these should be politically relevant, it was important to recog-nize the value of detachment and question "the assumption that political theory should avoid straying from direct engagement with current events" (xv). The pluralistic character of political theory was attributed in part to intellectual diversity within the field but particularly to flux within the domain of "the political." The issue implicitly posed, however, whether trends in political theory were determined more by professional and scholarly issues or more by events in politics, was not directly confronted. Although the editors warily applauded how intellectual eclecticism had enlivened political theory and contributed to its flourishing, they worried about the dissolution of identity and about "our ability to speak of a voca-tion at all" (xiii–xiv). Although there was some attempt to indicate a sense of unity and continuity, the editors were unable to attest to more than an unspecified "family resemblance" among the many modes of theorizing.

The lead essay was by Wolin (2000, 3–22) who focused on, and wor-ried about, what he had come to believe was a growing loss of identity in the field. He emphasized the fact that the conference from which the volume derived had been devoted to the future of the field and to stu-dents who would become professional political theorists. The conference, he noted, had been prompted by the "perennial uncertainty and contro-versy about political theory's relationship to political and social science, to philosophy, to history, as well as its relationship, if any, to the 'real'

political world." Wolin labeled his essay an "invocation" or "a response to a certain kind of loss" and claimed that there was a danger that the vocation he had once envisioned, if it ever had achieved anything approaching realization, was about either "to lapse into dilettantism" or "to harden into professionalism." He viewed his 1969 essay as partly a reaction to a political "crisis" and to a condition of undertheoretization and conformism, but more than a generation later we were, he claimed, faced with a situation marked by "overtheoretization" and diversity. According to Wolin, in a world in which "both theory and politics are ubiquitous and indeterminate" and "freed of the constraints of an overarching political," we have a "politics of multiplicity" and a concomitant "proliferation of theory" and diverse identities for "disjointed theorists." As a consequence, while political theory might make reference to real-world controversies, "its engagement is with the conditions, or the politics, of the theoretical that it seeks to settle rather than with the political that is being contested. . . . It is postpolitical." Wolin attributed these problems less to the faults and failings of theorists than to the chaos and speed of modern life, to a "society without a paradigm," to a "utopian" era, which paradoxically depended on the "perpetuation of dystopia" for the many. It seemed, he suggested, as if politics had outrun the capacity of political theory to comprehend it. Wolin asked if a new evocation of the vocation of political theory could aid us, but he concluded that "besides being fatuous, that call may be too late in the day." He claimed that in the space and time between his two essays, "the academic intellectual has undergone a dizzying series of intellectual permutations." Varieties of political theory had "replicated the pace of technological change" and become a segment of the "brainy classes," who ultimately perpetuated and benefited from the present and undemocratic condition of society. Wolin seemed to imply, as Weber had once claimed, that it was necessary to distinguish between those who live for politics and those who live off it and that contemporary academic political theorists belonged to the latter group.

Wolin's pessimistic assessment conflicted markedly with the basic spirit of the volume, which like later accounts of the status of the field, tended on the whole to celebrate vitality and plurality both in politics and political theory. In 2004, Wolin published a long-awaited expanded version of his pathbreaking *Politics and Vision* (1960), which had done so much to sustain the idea that academic political theory was the progeny of a "special tradition of discourse" and "intellectual enterprise" that, from the time of the Greeks, had been practiced by "acknowledged masters" of political philosophy (1–2). What was odd, and maybe paradoxical, was

that despite his more recent reflections, the basic image of political theory remained much the same as it had four decades earlier.

Another account of the field (White and Moon 2004) was a reprise of a special issue of *Political Theory* (2002) marking both the thirtieth anniversary of the journal and the fortieth anniversary of Isaiah Berlin's essay "Does Political Theory Still Exist?" The editors claimed that the initiation of the journal had represented the revival of political theory whose demise or decline had, because of the rise of positivist philosophy with its depreciation of the meaningfulness of value judgments, seemed, to many in the 1950s, to be imminent but that Berlin avowed would never expire in a pluralistic society where "ends collided." The book valorized both the ethic of political pluralism and the diversity of political theory, but the essays that composed it tended, as a whole, less to address and answer the question "What is political theory?" than to evoke Gertrude Stein's assessment of Oakland. Was there really any there there? Another volume, by Andrew Vincent (2004), also stressed the eclectic, and even fragmented, character of the conversations constituting the field. Although he presented an acute systematic account and analysis of these elements and emphasized certain family resemblances among them, which he suggested might yield ecumenical possibilities, what he posited as the "nature" of political theory was basically its plurality and contested identity.

There were distinct tensions among these diagnoses of the condition of political theory. While, according to Berlin, it had been political diversity that kept political theory alive, Wolin and others suggested that the fragmentation of the vocation and loss of identity were a reflection of what was happening in politics. The idea of "the political" and its unity, or images of its loss of unity, were, however, as mythical as the story of the vocation, and there was a persistent ambiguity about whether political theory was an academic enterprise or some wider genre such as that which had been assumed to compose the classic canon. Understanding what political theory *is* requires, in part, illuminating what it *has been*. Questions about what political theory *is* or *should be* (e.g., Nelson 1983) tend, as these books stressed, to be raised at junctures when its relationship both to the discipline of political science and to politics are matters of concern and contention. This was the case when George Sabine posed the question "What is Political Theory?" in the lead article of the first issue of the *Journal of Politics* (1939), and it was again the case when, in 1957, from diverging perspectives, Strauss, eschewing the term "theory" because of its association with images of science, asked, "What is Political Philosophy?" and G. E. G. Catlin inquired, "Political Theory: What Is It?" When Sabine's article was published, the study of the history of

political theory, that is, the exegesis of, and commentary on, the classic canon, constituted the principal domain of political theory, which, in turn, was still an integral intellectual dimension of political science. Today such historical studies seem far removed from the general literature of the discipline, and the same might be said of a number of other areas of academic political theory.

Although this situation is in part a consequence of scholarly specialization, there is no other social science in which such a numerically and qualitatively significant professional subfield, and particularly one that has been so influential in the evolution of the discipline, is so intellectually alienated and that so persistently continues to differentiate and mythologize its past and present identity. In the discipline of political science as a whole, there is a disposition to affirm that there should be reciprocity between empirical research and political theory, but these increasingly represent two distinctly different endeavors. There may be notable instances in which the respective conversations converge, particularly in the case of discussions about democracy, but such exceptions do not prove the rule. Wolin's depiction of the vocation of political theory was a classic articulation of this alienation. He claimed that this calling, paradigmatically represented in the texts that composed the "great tradition," was one to which academic theorists should and could aspire, even if only by interpreting and teaching this literature. There were, however, certain ironies attaching to this defense of the autonomy of political theory. The very idea of such a tradition of political thought, from, as Wolin put it, "Plato to Marx," had been a creation of political science and, for nearly a century, had largely defined what political scientists meant by "political theory." And despite Wolin's plea for recapturing the concern for political relevance that, he argued, had animated the tradition but had been relinquished by political science, he did not call for the subfield of political theory to extricate itself from professional political science but only to disengage intellectually from the conversations that dominated the discipline. The underlying issue, however, was the relationship between academic and political discourse.

Although the distance between political theory and political science became most prominent in the later part of the twentieth century and although there are a variety of contemporary professional and disciplinary factors that contribute to its perpetuation, it is rooted in structural factors that belong to the more remote past of the discipline. To understand the "nature" and condition of much of political theory today, it is necessary not only to attend narrowly to its genealogy (Gunnell 1993) but also to clarify the extent to which the genre to which it belongs is the residue

of a form of discourse that attended the institutionalization of modern social science but was functionally distinct from substantive social scientific claims.

The emerging social sciences in the nineteenth century were primarily the confluence of two intellectual tributaries: (1) elements of academic moral philosophy devoted to purposes such as civic education and (2) social reform movements such as those represented in the American Social Science Association, which had invoked the authority of science in their pursuit of practical influence. As these tributaries coalesced and were institutionalized in the context of the modern university and became the basis of increasingly differentiated disciplines and professions of social science, certain fundamental and related problems emerged. There were the problems of disciplinary demarcation and establishing the identity of these nascent fields, but there was also the problem of their practical relationship to their subject matter. These problems, much as in the case of Weber's essay on objectivity in the social sciences (which I will examine in the next chapter) and as in the case of the origins of the philosophy of natural science (which will be briefly discussed in Chapter 3), prompted the appearance of a rhetorical discourse that functioned at two levels. It addressed issues internal to specific fields, but it was also devoted to justifying the role of social science to the world from which these fields had in part sprung—and about, and to, which they still intended to speak. Such rhetorical discourses became characteristic features of these emerging disciplines, but they also increasingly became *distributaries* that were displaced from their original function and purpose. This dislocation was in part a consequence of increased differentiation within the academy, but it was also the result of growing distance between the academy and public life. These discourses did not, however, atrophy and disappear but rather took on new forms that constituted, and have continued to inform, significant dimensions of academic political theory. For example, epistemological arguments about the nature of social scientific explanation were, even through the 1960s, still closely tied to justifying contesting research persuasions in social science and to sorting out the relationship between social science and politics. The claim of political science to the status of science was from the beginning not merely an internal matter relating to how to conduct inquiry but more important a claim to cognitive authority, which would justify speaking truth to power. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, such arguments had, to a large extent, been abstracted and detached from their original context. Although these discussions may occasionally still feature in vestigial disputes about the character and purpose of social science, they have for the most part been

relegated to the ancillary province of "scope and method" or parceled out to narrow specialized philosophical venues such as the philosophy of social science. The assumption that they speak to an audience outside the academy has all but vanished.

We might ask to what extent the discipline of political science as a whole has, or should, transcend its rhetorical and political origins, but in the case of the study of the history of political theory, the question is whether what began as what might be described as a rhetoric of inquiry within political science can be transformed into a practice of knowledge—that is, an academic practice with relatively well-defined criteria of scholarly judgment. The study of the history of political thought, from which the very idea of political theory emanated, originated as a discourse devoted both to vouchsafing the identity of political science and to establishing it as a body of knowledge with practical significance, and for a century, it functioned in this manner. The purpose was largely to convey the historical meaning of democracy and to validate the United States as a democratic society. Although the narrative underwent a fundamental transformation in the last half of the twentieth century, it was still a rhetorical and ideologically informed story. The principal goal of the "revolution" in the theory and practice of the study of the history of political thought initiated, more than a generation ago, by scholars such as Quentin Skinner (e.g., 1969, 1978; see also Tully 1988) and J. G. A. Pocock (e.g., 1962, 1971, 1975) was devoted to transforming this literature into a more credible body of historical research. They rejected what they characterized as philosophical and ideological renditions of past political thought, such as that pursued by Strauss and Wolin, in favor of what they claimed was an authentic historical recovery of the meaning of texts, which was to be accomplished in part by a careful reconstruction of their political context. Although there are grounds for suggesting that this program did not fully cast off the imprint of its past, it has been considerably more successful in doing so than many other dimensions of political theory, which remain a kind of dislocated rhetoric. This "success," however, has not been without its problems.

There are some who would deem the more recent scholarly achievements of the social sciences as entailing a relinquishment of the very purpose that gave rise to these fields, that is, to have a practical impact on their subject matter. Similarly, one might reasonably ask if the turn in the study of the history of political theory from a rhetoric of history to, one might say, a history of rhetoric and ideology has not carried with it a loss of political relevance. The pursuit of a more "historical" study of the history of political thought was, however, in part motivated by the

assumption that only a more "objective" history could carry authority with respect to speaking about and to politics. It might not be surprising that once its scholarly status was established, the political motif tended to resurface (e.g., Skinner 1998), but at the same time, as in the case of social science as a whole, increased academicization often means "being deprived of its political character" (Hampsher-Monk 2001, 159, 168; Hampsher-Monk and Castiglione 2001, 8). My purpose, however, is not to describe, evaluate, and make judgments about the present state of the study of the history of political thought but rather to reflect on certain elements of its pedigree. But neither is my goal to present a detailed account of the evolution of this field of study in the United States (e.g., Ball 2001), let alone in other countries. I only seek to recall, emphasize, and interpret some of the basic contours of what by now is a relatively well-documented development and thereby illuminate certain aspects of contemporary political theory and its relationships to political science and politics.

Rendering the history of political theory was originally, and in several respects, more a "politics of history" than a history of politics. One sense of what we might think of as the politics of the history of political theory was reflected in Immanuel Kant's claim that the principal events of human history are politically caused and manifested. This, as he noted, was an "*a priori*" assumption that preceded and was meant "to supersede the task of history proper, that of *empirical* composition." Kant claimed that the human past was an organic whole that was not only rooted in politics as a form of life but also could only be known and authenticated by a "public" that was the emanation of that form (Kant 1970, 52–53). Hegel, and many of those influenced by Hegel's work, produced variations on this theme that, by the middle of the nineteenth century, found their way into a variety of academic practices. One such practice was the study of the history of political theory in the United States, which embodied the assumptions that the past has a political essence and that the study of the past is, therefore, inherently politically relevant. A second dimension of the "politics" of this history was the extent to which it reflected and consciously embodied political attitudes and agendas. Third, this body of work was very much part of the "politics of theory" in that it served to affirm the identity and autonomy of political science among the social sciences and, within political science, to underwrite certain forms of scholarship and conceptions of political phenomena as well as democratic regimes. Finally, this literature was involved with justifying political science to society at large and with providing grounds for the discipline's claim to truth.

Stefan Collini has noted that "there is no single enterprise or entity corresponding to what in English-speaking countries has most often been called 'the history of political thought'" and that in order to understand this genre, it is necessary to look at particular "*intellectual* and *academic* cultures" (2001, 281). More specifically, he suggested that "if one is interested in the historical development of the 'history of political thought,' one is interested in an aspect or episode of the intellectual and institutional history of academic disciplines" (2001, 283). If we think of the study of the history of political thought generically as a "form of discourse" conducted in diverse ways and settings by university scholars, it is difficult not to conceive it as a relatively universal endeavor, but if we think of it as a self-ascribed and institutionally differentiated "academic discipline," we are talking about a practice that was largely a nineteenth-century American invention. For example, Robert Wokler (2001) has noted that in England, "the birth and rise of the study of political thought as a genuinely academic discipline" was largely a "twentieth century" development. Although it is possible, and common, to identify in various countries what might be considered as functional equivalents and prototypes of the academic practice of writing the history of political thought, this practice was largely a creation of American political science.

The works of authors such as Aristotle, Locke, and Rousseau were already central texts in the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century American college curriculum in moral philosophy. This course of studies was dominated by a Scottish Enlightenment perspective, which included practical ethics and which was taught from a religious perspective. This iconic literature, which became the core of the classic canon, was presented not only as the progenitor of the ideas embodied in American institutions but also as a source of principles that should be inculcated in citizens and political leaders. Although political science, as a distinct discipline, was, as Bernard Crick (1959) so notoriously put it, the "American science of politics," this is not to say that its American locus entailed a lack of European influences, which, over the years, would both persist and be manifest in new waves of influence. The person most reasonably credited as its "founder" was the German émigré Francis Lieber, who grafted German philosophical history onto the political dimension of American moral philosophy and made the concept of the State the subject and domain of political science. From the point of his earliest writing on the study of politics (1835a, 1838, 1853), he also situated the already canonical authors, from Plato onward, as central actors in a Kantian/Hegelian vision of history, which was the story of the State as the evolution of human freedom. Lieber designated these luminaries as the predecessors of

the field of study that he was attempting to institutionalize, and the history of politics was presented as moving toward culmination in American society and the institutions of American self-government. The emerging discipline, as a whole, was devoted to justifying the United States as the realization of popular sovereignty, and the study of the history of political thought served the function of validating that putative body of knowledge by attaching it to an illustrious lineage. The history of political ideas was conceived as, at once, the history of political science and the history of the theory and practice of the State as embodied in American political institutions and thus as providing a provenance for both the discipline and its subject matter.

Lieber was deeply involved in the politics of his time with respect to issues ranging from slavery to polygamy, and his story of the evolution of political thought reflected and supported his views. Although this embryonic account of the history of political theory was very much part of academic struggles involving issues of disciplinary identity and status, it was also in the service of demonstrating the field's pedagogic and epistemic authority. By the late nineteenth century, however, it had become increasingly distant, conceptually and practically, from the practice of politics. The elite character of both politics and university education and the ease with which an intellectual entrepreneur such as Lieber moved between the worlds of academe and politics had contributed to the permeability of the membranes separating scholarly and political discourse. The situation changed significantly with the professionalization of social science and with democratizing transformations in the world of politics. Although Lieber's vision of political science was adopted, adapted, and perpetuated by individuals such as Theodore Woolsey at Yale and Herbert Baxter Adams at Johns Hopkins, the connection to politics became increasingly attenuated. This academic formalization of the American democratic metanarrative was prompted by a political purpose, but once it had become a specialized property of the academy, there was the problem of maintaining its political significance and making contact with the audience that it was supposed to address.

It was Lieber's successor at Columbia, John W. Burgess (1890) and the latter's colleagues and students, who most fully institutionalized the discipline of political science, including both the theory of the State and the attending study of the history of political ideas. The goal of influencing politics still deeply informed the positions of Burgess and others, but the strategy for doing so began to change in a world where political power was becoming diverse and dispersed. Although Burgess claimed moral authority, he sought to ground it in an image of science. For these

first- and second-generation political theorists, history was conceived and advertised as a science, and the story they told was once again a democratic metanarrative that supplemented but transcended that within the world of politics itself. They were avowing more than the idea of a political interpretation of history. They were subscribing to the notion that writing history was politically and philosophically salient, but they also believed that in a society in which the grounds of social knowledge and authority were changing, it must be perceived as scientific if it were to be politically effective. In this context, the history of political theory was explicitly presented as the history of political science (e.g., Pollock 1890). Despite the Progressive ideological shift that characterized much of the next generation, the strategy of seeking practical effect on the basis of a claim to scientific neutrality played a large part in the discipline's separation from the field of history and the creation of the American Political Science Association (APSA) in 1903, which also distanced the profession from the increasingly conservative discipline of economics (Gunnell 2006). It is ironic that, in the last quarter of the twentieth century, it would be the ethos of guild history that would attempt to reclaim the study of the history of political theory.

Whatever may have been the actual status of the German professoriate of the nineteenth century, its role and stature were perceived as models by a wide range of ideologically disparate American scholars who went abroad to imbibe the theory of the State and its attending history. These perceptions of the influence of German academicians shaped profoundly the image of what American scholars believed could be the relationship between the academy and public policy in the United States. Despite Burgess's conservative political commitments, the constitution of his School of Political Science, which he claimed was best described as a "School of Political Thought," with its emphasis on combining history and political science, reflected his image of the German academy and his general optimism regarding the possibilities of theory informing practice through the medium of exchange between academic and political elites. He did, however, become frustrated by the fact that his school seemed more to reduplicate itself with academically inclined PhDs than to produce political leaders. Although Burgess himself was an unremitting Hegelian and viewed the course of American history and the history of political thought in these terms, those, such as the philosopher Archibald Alexander and the historian William A. Dunning, to whom Burgess allotted the task of teaching the history of political theory, were more broadly grounded. They drew from English and French as well as German sources as they sought to establish the ancestry and identity of the study of the history

of political theory as a yet more distinct intellectual endeavor as well as a subfield of political science. But this period also marked the further dislocation of this rhetorical history. Its form, content, and purpose persisted, but its actual relationship to politics—and even, in some degree, to political science—changed as it became a more specific field of study.

More than any other work, it was Dunning's three volumes on *A History of Political Theories*, written over a period of two decades (1902, 1905, 1920), that established the history of political theory as a recognized academic literature and a defined element of the university curriculum. Dunning continued to emphasize the unity of theory and practice by stressing and elaborating the assumption that political theory was *in* politics as well as an academic historical discourse *about* politics, and he continued to press the points that the history of political theory was the past of contemporary political science, that politics was the subject of history, and that political change was a product of a dialectic between political ideas and their social context. Although Dunning depreciated attempts to bring scholarship to bear on political life, or at least was wary of the efficacy and propriety of academic political advocacy, he continued to stress that the history of political theory was, on the whole, a story of the progress of democratic ideas and institutions as well as of the history of political science. Dunning's work was paralleled, and mildly challenged, by Westel Woodbury Willoughby at Hopkins (1903). Willoughby emphasized the importance of theory in political life and, even more than Dunning, the immanence of political ideas in the context of political fact. He was one of the principal actors in founding the APSA and in designating political theory as a recognized subfield. These individuals claimed that the history of political theory was a repository of concepts for scientific political inquiry, and they maintained that only by establishing a scientific professional identity, and detaching the discipline from the kind of overt partisanship that Willoughby noted in the work of individuals such as Burgess, could political science become politically effective. A perspective similar to that of Willoughby was embraced, and elaborated, by Charles Merriam who had cut his academic teeth by teaching and writing, from the perspectives of Burgess and Dunning, about the history of political theory in both Europe and the United States (Merriam 1900, 1903). He, and his student Harold Lasswell, believed that political science and political practice could be bridged by educating citizens and by gaining the ear of political elites and that these goals could be accomplished only if political science achieved a scientific status. For Merriam, however, the history of political theory remained both the story of democracy and an account of the evolution of political science, and he held on to the idea

that it spoke to both the academy and the public. For the first quarter of the twentieth century, political theory, as a distinct element of political science, continued, despite the new empiricism represented by individuals such as Merriam, to be dominated by studies of the history of political thought (e.g., Carlyle and Carlyle 1903; Figgis 1907; Gettell 1924; Merriam and Barnes 1924). What had also taken place, however, by the mid-1920s, was an Americanization, and Anglicization, of the literature. This was in part a function of the turn away from German philosophy and political ideas after World War One, and there was also greater intercourse with England and the influence of scholars such as Ernest Barker, Harold Laski, and A. D. Lindsay. But although the more strictly Hegelian elements that had characterized the American adaptation faded away, the essential characteristics of the form, such as the historical relativity of ideas leavened by an idealist image of progress, persisted.

Although the crisis of democratic theory in political science, during the 1920s, ended with the demise of the theory of the State as an account of popular sovereignty based on the existence of a homogeneous American "people," the history of political theory continued to flourish as a justification for the new theory of democratic pluralism and the attending image of a science of politics that came to dominate the field by the end of the 1920s. Apart from a nascent tension between some political theorists such as W. Y. Elliott and the emerging pluralist theory of democracy, the study of the history of political theory remained an integral aspect of American political science. The political polarization of the globe in the 1930s and an inferiority complex about the articulation of democracy, or liberalism, as an ideology provided incentives for moving that history yet further in this direction. The idea of a great tradition reaching from Plato to the present became, more than ever, the past of both American politics and political science. Works such as C. H. McIlwain's *The Growth of Political Thought in the West* (1932) did much to solidify the assumption that the classic works were pivotal elements of an actual historical tradition. However, among the proliferating number of texts during the 1930s and 1940s that served to underwrite liberal democracy as well as the discipline devoted to studying it, Sabine's *A History of Political Theory* (1937) became the most paradigmatic. Although Sabine claimed that political ideas were relative to their context, depreciated the assumption that political theory had anything to do with ultimate "truth," and stressed the danger of all transcendental perspectives from natural law to Marxism, he sustained the image of progress in both ideas and institutions. He claimed that the logic of the experimental method, which he argued was at the heart of both science and liberalism, ultimately ensured

their survival and doomed the aberrational absolutist lapses of totalitarianism. Sabine's work could, at that point, hardly have fitted better into the general perspective of American political science and its ostensible commitment to the separation of fact and value, but the separation of these two realms was in reality a way of endorsing the liberal ethos.

The pluralist image of social reality and democratic theory, although precipitated and anticipated by theorists as diverse as Arthur Bentley (1908) and Laski, had been most fully and originally formulated by a now largely forgotten group of scholars including Harry Elmer Barnes, Walter Shepard, Peter Odegard, and John Dickinson (Gunnell 2004, Ch. 4). They elaborated a general image of democracy, and the methods of science appropriate for studying it, that pervaded and dominated disciplinary discourse during the 1930s and 1940s. This theory, and the doctrine of scientism associated with it, was more schematically rearticulated in the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s and 1960s by scholars such as Pendleton Herring (1940), David Truman (1951), and Robert Dahl (1956). The theory of pluralist democracy, and the emergence of the behavioral movement in which it became embedded, were in part a response to the growing sentiment that political science had not realized its promise—in either the cognitive or practical sense. This, in turn, was tied to a renewed concern, in the midst of the Cold War, with providing an alternative to alien ideologies and with demonstrating that the theory of democracy was scientifically grounded and indeed inherent in what Daniel Boorstin (1953) claimed was the "genius" of American political practice. It was, however, something more internal to the discipline that most significantly prompted both this reprise of pluralism and a new defense of political science as truly scientific. These were, most directly, a response to an assault on the basic values and practice of mainstream political science, an assault that was particularly unsettling because it was mounted within the very heart of the discipline and its legitimating rhetoric—the study of the history of political theory.

Although it is often assumed that the behavioral revolution involved a rejection of the history of political theory in favor of what it characterized as scientific theory, it was in part a radical change in the literature associated with the history of political theory that instigated the behavioral movement. Sabine had posed the question "what is political theory?" in part as a response to the fact that the traditional image of that history was, for the first time, facing a challenge. Between the late 1930s and early 1940s, a significant number of émigré scholars had arrived in the United States and, for various reasons, gravitated toward the field of political theory in which, by the mid-1950s, they produced a fundamental sea

change. This group included, most notably, Strauss, Hannah Arendt, Eric Voegelin, Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse. They were, in several respects, a philosophically and ideologically diverse group, but despite their differences, they embraced some common principles and assumptions, and to Americans, who had for a generation been relatively insulated from foreign influences, their arguments appeared quite similar. There were some American partisans such as John Hallowell who aided in the penetration of the genre, and by the early 1960s, with the publication of what many saw as the principal successors to Sabine's book—Wolin's *Politics and Vision* (1960) and Strauss and Cropsey's *History of Political Philosophy* (1963)—a basic intellectual shift had occurred. The quite sudden behavioralist depreciation of the study of the history of political theory (Easton 1951), which took place during the 1950s, was in large measure a reaction to this literature increasingly becoming a rhetoric that was now devoted to undermining rather than defending mainstream political science and its commitment to a science of politics as well as the idea of liberal democracy that had now become emblematic of both political science and American public philosophy.

Even though the political aspirations of the émigrés in their own country may to some degree have been as utopian as the images that nineteenth-century American scholars carried home from Europe, there was a more pronounced intersection between academic and public discourse in a country such as Germany than in the United States. The émigrés had strong political or parapolitical commitments and were dedicated, in one way or another, to the goals of theoretical intervention in politics and cultural change. Most had confronted politics in its most concrete and ineluctable form, but they were nearly all deeply suspicious of liberal democracy, particularly in its pluralist version, which, after Weimar, they tended to view as a potential threshold of totalitarianism. Both because of their experience in the German educational system and because of their political and theoretical assumptions, they depreciated empirical science and perceived it as in opposition to philosophy and history, which they believed was the basis of a critical theory of politics. Many were influenced by the work of individuals such as Martin Heidegger, Oswald Spengler, Stefan George, Carl Schmitt, and other antimodernist persuasions, which informed their images of the crisis of the West and the decline of political thought. Since they all saw relativism in its various manifestations as a precursor of philosophical and political nihilism, they reacted negatively to American pragmatism and subscribed to some version of transcendental and foundational philosophy. In short, in most respects, they could not have been more at odds with the substantive content and purpose of

the field of political theory in the United States, but strangely, it was here rather than in Europe that most found significant academic status. This was in part because the form of the intellectual vessel was both congenial and familiar.

The tale of the tradition, as told by political philosophers such as Arendt, Strauss, and Voegelin, became a much more dramatic and structured trope that in many respects mirrored, and perpetuated, the holistic images of the nineteenth century. Authors such as Machiavelli were cast as romantic or demonic protagonists in a plot containing distinct points of beginning, transformation, and even end. Although the émigrés viewed their work as political in both character and purpose, it was actually a triply dislocated rhetoric. First, the history of political theory, like the discipline's built-in Whig history of itself, had already become distanced from the particularities of politics. Second, the new rendition of the history of political thought was relevant almost exclusively to an academic audience and hardly intelligible to a more general public. Although the new literature was addressed, at least obliquely, to contemporary society, issues surrounding the Cold War, and the viability of democratic institutions, it was a kind of philosophical politics in which actual events resonated more as exemplars than actual objects of investigation. And, finally, it was increasingly alienated from the very discipline in which it was professionally situated. The new synoptic account of the tradition that took shape after the war still told the story of political science, but it was now a tragic story of its flaws and irrelevance. At the same time, however, the narrative singled out the enterprise that Wolin would label as the "vocation" of political theory, which survived modernity, stood in opposition to political science, and provided an account of the lost remnant of truth that this vocation might recover. The various senses of the politics of history were still very apparent in the genre, but now more than ever it was a kind of virtual politics that was at issue.

Debates in the 1960s about such matters as whether the whole tradition had been based on a logical mistake and consequently whether political theory was "dead" (e.g., Laslett 1956), debates that in retrospect might seem much like the famous Monty Python parrot skit, regarding whether the Norwegian Blue was dead or merely resting, were largely secondary effusions of philosophical controversies about positivism, but even this discussion assumed the existence of *the* tradition as a piece of historical reality. The field had moved from *A History of Political Theories* to *A History of Political Theory* to the Straussian *History of Political Philosophy* and Wolin's organic image of "continuity and change." While the "tradition" took on a greater aura of reality and significance within the increasingly

self-contained literature of political theory, it was often foreign to both political science and American politics.

Wolin had hoped to speak to a public world as well as to the discipline of political science, but his claims had, in effect, become compressed into providing an identity for an emerging professional enclave. Wolin's story of the great tradition, now as the past of contemporary academic political theory rather than as the past of mainstream political science, but once again as a way of bridging the gap between academic and public discourse, was in many ways the last gasp of the history of political theory as a rhetoric of inquiry. The study of the history of political theory had become simply another element in a highly pluralized world of academic specialization with its own scholarly outlets but supplemented by token appearances in mainstream journals that did not want to offend any element of their professional constituency. For those who invented the paradigm a century earlier and for those who transformed it a half-century later, there was still, despite all the ways in which it was a dislocated rhetoric, something "political" about it. For those who came later, however, and were initiated into these forms as part of a graduate school education, it was much like the situation of those who enter a fraternity and adopt, often with great enthusiasm, arcane rites, which they practice without quite ever grasping from whence they came.

By the early 1970s, the genre was most vulnerable at the core of its self-ascribed identity—*history*. It was, at this point, quite thoroughly brought to task on the grounds that it was a discourse about the past that was in various ways inadequately "historical" with respect to both method and substance. Detached from its roots and exposed, it was simply recognized for what it was and always had been—a rhetorical medium. Several scholars, although hardly agreeing completely either about alternatives or about the criteria of historicity and interpretation, advanced quite extended critiques arguing, in effect, that not all talk about the past is history (Gunnell 1979). They claimed that an analytically and retrospectively constituted canon had, for a century, masqueraded as an actual tradition. As much as this literature had been studied, it had been approached in terms of, and encased in, a framework that often obscured both text and context as well as their actual political character and potential relevance for the present. And the attachment to the idea of the "great" tradition had inhibited the capacity to recognize and study a variety of actual historical traditions. The question that was posed was, in effect, whether a displaced rhetoric could be transformed into an autonomous scholarly practice.

One might speculate that if the ideological and philosophical transformation effected by the émigrés had not alienated political theory from

mainstream behavioral political science, the study of the history of political theory would have remained a rhetorical adjunct. Isolated from the discipline, however, it became increasingly exposed and susceptible to criticism. There is no need to rehearse the tenets and evolution of the "new historicism," but it assumed, despite the growing popularity of arguments such as those of H. G. Gadamer and various strains of poststructuralism and postmodernism, that there was something beyond varieties of "presentist" history. This literature, which some would refer to as a scholarly "revolution" precipitated by the Cambridge school, was accompanied by its own epistemological agenda and rhetoric of inquiry. It claimed that it was preferable to its rivals because it deployed a method that yielded an objective recovery of the past and an authentic understanding of the texts and their authors. One of the problems of the new historicism, however, was that it was forged in the crucible of the old historicism, whose purpose was, in several senses, political. To suggest, for example, as Skinner did, that "real history" would in the end be relevant for such things as a better theoretical understanding of the connection between thought and action, or that it was not possible to address classic texts philosophically unless they were first understood historically, that is, in terms of their actual context and intention, was eminently reasonable. The very subject matter, however, although much expanded beyond the classic literature, was still largely defined by works that had been selected by the rhetorical genre. The question was why, exactly, this material was being studied apart from the fact that it was there.

There is, as already noted, reason to suggest that the new historicism was not simply the outgrowth of ideological and philosophical abstemiousness but rather in some respects yet another version of the claim that it is possible to be most effectively political by being apolitical and the assumption that in a time of historical self-consciousness, historical claims that are based on defensible criteria of scholarship are more practically effective than mythical history. It is difficult to read this literature and not sense that its renunciation of philosophical history and its emphasis on a truly historical method was, much like Weber's claims about value-freedom, designed to undercut adversaries and accrue its own authority as well as, in at least some attenuated manner, speak to public life. One cannot fail to see, for example, that Skinner's early work reflected his antipathy for ideological arguments such as those of C. B. Macpherson (1962) and Strauss and that his concerns extended beyond methodological issues. Similarly, Pocock's *The Machiavellian Moment* (1975) represented a political agenda even though the politics involved may not have extended much beyond the parapolitics associated with issues such

as those involved in the seemingly interminable debate about whether the origins of the American founding were republican or liberal. The concern was hardly that those criticized were simply poor historians. Many embraced the new historicism and practiced it paradigmatically, but in a manner colored by various ideological inclinations. Whatever the commitments of its founders, the new historicism, like the old historicism, was, in the end and in many ways, an equal opportunity employer.

The program of the Cambridge school (Kuper 2002) is hardly secure from criticism (e.g., Tully 1988; Gunnell 1998, Ch. 5). Many have pointed to problems such as the gap between methodological promise and practice and a tendency to emphasize context over text, but there can be little doubt that, if judged on the basis of generally accepted scholarly criteria, the new historicism, broadly construed in terms of the work of both its founders and those who have shared its goals, represents a greater contribution to knowledge than the old historicism. One obvious benchmark might be a comparison of the scholarship on authors such as Machiavelli and Hobbes before and after 1960 (e.g., Skinner 1996; Strauss 1936). It would be difficult to deny that in the last quarter of the twentieth century there was a measurable increase in our understanding of both the contexts and texts of what has been conventionally designated as the history of political thought. Both the initiators of this persuasion and the second generation of scholars who might reasonably be associated with it have produced significant substantive work as well as methodological sophistication in the study of conceptual development (e.g., Ball, Farr, and Hanson 1989), and the attitude engendered has spilled over into various other aspects of history and historiography. Even many of those committed to furthering a controversial perspective such as that of Strauss have both weakened and expanded the philosophical agenda and taken more literally Strauss's claim about the necessity of understanding authors as they understood themselves. This is not at all to suggest that there is something inherently invalid about using texts belonging to the classic canon as vehicles of commentary (Baumgold 1981) but only that it is no longer convincing to claim the authority of "history."

As the study of the history of political theory moves into the second decade of the new century, we are left with the question whether an activity such as social science, which had its origins in the cauldron of politics, can extricate itself and become a practice of knowledge that at the same time is politically significant. But further, can an element of social science such as the study of the history of political theory, which began as a rhetoric of inquiry, detach and transfigure itself and become a functioning dimension of such a practice? Whatever the extent to which its rhetorical

origins may still shape, or burden, the study of the history of political theory, the verdict must be that it has established a reasonable claim to scholarly autonomy. Yet, given its original purpose of speaking to political life, there remains the question of its contemporary relevance in terms of both principle and practice. Social science, as well as the study of the history of political theory, originated in a very different context, and the discursive shadow of that context continues to constrain their evolution.

The career of the study of the history of political theory provides a benchmark for examining the fate of other dimensions of political theory whose contemporary situation is considerably more ambiguous. During the last years of the behavioral era in American political science, that is, during the late 1960s, the growing intellectual split between the mainstream discipline and much of political theory resulted in somewhat contrived "official" institutional and professional distinctions among historical, empirical, and normative theory or, less officially, between what was often referred to as "traditional" and "scientific" theory. Although this development was often accepted and applauded by both sides of the controversy about behavioralism, the rhetoric attaching to the controversy, regarding such matters as the nature of social scientific explanation and the historical career of political theory, were dislodged as these "vocations" went their separate ways and became respectively internally further differentiated. In a somewhat similar manner, the so-called enterprise of normative political theory became increasingly anomalous, but this development was also prefigured in the past of the social sciences.

For Merriam and Willoughby, as well as for the subsequent generation of political scientists, the goal had not been to dislodge social science from a position where it could influence politics but rather to provide a new, that is, scientific, basis for such influence. What this in effect entailed was that normativity became sublimated in scientific claims, just as it had been previously embedded in historical claims. From its inception, American political science had been devoted to specifying the criteria of democracy and demonstrating the conformance, or lack of conformance, of institutions and political practices to that concept. With the demise of the theory of the State and its account of democracy, the pluralist theory of democracy that emerged in the 1920s was implanted in a descriptive analysis of American political practice. This literature reached its apotheosis in the empirical theory of democracy advanced, during the 1950s, by political scientists such as Truman and Dahl. The mutually agreed upon professional division of labor, which emerged during the last quarter of the twentieth century, created a situation where normativity tended to remain "underground" in empirical political science, while what was officially

designated as normative political theory, or sometimes value-theory, had no clearly specifiable parentage. It was in part a category springing from the positivist claim, and from even earlier images in the discipline, that all judgments could be parsed as either factual or evaluative, and it was in part a classification designed to cover modes of discourse that did not fit the behavioral image of theory. Despite its professional connection to political science, what was considered as belonging to normative political theory consisted of a diverse interdisciplinary literature without a concrete home, subject matter, purpose, and audience. Released from the normal professional constraints, which had perpetuated the idea of the unity of political theory, the two already estranged voices began to break into distinct discourses with minimal mutual contact.

By the end of the 1960s, those who found themselves attached, or attached themselves, to the proliferating "vocations" of what tended to fall under the category of normative political theory wished to speak about and to the practice of politics, but they rejected the authority of science on which political science had previously predicated its normative judgments. Instead, they sought a variety of philosophical and historical grounds, but they often conveyed a message that was neither directed toward nor comprehensible to a distinct political constituency. Seeking an identity for normative theory in the work of thinkers such as John Rawls, Jürgen Habermas, and Michel Foucault had little resonance beyond the academy. This is not to say that there have not been instances of significant intersection between academic and public discourse, but these are isolated and complicated events and are neither indicative of the general structural relationship between political theory and American politics nor necessarily evidential of why such intersection *should* occur. The question of exactly why the claims of academic political theorists should be heeded, particularly in a democratic society, is seldom confronted.

There are significant grounds for claiming that, during the past generation, there have been unprecedented historical, textual, and analytical advances in the scholarship of political theory, but the field also remains haunted by the mythologies of its past. Significant elements of the literature of political theory consist of varieties of abstract moralism propounded by individuals who lack the location and status of moralists but seek to function as public ethicists and spokespersons for an increasingly phantom audience. Although claims about matters such as justice and democracy once had a great deal to do with both the agenda of social science and its relationship to political life, they now are largely part of a disjoined self-contained conversation. The fact is that if the everyday world of politics were radically transformed, or disappeared altogether, many of

the conversations of political theory would not be fundamentally altered. Those who identify with this field, however, are often possessed of a sense that, abandoned by political science, it represented an activity that had been chosen as the promulgator of political values and that it somehow had accrued the authority to speak, in varying degrees of specificity, about a variety of issues relating to public life.

A generation after its invention, normative political theory, which is largely the descendant of the genre of the history of political theory, is still unclear about how it relates not only to political science but also to the other fields such as philosophy. And how it relates, and should relate, to politics is even less clear. Many theorists affect a stance, and speak in an idiom, not unlike that of the clergy who dominated moral philosophy in the American academy during the first half of the nineteenth century, and it is important to recognize the extent to which the contemporary discourse is genealogically anchored in an unreflective perpetuation of themes characteristic of that literature. The fundamental difference is that, unlike Lieber or Woolsey, the moralists of the current era are neither appointed by nor seldom speaking to any distinct community and in most instances have never ventured from the academy into the worlds of practice that they profess to advise and admonish. It was, ironically, the very failure of moral philosophy as a public voice in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that prompted the turn to science as a new basis of intellectual authority, while in the last generation, the belief that has dominated political theory is that scientism must be replaced by moralism. Some today suggest, as others have since the 1950s, that the answer to the problem is to overcome these dichotomous commitments and find a way to bring empiricism and normativity into a complementary relationship, but while such analytical solutions may be aesthetically satisfying, they do not take adequate account of either professional and institutional inertia or the extent to which the problem of theory and practice has no theoretical solution and is ultimately itself the practical problem of the relationship between academic and public discourse. The paradox inherent in the study of the history of political thought is that while it may have to some degree escaped its rhetorical origins and achieved an independent scholarly authority based on its contribution to knowledge of the past, that authority has little practical relevance. The paradox of normative political theory is simply that the "knowledge" it professes is not knowledge about anything unless that knowledge is practically manifested or *acknowledged*. These remarks are not intended to suggest that political theorists either should or should not speak prescriptively about political issues. The academic voice is as legitimate and credible as many

others in the political arena. It is, however, to suggest that the politics about which many do speak is often a philosophical construction and that in many instances scholarship has been replaced by pronouncements grounded in claims to various forms of epistemic privilege that do not fit comfortably with the typical expressions of democratic sentiment.

Once we dispel the myth that political theory is some special vocation by dint of either its ancestry or its capacity to determine truth, justice, and the criteria of public reason, it is apparent that it shares the heritage of the past of political science, as well as that of social science as a whole, and that its future is tied to the character and fate of those enterprises. For many years, there has been a debate, which has once again has surfaced in the Perestroika controversy in political science, about whether social science is a "scientific" or interpretive endeavor—or a composite of quantitative and qualitative approaches. The answer is that, whatever methods social science employs, it is by its very nature, like all social science, an interpretive, or what I will refer to as a metapractical, enterprise, because it is devoted to understanding other conceptually preconstituted human practices. The recognition of this cognitive fact and its epistemic implications does not, however, settle the fundamental question of the practical relationship between social science and its subject matter. It is not possible to come to grips with the dilemmas of academic political theory without grasping the character of the more fundamental genre to which it belongs. The following chapter explores these issues through an examination of two classic accounts of metapractical analysis—those of Max Weber and Michael Oakeshott.

Social Scientific Inquiry and the Metapractical Voice

> When I interpret, I step from one level of thought to another.
> —Wittgenstein

EVEN THOUGH THERE IS A PERSISTENT TEMPTATION TO MAKE the mistake of assimilating the academic practices of political theory to the lineage of classic canon of political thought, it is persuasive to claim that the problems and characteristics of metapractices that address political issues have been, in various ways, exemplified in the literature of that retrospectively and analytically constituted "tradition." The nature of politically oriented metapractical discourse is, however, in many respects most visible and distinct in the age of differentiated and institutionalized forms such as those represented by the modern social sciences. Social scientific inquiry inevitably confronts questions involving the relationship among three modes or levels of discourse: the social practices that are the objects of analysis; the practices of social science; and accounts of the logic and epistemology of social science—whether the latter are an internal dimension of these sciences or the formulations of autonomous external commentary such as the philosophy of social science. There are two fundamental paradoxes, or essential tensions that are manifest in the relationship between social science and its subject matter as well as in the relationship between the practice of social science and metatheoretical claims about the nature of social scientific inquiry.

The first is a *cognitive* paradox that derives in part from what might be called the "two-language" problem or the necessity that any metapractical claim, whether a social scientific account of some social phenomenon or a philosophical statement about some aspect of social science, requires

the application of a metalanguage. This usually involves the specification of particulars in terms of some form of generic conceptual typification that is grounded in a theoretical understanding of the subject matter. The basic paradox is simply that although the facts specified as elements of the object domain gain identity and meaning through the application of the concepts belonging to the language of inquiry, the practices under investigation have already been indigenously discursively constructed and endowed with meaning. An interpretation of social phenomena in the language of social science, as well as a philosophical account of social scientific inquiry, entails the deployment of a supervenient terminology and the conceptual reconstruction of the subject matter. The second paradox is *practical* and, in many respects, an implication of the cognitive relationship. There is always, at least to some degree, an epistemic and conceptual conflict between the languages and criteria of knowledge inherent in the respective spheres of a metapractice and its object of inquiry. The superior understanding and judgment often claimed by the social theorist or the philosopher of social science, even if there is no overt normative purpose, almost inevitably deviates in various ways from the understanding and values constitutive of the practices that are the subject of analysis. This grammatical conflict may simply be about specific matters of fact, or it may, depending on the degree of cultural and ideological divergence, involve fundamentally different conceptions of social reality. The practical problem may arise simply from a random juxtaposition of the practical and metapractical visions, as in the case of the relationship between much of cultural anthropology and the practices it studies. Such disagreement may, however, be more intentionally pursued by metapractices such as in the case of the critical and reformist motives so evident in much of the history of social science as well as in the manner in which the philosophy of social science has typically involved either a justification or a critique of the practices of social science.

These paradoxes are not eliminable; they are at the core of social scientific investigation as well as of philosophical reflection on that practice. What varies, however, are the responses that these paradoxes evoke and the extent to which they are systematically confronted. There is, indeed, a large body of literature that has, either reflectively or obliquely, confronted these paradoxes, but what is remarkable is that the paradoxes have seldom been directly and satisfactorily identified and addressed. This is in part because discussions of these matters have often been skewed or clouded by the agendas pursued by social theorists and philosophers. Weber's "The 'Objectivity' of Knowledge in Social Science and Social Policy" (1904) and Oakeshott's "On the Theoretical Understanding of

Human Conduct" (1975) were by no means free from such agendas, but these essays, separated by nearly a quarter of a century, constitute exemplars to which we can repair in confronting the complexities of the issues involved.

These essays have often been cited in the course of arguments in which they are approached as objects of criticism or praise, but they have seldom been carefully examined on their own terms. My concern is not to engage in a general consideration of the work of Weber and Oakeshott, and it is certainly not to sort out and evaluate the vast secondary literature that has been devoted to that work. My discussion is limited to an analysis and comparison of these essays and to the manner in which they singularly and classically illuminate both the conditions and possibilities of metapractices such as political science and political theory. Although both Weber and Oakeshott took definite positions with respect to the nature and role of metapractices such as social science, there is no need to accept their specific injunctions. However, and in a manner that surpasses much of the more recent literature, they provided the terms for thinking carefully about the relationships among philosophy, social science, and politics. Their arguments are much more subtle and finely grained than the stereotypical positions that have informed so much of the literature touching on these issues.

Although the essays are strikingly similar in the manner in which they recognize and define the basic paradoxes of social science and although, in some respects, they present very similar claims, they also, in other respects, differ significantly. Some of the differences may be attributed to the respective contexts. For example, while Weber was continually moving between the venues of the academy and politics and only incidentally engaged in philosophical discussions, Oakeshott, although often speaking about public issues, was quintessentially academic and philosophical in his approach and orientation. And while Weber's primary concern was with the application of social science to public policy, Oakeshott was deeply suspicious of such practical intervention. Both, however, were in part responding, at least indirectly, to positivist accounts of the nature of social inquiry, which not only conflicted with their basic positions but also tended to obscure the discursive tension between social theory and political practice.

It is difficult to specify the exact genre and intellectual location of Weber's essay, but it is often mistakenly categorized as an exercise in the philosophy of social science. Although there is little doubt that Weber was influenced by various philosophical arguments and although his essay certainly contained what might be characterized as philosophical claims

about both the nature of social phenomena and the practice of social science, it did not belong primarily to the discourse of philosophy. Weber was actually very reluctant to become enmeshed in the kind of epistemological and methodological arguments that many of his contemporaries considered to be the foundations of social scientific practice. He did, however, recognize the rhetorical power of philosophical arguments deployed in the discourse of social science, and although his essay was most concretely situated in the practice of social science, it functioned (as in the case of the early literature of political theory in the field of political science) in the interstices among philosophy, social science, and politics. It was essentially a metapractical defense of a certain conception of social science practice—a rhetoric of inquiry, which drew on philosophical claims but which spoke both to social scientists and to political actors.

Weber famously, and notoriously, argued that the conduct of social science required fundamental commitments to the autonomy and "value of *theoretical* knowledge," "the *formation of clear concepts*," and "the strict *distinction between empirical knowledge and value-judgment*." What he meant by these phrases as well as by his references to "objectivity" and "objectively valid truths" was closely related to what he would later refer to as the tenets of "ethical neutrality" and the distinction between the "vocations" of science and politics. What is often neglected in discussions of his work, however, is who he indicated as the principal audience toward whom these remarks were directed. Although the essay was clearly addressed in part to social scientists and presented in the context of heated academic controversies about method and the relationship between social science and politics as well as the applicability of the methods of natural science to social scientific inquiry, it was also designed to vouchsafe, before a wider public, the cognitive authority, and consequently the practical significance, of social science. He explicitly stated that he was speaking *primarily* to those who were "detached from practical scientific activity" and who required enlightenment with respect to the basic nature of "'social scientific' work." Weber stressed that the basic commitment of the social sciences was, or should be, to the pursuit of illuminating "the *facts* of social life," but he also pointed out, as the title of the essay indicated, that these fields were historically concerned with "social policy" and "the training of *judgment* in respect of *practical problems* arising from these social circumstances." This raised the issue of how the empirical claims of social science were related to, and could be reconciled with, "value-judgments" and a "critique of sociopolitical work," because the latter were, at least most immediately and de facto, the province of politicians and legislators (Weber 1904, 359–60).

Weber was writing at a time when both German society and the university were becoming less politically and socially homogenous and when, at the same time, the status of academic intellectuals was declining. He believed that in this situation the only claim to authority that university intellectuals could embrace, and that would be practically efficacious and meaningful, was one that was presented in the idiom of science. But the *Methodenstreit* in which he was so actively involved raised contentious issues about both the nature of social science and its relationship to politics, issues that were often fought out on the terrain of philosophy. Despite Weber's stress on the logical disjunction between empirical and evaluative claims, he was talking less about forms of speech and judgment than about the existential problem of the relationship between the practices of social science and politics as well as about the commitments that should, in his view, define and distinguish them. He emphasized that, despite their present academic location, the social sciences "arose historically from *practical* perspectives" and, more specifically, for the purpose of making value-judgments about public policy. Although he did not elaborate this point about the origins of social science, it was an accurate claim, but he also stressed that these sciences had heretofore failed to take full account of their new situation. This was their setting in the academy, which indicated the need to formulate a "principled distinction" between "existential knowledge" of what "is" and "normative" claims about what "should be." For Weber, this was actually less a logical distinction than a recognition of the difference, and growing distance, between academic and public discourse. He argued that although a mistaken image of the unity of empirical and ethical claims had persisted "among practical men of affairs" as well as, more obviously, among many inhabitants of the university, it was necessary to realize that in the modern age "the task of an experimental science can never be the determination of binding norms and ideals, from which, in turn, guidelines for practical application might be derived" (360–61).

What Weber was announcing and propagating by these remarks, which have often been misconstrued, was less a philosophical imperative about distinguishing between fact and value than the need to recognize a practical difference that was often denied or resisted by his academic contemporaries on both the left and right. More important, however, he was also making what was viewed by many as the counterintuitive claim that the renunciation of value judgments on the part of social science was the key to its playing a substantive part in political decisions. It was not that it was logically incorrect or impossible for science to engage overtly in making value-judgments but rather that it was no longer its practicable

role. Even if social scientists wished to do so, they were, in an increasingly ideologically and culturally pluralized society, in no position to perform this function, since, unlike the imperious brand of moral philosophy that had characterized universities during the prior generation, the social sciences were no longer an integral part of the structures of political power. Furthermore, if social scientists attempted to take on this function, it would undermine their cognitive authority, which was the only kind of authority that they, in effect, now possessed, or could reasonably claim, and which was their potential source of practical purchase. Only, ironically, by separating social science and politics could the former have an impact on the latter.

Renouncing the task of making value judgments, or at least insisting on a clear distinction between the two forms of discourse, did not entail, Weber insisted, that values should not be matters of critical discussion in social science or that these sciences had nothing to contribute to the formulation and assessment of such judgments. His purpose was actually to make the judgments of social science, and particularly those that he personally avowed, politically effective. His distinction between empirical and evaluative claims, and later between the vocations of science and politics, in large part served to demonstrate how each might impinge, favorably or unfavorably, on the other. Without, however, making it clear that in both principle and practice they were different endeavors, it was impossible to discuss relationships cogently. Unless both social scientists and political actors recognized the difference, the matter of connections could not be articulated and confronted. What was important was to determine the appropriate "*meaning* and *purpose* of the scientific criticism of ideals and value-judgments." This, he suggested, could include such things as analyzing and clarifying the "ideas" and "values" embedded in "meaningful human action" and demonstrating the likelihood of attaining a certain end by a certain means (361). He argued that there were many ways in which empirical and normative claims were, and might be, connected, but these were contingent and ultimately depended on what at any particular point constituted the practical relationship between social science and politics.

Weber argued that, in the conditions of modern society, responsibility for the act of choice in politics was not, and could not be, the "business" of science, but by doing such things as telling social actors what they potentially could do (and maybe even helping them reflect on what they actually wished to do) and by assessing the real and hypothetical consequences of their decisions and actions, social science might, if it carried authority, significantly constrain and guide practical decisions. In

an important sense, achieving clarity was the key to practical effectiveness. Even this minimalist perspective might have been a utopian hope, but Weber realized that in the case of political values, "validity" was, in the end, a political matter. It was individually, historically, and culturally relative—no matter what transcendental or extrapolitical standards a social scientist or philosopher might call on as justification. But just as surely as Weber was recognizing the ultimate autonomy of politics and pointing out to social scientists that they were not political actors, he wanted to make clear to political actors that science was the province of scientists and possessed its own criteria of judgment. One of the dangers in his context, as in the United States during the late nineteenth century and mid-twentieth century, was that politics might significantly intrude on science.

Weber claimed the goal of science was, or should be conceived as, the search for universally valid empirical knowledge or truths, and this claim was essential to the rhetorical force of his essay. The claim was directed not only toward social scientists for the purpose of urging the notion that the establishment of cognitive authority was the path to practical effect but also toward political actors for the purpose of convincing them that social science did in fact possess such authority. If this was not the manner in which the role and capacity of social science was perceived externally, these disciplines would have little influence, and if this was not the actual commitment of social science, it would be exposed as the disguised ideology that it often embodied. The question was one of how social science could achieve, or was to pursue, this scientific goal, and Weber's answer was that it was to be accomplished by "*conceptually ordering* empirical reality" and producing results that would be universally recognized as correct. The implication was not only that there must be accepted transcultural standards of validity among scientists but also that in certain respects it was necessary for social science to challenge society's understanding of itself, in terms of both substance and language. The problem, then, was to determine what "objectivity" in this context meant and entailed, that is, what was involved in this activity of "conceptual ordering" (362–65).

Weber stressed that what, from the perspective of social science, constituted a social fact and valid knowledge could not be concluded outside the language of science. It was only through the presuppositions of an investigator that a phenomenon and its cause could be factored out of the total spatial and temporal complexity of social life where "the stream of infinite events flows constantly toward eternity." Otherwise, there would be a "chaos of 'existential judgments' with respect to innumerable individual judgments" (378). There were no facts that spoke for themselves

without being conceptualized in the language of social science, and significance was, in the last analysis, a function of the concerns of the social scientist, "for scientific truth is only valid for those who *seek* the truth," which meant those who manifested the scientific spirit (383). At this juncture in the essay, however, Weber pointedly shifted his emphasis away from how the language of social science was inevitably and necessarily constitutive of social facts to an examination of the extent to which, unlike natural science, it *did not* create facticity.

For Weber, the distinctive attribute of social phenomena was their preconstituted conceptual character. They were already meaningful when encountered by scientific investigators. Meaning was not, in the first instance, endowed by the interpreter but by the actor. Despite his insistence on the *constructive* role of social scientific concept formation, there was another sense in which the objects of social inquiry *did* possess a kind of independent objective status. While the language and concepts of natural science were, in effect, constitutive of the facts that composed the category of natural phenomena, social objects were conventionally meaningful in terms of the understanding of social actors and their context and thus part of a realm that was discursively prior to the language of social science. Weber viewed this cognitive paradox as endemic to social inquiry and as integrally connected to the practical paradox inherent in the relationship between social science and its subject matter. The *epistemic* question was how to reconcile the historical particularity and indigenous meaning of social facts with the search for scientific significance and generalization. The *practical* question was how to adjudicate the tension between the factual domains constituted, respectively, by social science and its subject matter. The latter question of how, exactly, truth could speak to power or how to make political actors listen to the claims of social scientists, even if these claims were accorded the authority of science, was one for which Weber, in the end, did not offer a definite solution. In Germany, this strategic problem was bequeathed to individuals such as Karl Mannheim and then to subsequent generations in which the metapractical imagination was even further strained and from which few clear answers were forthcoming.

Although Weber claimed that the social world only becomes intelligible in terms of the categories through which the social scientist orders it, he was also saying that social phenomena are ontologically and epistemologically "given" in a way that natural phenomena are not. While social science creates facts as classes or kinds of things in terms of its theories and attending categories, it does not conceptually construct facts as particularities. Weber stressed that the discursive products of social science

are *reconstructions* and, at least potentially, rivals of the perceptions and *constructions* of social actors. The dilemma was how to reconcile the social world as, in one sense, and from the perspective of the social scientist, an infinite chaotic universe of unintelligibility, which required external conceptual ordering, with the manner in which it was, in another sense, already meaningfully and primordially ordered and sometimes in a manner that was far too rigid.

Weber's answer lay, first of all, in the concept of "interpretation," which implied both a prior and intelligible discursive object and a metalanguage of interpretation and reconstruction. For Weber, interpretation could not, to use a contemporary phrase, "go all the way down" in the sense that concept formation in the natural sciences did, and this cognitive difference entailed a practical difference. Because cultural significance was not self-evident and was, in the end, a consequence of the perspective from which the investigator approached social practices, explanation, Weber emphasized, was not a matter of subsuming phenomena under laws. This form of explanation not only concealed the particularity and historicity of social facts but also obliterated their conventional nature. Weber argued that the "naturalistic prejudice," or the idea that every concept in the cultural sciences should be similar to those in the natural sciences and involve deduction from abstract axioms, had led to a number of mistakes in seeking to account for the "psychological" grounds of social action and institutions. And it led as well as to an "apparently unbridgeable gulf in our discipline between 'abstract'-theoretical method and empirical-historical research." What was required, he argued, was not extrapolation from general premises about human beings and their psychology but, instead, an "understanding" of "social institutions."

By such "understanding" (*Verstehen*), Weber, as is now often recognized, did not mean some form of intuitive apprehension, which some of his predecessors and contemporaries had embraced, but rather sensitivity to historically specific social contexts and practices and the intentions that were embedded in the concepts informing conventional action. There had, he argued, been a failure to grasp the basic character of "conceptual formation characteristic of the sciences of human culture." This kind of formation was exemplified in the "*ideal type*" (385–387). The ideal type was neither an "ethical" ideal nor a "*representation* of the real" but a necessary and unavoidable vehicle of interpretation. Such constructs were "formed by the one-sided *accentuation* of one or *several* perspectives, and through the synthesis of a variety of diffuse, discrete, *individual* phenomena, present sometimes more, sometimes less, sometimes not at all, subsumed by such one-sided, empathetic viewpoints, so that they

form a uniform construction *in thought*. In its conceptual purity this construction could never be found in reality," but "historical research" might determine how close it approximated and illuminated an individual instance of what was specified (387–88). There was no avoiding the fact that since social science was a matter of interpretation, there must be a *language* of interpretation. And an interpretation was an argument about what is interpreted and therefore predicated on the assumption of difference. Weber emphasized the therapeutic possibilities and intentions of social science, and since social science was necessarily involved in reconstructing the object of its interpretation, it had a potential practical effect on social and political action.

What has bothered many commentators, as philosophically and ideologically diverse as Leo Strauss and Jürgen Habermas, was Weber's failure to postulate some transcendental, rational, critical standard for social scientific judgment, but the essence of Weber's message was the impossibility of philosophically resolving the cognitive and practical paradoxes. There was no theoretical solution to the theory/practice problem, because it was itself actually a practical problem. But what has also been neglected is the extent to which Weber's conception of the ideal type was his answer not only to the cognitive paradox but also to the problem of bridging the existential gap between social science and politics. The wide range of ideal types potentially played both an epistemic and *practical* mediating role. Not only were they sensitive to different—and changing—historical and cultural contexts, but unlike the universalizing and totalizing abstractions generated by those economic theorists who wished to emulate natural science, they were accessible and meaningful to political actors, particularly when shaped by the kind of historical narratives that often characterized Weber's work.

By the time that Oakeshott addressed these issues, the practical as well as conceptual distance between social science and society had widened even further than in Weber's context. In Oakeshott's extended analysis of what was involved in understanding human conduct, he defined and confronted the basic paradoxes of social inquiry that had been so prominently accentuated by Weber, but he attempted to resolve them in quite a different manner. There was also a difference in moral perspective between the two essays. In some respects, both Weber and Oakeshott recognized, and treated, the cognitive paradox in a similar manner, but while Weber's ultimate concern was to bring social science to bear on practical issues, Oakeshott's conservative stance valorized the independence of the practical world and the need to insulate it from the theoretical constructions of social science. Like Weber, however, Oakeshott defended the epistemic

autonomy of those practices devoted to understanding human action. Oakeshott, also like Weber, made only very oblique references to the positions that he challenged in his essay, but what is also remarkable, or at least noteworthy, was his avoidance of any reference to other literature of a similar genre, such as the work of Peter Winch (1958) and Charles Taylor (1971), which by this point had emerged in part as a response to the once again dominant positivist image of explaining social behavior. This omission may have been the result of a reluctance to clutter his analysis with secondary citations, but it may also have been a consequence of his philosophical and ideological disagreement with certain varieties of postpositivism. Despite his interpretive stance, Oakeshott was certainly not on the side of Taylor with respect to the critical practical application of social science, but he also did not accept the epistemic leveling that many believed characterized the position of someone such as Winch with respect to the relationship between the truth values of social science and those of everyday social practices.

In part I of his essay, Oakeshott undertook what he broadly referred to as the "adventure of theorizing the engagement of theorizing." This theory of theory represented, in effect, a philosophy of social science, which was the basic genre to which Oakeshott's essay belonged. His first concern was to demonstrate that the theoretical or contemplative perspective manifested a degree of universality, irrespective of the subject matter. But although he wished to give a general account of this kind of intellectual attitude, which was manifest in both natural and social inquiry, his basic concern was with the manner in which theorizing applied to understanding human practices. He also distinguished, as his title implied, between, on the one hand, the concept of understanding as an internal feature of the "world of intelligibles" that constituted society and, on the other hand, understanding as a *theoretical* or metapractical interpretive activity. The latter, he argued, required an external "unconditional" continuing "engagement" (*theorein*) devoted to making a "going-on" (*thea*) in the world of human conduct less "mysterious." This search for clarity and illumination was for Oakeshott an end in itself with its own intrinsic demands and criteria of success, which in some respects resembled Weber's description of the spirit and commitments involved in "science as a vocation." The result of any theoretical "inquiry" (*theoria*) would be a "*theorem*" or specification of, and claim about, the phenomenon toward which the act of theorizing was directed. Oakeshott, in his footnotes, drew on the classical Greek terminology in part because he wished to stress the difference between theorizing and its product—a distinction obscured by the uses of the English word "theory." But in the case of

social inquiry, theorizing, he maintained, was something quite different than it was in natural science. This difference, however, had less to do with methods, or even the nature of social phenomena per se, than with the unique *relationship* between social inquiry and its subject matter.

Like Weber, Oakeshott argued that in the case of the study of human conduct a specific intelligible event or "going-on" was, in one respect, "given" and constituted a "fact" prefigured in the world of conventional objects in which it resided. The identity of human conduct was not, in the first instance, a function of the concepts of theoretical inquiry but of the "self-understanding" of the social actor. The facts of human conduct, unlike those of natural science, acquired meaning prior to the performance of social scientific theorizing. Nevertheless, a theoretical designation (*theorema*), which created distinctiveness among the "confusion" of all that happens in social life, could not ultimately be specified "independent of reflective consciousness" manifest in social inquiry. Although, in one sense, a "theory," as a product, was not constitutive of "another thing," theorizing was itself a particular or special kind of "going-on" and activity that "supervenes" in the course of its "critical" interrogation of the object. Consequently, despite the preconstituted meaning of social events, there could "be no absolute distinction between 'fact' and 'theorem'" in the continuing process of "unconditional, critical engagement." For Oakeshott, social inquiry involved a constant dialectical relationship between preconceptualized social particulars and their reconstruction in the language of social science. Failure to recognize the difference only led to obfuscation (I.1).

From the beginning of the essay, then, Oakeshott made it clear that there were three realms of discourse involved: (1) theorizing theory, that is, a general philosophical account of theoretical endeavors such as history and social science; (2) the conduct of theory or social inquiry; and (3) the "intelligibles" that were the subject matter of theory. Within each realm there were, he claimed, "platforms" of "conditional understanding." This was particularly true of theory, and despite the attachment of inquiry to the regulative ideal of "definitive understanding," understanding as a theoretical project should be and, he argued, must be in principle, a never-ending and evolving endeavor. But, for Oakeshott, each realm also in some respects represented successive, but mutually exclusive, levels of analysis. *Theorizing theory*—that is, philosophical analysis—produced an understanding that was, at least in one sense, superior to that involved in the *activity of theory*, just as the theoretical understanding of human conduct was a reflective advance over the indigenous understanding of social

actors. However, according to Oakeshott, each level was autonomous, despite the complex relationships among them (I.1).

Oakeshott claimed that in the case of social inquiry the initial theoretical "platform" was achieved by a basic "recognition" and "identification" of a phenomenon. This, however, required, from the outset, the imposition of conceptual meaning and significance through the "construction" of "ideal characters" that allowed a measure of generalization and gave rise to a "reflective composition" or "sketch." Such a tentative "conceptual identity" was necessarily an abstraction composed from a "selection" of various characteristics. Such an identity, operating at various levels, was always a "unity of particularity and genericity," even though the tension between the specific and the abstract was, paradoxically, always "imperfectly resolved." The next "platform" of theorizing required investigating relationships between identities and constructing a "map," but it also entailed conditional "verdicts" and a "diagnosis" with necessary normative and evaluative implications (I.2). At this point, the theorist might choose to move beyond the "prison" of mere description to a yet higher platform of explanatory "postulates" (I.3). This latter task was what Oakeshott set for himself in part II of the essay when he turned from an *analysis* of the nature of theorizing to the issue of how one might go about the *performance* of theorizing, but he also stressed once more that it was necessary to recognize that theorizing, as such, branched into two different "categories" or "orders of inquiry."

One branch was devoted to the interpretive understanding of human "actions," "practices," and "artefacts," while the other was directed toward things such as the objects of natural science, which were not in themselves "exhibitions of intelligence." Like some of his contemporaries and later social scientists who explored issues surrounding the explanation of human action, he suggested that these categories might in certain instances be predicated on the same "thing," which could be conceived differently—such as, he suggested, the distinction between a "wink" and a "blink"—but these realms of investigation were distinguished by different "idioms of inquiry" or forms of "science" and theory, which constituted independent systems of theorems and presupposed the ontological autonomy of each sphere. Unlike some arguments advanced in both philosophy and social theory during this period, as an attempt to reconcile conflicts between positivist and antipositivist images of social science, Oakeshott did not suggest that "explanation" and "interpretation" were complementary ways of illuminating the same social fact. And he especially emphasized that as difficult as it might be, in the case of phenomena involving such things as "reasons, beliefs, and practices," to develop a system of

postulates and adequate "instruments" of understanding, it was a mistake to seek "all-purpose 'sciences.'" Such a search only led to the kind of "categorical muddle" and "masquerade of categories" represented in much of contemporary psychology and sociology. In these fields, there was, he claimed, a failure to recognize that "psychological mechanisms cannot be the motives of actions or the reasons for belief" and that there are no general laws governing "social systems."

What Oakeshott singled out as an "unambiguous intellectual engagement" was what he termed the project of "theorizing conduct *inter hominess*." Human conduct involved "expressions of intelligence" manifest in "actions and utterances in respect of being subscriptions to procedures or 'practices' comprised of rules and rule-like considerations." In addition to this general distinction between theorizing natural and conventional objects, Oakeshott insisted that it was impossible simultaneously to "use" and "interrogate" a science. The *philosophy* of social science, that is, theorizing theory, and the *conduct* of social science were two different practices—or at least different orders of discourse—and the role of the former was to understand rather than, he emphasized, dictate to the latter. And just as the interrogation and the practice of science were two different activities, he stressed the difference between the theory and the practice of human conduct, and he also maintained that it was inappropriate to cross this boundary. Theorizing theory, engaging in theory, and participating in the practices of society were, despite possible relationships among them, different and logically mutually exclusive spheres. He had very definite views, however, about these relationships. Although in a cognitive sense, theorists could claim "a superior platform of understanding," they had no basis for considering themselves superior with respect to the practices that they studied or "able to provide a *substitute* for the activities of map-makers or agents in conduct, to have the authority to seize the helm in their concerns, or to be persuaded by others that this is the case." Oakeshott suggested that although, in various ways, his general analysis owed much to the work of Plato, he diverged in that he rejected the urge to return to the cave and replace the perceptions of the inhabitants with the more "definitive understanding" of the theorist (I.4). The kind of theoretical intervention that Weber ultimately, but indirectly, hoped to achieve was what Oakeshott explicitly rejected, yet this difference had little bearing on their mutual grasp of what was fundamentally involved in understanding human conduct.

After his general exploration of the nature of theorizing and the distinction between forms of the activity, Oakeshott addressed in part II, the longest section of the essay, the specific act of theorizing as directed

toward the "identity of 'human conduct'" and the "postulates" regarding what was peculiarly involved in theorizing this category of phenomena. He engaged in an examination of the appropriate "idiom" for talking about human conduct as well as an extensive elaboration of what might be called a phenomenology of human action. The concept of human conduct was, he claimed, itself an "ideal character" or metapractical category of "goings-on" rather than a particular spatially and temporally located social act or practice. It was an ideal typification referring to individual agents, endowed with the capacity for "reflective intelligence," responding to a "contingent situation by doing or saying *this* as opposed to *that* in relation to an imagined or wished-for outcome and in relation, also, to some understood conditions." Human conduct consisted of actors engaged in "enacting and disclosing" themselves through mutual "transactions" and through the performance of acts and utterances marked by such characteristics as belief, deliberation, choice, decision, and motive. This realm also included "fabricating" facts and institutions, which were manifestations of conduct and potential objects of social inquiry. He again stressed, however, the fundamental difference between the conduct or "doings" of the theorist and those of the "performer" of conduct as well as between the different platforms of understanding and action that they occupied. He also claimed once more that "a theoretical understanding cannot itself be an engagement in the conduct being theorized," because "the theorist of conduct is not, as such, a 'doer,' and the theoretical understanding of conduct cannot itself be theorized in terms of doing." Although he recognized that in one general sense theorizing was itself a *kind* of "doing, his point was that there was a logical and practical difference between, for example, "theorizing a comic act" and the act itself, that is, making a joke (II.1).

Social actors or agents were, in effect, "composed" of mutual understandings, and they inhabited contexts of "intelligible *pragmata*" consisting of such understandings. Although, in principle, agents were free in the sense that human agency entailed contingency and choice, they were, despite the capacity for innovation and change, bound by the context of conventions in which they operated. Even though many actions were conventional, in the narrow sense of that term, and derived from habit rather than explicit forethought or premeditation, a large portion of human conduct was devoted to effecting "wished" outcomes and the use of "persuasive speech" directed toward achieving those outcomes (II.2, 3). Like Weber, Oakeshott stressed that an agent's assessment of a situation and response to it were not "subjective" in the sense of ineffable feelings or "neuro-physiological" events but rather were based on comprehensible

"understandings" that were publicly meaningful and not reducible to some general egocentric and rational calculus of interest or means to an end (II.4).

What joined agents in conduct were not simply ad hoc encounters but, more typically, participation in a "practice," which was "a set of considerations, manners, uses, observances, customs, standards, canons, maxims, principles, rules, and offices specifying useful procedures or denoting obligations or duties which relate to human actions and utterances." These ranged from the narrow rules of "mere protocol to what may be called a 'way of life,'" and they might "acquire the firmness of an 'institution,' or they may remain relatively plastic." Oakeshott claimed that the "two most important practices" in any society were the inclusive ones consisting of "a common tongue and language of moral converse." He discussed the latter in great detail, because, he claimed, it provided the principal manner of "self-disclosure" and "self-enactment." But despite his emphasis on practices, Oakeshott insisted, like Weber, that social ontology was ultimately a matter of individual agents and that there was nothing in fact "to correspond with the vile expression 'social choice'" or with terms such as "society," "man," or "community." Weber and Oakeshott both recognized the ultimate particularity and historicity of social facts. Finally, he stressed once again that despite his use of terms such as "reflective consciousness" and "deliberation," he was not taking an "intellectualist" stance that denied habitual or even "irrational" conduct. "Reflection" in this instance did not refer to "goings-on" that preceded action but rather represented the "conditions of action," which included such things as a reflective capacity (II.5).

In part III of the essay, Oakeshott passed from the general "postulates" of inquiring into human conduct to an engagement of the issue of how "to theorize an already identified action or utterance" as a "substantive performance" undertaken by a particular agent (III.1, 2). This was what he designated as an "*eventum*" and a matter of "contingent" relationships involving the "particularity" of "individual occurrences" and their conditions. Here it was necessary, he maintained, to move beyond the imposition of ideal characters to a more detailed "contextual" understanding where conduct was encountered in terms of its preconstituted "conventionality." This, however, ultimately, he argued, required putting a phenomenon "into a story" that functioned as a theorem, and although it had "no overall meaning," it was a "narrative" in which the object was featured as an "intelligible event." Although such a "story" could be used for various instrumental purposes, conveying a message other than for the production of intelligibility was to relinquish what Oakeshott referred

to as the "historical attitude." Thus "the theoretical understanding of a substantive action or utterance was in principle, and in the end, a form of 'historical' understanding." (III.3).

The book in which Oakeshott published the essay exemplified the levels of discourse and the relationship between them that he had elaborated. Part I consisted of the present essay in which he undertook the tasks of theorizing theory and specifying what was involved in theorizing human conduct. In part II, he constructed the ideal character of a "civil association" or "civil condition," and in part III, he examined the evolution of the modern European state as a historical instance of this ideal type. This is some respects resembled what Weber had undertaken in works such as the *Protestant Ethic*.

What is most important about the essays by Weber and Oakeshott is neither their particular, and sometimes conflicting, motives and audiences nor their often different conclusions about the proper relationship between philosophy, social science, and social practices. What is important is their explicit recognition of the autonomy of these practices and the logical and existential differences that characterize these orders of discourse. They both realized that it is not possible to talk meaningfully about relationships without recognizing difference, and they indicated the manner in which the cognitive paradox entailed a practical problem. Their work not only offers a benchmark for thinking about these matters but also advances specific arguments that can provide the beginning of a conversation that is more fruitful than much of the literature that so often, in the course of pursuing some strategy, has attempted in one way or another to suppress rather than confront the paradoxes of social science.

Their analyses were arguably more complete and systematic than other literature advocating what would come to be referred to as an interpretive form of social science, but they were seldom enthusiastically embraced. The principal reason for the tentative, and sometimes almost hostile, reception was not only that they challenged the dominance of positivist renditions of social inquiry but also that, in the end, they did not offer what many interpretive theorists really sought. What was often viewed as missing was a foundation for a critical social science and a critical philosophy of social science that would contradict Oakeshott's bias against intervention and that was more robust than Weber's tentative hopes for negotiation between theory and practice. For many, on both the left and right, Weber and Oakeshott were ideologically suspect and did not sufficiently underwrite the mission of social theory. What both Weber and Oakeshott recognized, however, was that there was no philosophical or

epistemological answer to what is typically referred to as the theory/ practice problem.

One classic kind of response to these questions has been to claim, like Peter Winch, that there are no definite general criteria for resolving a conflict between the conceptual domains, and the respective ontologies and epistemologies, which often divide social science and its subject matter. A similar position was reflected in Thomas Kuhn's work, which not only emphasized the incommensurability of the domains of facticity constituted by different scientific theories or paradigms in natural science but also strongly implied that the philosophy of science as a metapractice had little to offer to the practice of science. Certainly Winch, and arguably Kuhn, was influenced by Wittgenstein's remarks "on certainty," where he claimed that criteria of "truth" belong to our "frame of reference" and that conflicts between frameworks, whether within a practice or between a metapractice and its object of inquiry, can only be settled by "persuasion" (1969, 83, 262). For much of philosophy, and particularly for fields such as social science and political theory, this kind of argument has not been easily digested. The typical response to what is often pejoratively referred to as "relativism," putatively represented in the work of individuals such as Weber, Winch, and Kuhn, has been a variety of claims to the effect that metapractical interpretations should, and in one way or another can, trump the perceptions and conceptions embedded in the practices that constitute their subject matter (e.g., Wilson 1970; Hollis and Lukes 1982; Margolis, Krausz, and Burian 1986). This position was manifest not only in positivist claims about the objective and scientific character of social science but also in various arguments claiming the authority of moral philosophy. This stance is also evident in some more moderate claims to the effect that the detached position of social science ensures the superior objectivity and therapeutic value of metapractical reflection (Taylor 1971). During the middle years of the twentieth century, particularly in fields such as political science, there was an extended debate about both the epistemic bases of social science and its practical relationship to its subject matter. The fundamental issue involved the question of whether there was some form of scientific explanation applicable to both the natural and social sciences or whether the nature of social phenomena demanded an autonomous method, which was often referred to as interpretive (e.g., Rabinow and Sullivan 1979; Hiley, Bohman, and Shusterman 1991). One of the ironies that characterized this debate was that many of those on each side assumed that their respective answer provided a superior basis for normative metapractical judgment. This assumption may have been more latent on the part of those who embraced scientism,

but as I have already stressed, the pursuit of the title of "science" among the social sciences had, from their very origins, always emanated from a concern about achieving practical authority. And those who opposed applying what was putatively advanced as the methods of natural science often argued that an interpretive approach had greater significance for the relevance of social science. Seldom did "interpretivists" embrace a position such as that of Winch, and in fact most, like Habermas (1971, 1984), specifically noted the deficiency of such a position, because they claimed it did not provide a sufficient basis for a critical and universally rational perspective (e.g., Bernstein 1976; Apel 1985). The idea of social science as an interpretive enterprise was, for the most part, as hostile to what was pejoratively characterized as "relativism" as the stronger visions of critical theory that wished to support the idea that metapractices occupied a distinct position of epistemic privilege. Individuals such as Karl Popper (1970) argued that "relativism" was a danger to the objectivity of natural science just as political theorists such as Strauss and Allan Bloom (1988) argued that it would infect society. What was really at stake in all these arguments, however, was actually less a concern about philosophical relativism leading to political, or scientific, nihilism than a wish to assure the cognitive superiority of metapractices and their claim to adduce standards of judgment that transcended those of their object of inquiry (Gunnell 1998, Ch. 3).

During the last quarter of the twentieth century, the growing intellectual distance between mainstream political science and political theory, which marked the postbehavioral era and its de facto partition between empirical and normative studies, led to a decline in discussions about the nature of social scientific inquiry and its relationship to politics. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, however, the principal terms of the mid-twentieth-century debates resurfaced once again. There often seemed, nevertheless, to be a dim historical memory of the details of the earlier controversy, and the consequence has been that while recent discussions have reawakened the discipline's concern about these matters, there has been little advance in the analysis of the issues. There is once again a widespread concern with "making social science matter" (e.g., Flyvjberg 2001; Schram and Caterino 2006), which was manifest in intellectual insurgencies such as the Perestroika movement in American political science (e.g., Monroe 2005). This movement, as well as similar rebellions in other areas of contemporary social science, drew on diverse elements of philosophy, ranging from Aristotle to Pierre Bourdieu, as it sought to elevate what was often referred to as *phronesis*, or practical knowledge, over the pursuit of pure science. This sentiment, however, was hardly novel.

Although it might appear that the behavioral era represented a hiatus in the practical concerns of political science, a deeper examination of that period reveals that the ultimate purpose behind the enthusiasm for, what Easton and others referred to as the pursuit of, "pure science" was to sustain the authority of political science in the area of public policy. This was what enabled the sudden dramatic shift in Easton's 1969 presidential address to the American Political Science Association and his proclamation of a "new revolution" in the discipline that would change the distribution of emphasis from theory to practice—from a "rigorously scientific discipline modeled after the methodology of the natural sciences" to a "credo of relevance" whereby the pursuit of "the discovery of demonstrable basic truths about politics" would be subservient to the application of currently available knowledge to the "problems of the day." As in Easton's address, this practical concern has usually been tied to an increased emphasis on enhancing methodological pluralism and, particularly, to a call for incorporating more interpretive or qualitative modes of inquiry. Even when political science might have appeared to be most absorbed with establishing itself as an empirical science of politics, and even opposed to advancing value judgments, this was largely because it equated scientific description with an empirical validation of democracy and believed that the scientific stance entailed social authority. Contemporary discussions have seldom manifested much sensitivity to the broader history of social science and the fact that this history has manifested a genetic, but often frustrated, propensity to seek practical as well as cognitive authority over its subject matter. The problem is not rooted in some recent circumstantial matter arising from the alleged dominance of an approach such as rational choice analysis or a sudden lapse in the civic consciousness of social scientists. And embracing a more "interpretive" approach to social inquiry does not automatically provide an answer to the practical problem of the relationship between social science and politics.

One of the ironies attaching to allusions to Aristotle's image of *Phronesis* and to urging a more "phronetic" approach to contemporary social inquiry is that there was in fact little viable place for such a science in the context in which he wrote. Aristotle struggled with the issue of exactly how philosophy and politics could be reconciled, and although he conceived of political science as a practical science, defined by having "an end in action," *Phronesis* was prudence or practical wisdom as opposed to abstract or contemplative knowledge, which was the province of philosophy or *Sophia*. It was hardly clear in Aristotle's context exactly how philosophy, political science, and politics were or could be related, and it is no less clear today. To argue that social science should

be more "phronetic" seems to suggest, maybe quite contrary to Aristotle's position, that a metapractice should in some fundamental manner either participate in or displace practical judgment. And to claim that this can be in part facilitated by a more interpretive turn in these disciplines is still to suggest some intrinsic superiority for the judgments of social science as a justification for theoretical intervention in practical matters. My point is neither to support nor to reject such a claim but rather to explore the complexities of the issue. Although there is a tendency to assume a dichotomy between interpretive and scientific approaches to social inquiry, the essays by Weber and Oakeshott forcefully demonstrate that all social science, as a metapractical endeavor, is interpretive, because the object of inquiry is conceptually preconstituted. Whether so-called qualitative methods, as opposed to quantitative analysis, are more appropriate is debatable, especially since these categories are often not well-defined, but methods do not alter the interpretive position of social science. There are, however, two contrasting but equally problematic attitudes toward the investigation of social phenomena that inhibit coming to grips with the issue of interpretation.

One attitude is rooted in the assumption that such phenomena are in some sense simply "there" to be approached by various methods. There is, at present, a great deal of emphasis on interdisciplinary forms of study and on a rejection of the kind of specialization that has created what is sometimes referred to as divided knowledge. This interdisciplinary enthusiasm, however, is sometimes not carefully considered and is advocated on the assumption that various disciplines and methodologies represent different perspectives on the same phenomena, when actually what might be more typically involved are different theoretical accounts of, or assumptions about, the nature of the object under investigation and correspondingly different views about how to approach that subject matter. If, however, an interdisciplinary ethic is predicated on the realization that the social sciences are bound together by the fact that they must confront the same basic theoretical questions as well as the same fundamental issues regarding their cognitive and practical relationship to their subject matter, the valorization of interdisciplinary study not only makes sense but is crucial. The other attitude, which is also sometimes reflected in calls for interdisciplinary study, is based on the contrary assumption that social phenomena have no distinct identity and autonomy apart from what is imparted by an act of interpretation. There is often a tendency, in the wake of arguments such as those of Jacques Derrida (e.g., 1987), to suggest that each act of interpretation reconstitutes its subject matter. This assumes that social or literary phenomena are open, or hostage, to infinite

variations of meaning and thus that the more viewpoints the better. The claim that interpretation yields the meaning of its object is, of course, true in the sense that interpretation, in one respect, conceptually *re*-presents what it is directed toward; but in another important respect, as Weber and Oakeshott both recognized, interpretations come up abruptly, both cognitively and practically, against the conceptual structure and content of the practices about which they speak. While the claims of natural science, religion, and even politics *do* in effect create their subject matter, those of metapractices such as social science are constrained by the conceptually and existentially preformed character of their subject matter. Much of what comes to light in an analysis of the work of Weber and Oakeshott is encountered, as I will argue in Chapter 5, in the work of Winch who provided an important bridge to the social scientific significance of the work of Wittgenstein. There is, however, a continuing inhibition to coming to grips with this literature and, particularly, a deep-seated urge to escape what is conceived to be the constraints implied by the theoretical autonomy of conventional phenomena.

Many philosophers and social theorists are still reluctant to let go of the idea that conventions must be explained or justified by something supra- or transconventional that can also underwrite metapractical normative judgment. One strategy has been to adopt some form of metaphysical realism and posit a transcendental foundation. Another strategy, which has been most recently expressed in the turn to cognitive science and which has been at the root of political science's century-old fascination with psychology, has been to seek a naturalistic basis for explaining social phenomena. There is a basic conceptual mistake involved in both of these strategies, and it is one to which Wittgenstein paid a great deal of attention. The mistake is to take a term such as "real" or "mind" and look for the object to which it refers. Wittgenstein was not alone in seeing this problem. J. L. Austin pointed out that "there are no criteria to be laid down in general for distinguishing the real from the not real" (1962, 76), and Gilbert Ryle demolished the idea of the mind as a homunculus to which the senses reported their findings as if they were "foreign correspondents" (1954, 99). Political theorists continue to be trapped by these illusions, but the bait is fear of conventionality and the hope for solace in a realm that lies beneath or above it.

CHAPTER 3

FEAR OF CONVENTIONS

The idea of "agreement with reality" does not have any clear application.
—Wittgenstein

No supposition seems to me more natural than that there is no process in the brain correlated with . . . thinking; so that it would be possible to read off thought processes from brain processes.

—Wittgenstein

IN RECENT YEARS, AN INCREASING NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS IN social science and social theory have subscribed to certain elements of philosophical realism as a metatheoretical account of social scientific inquiry. Some claim that the adoption of a realist philosophy can, at last, put social science on a truly scientific foundation, and others profess the belief that it can underwrite a critical perspective and provide a basis of normative judgment, which would usher in a new era of human freedom. Many of the arguments in favor of realism, however, involve less the advocacy of a specific philosophically identifiable position than the creation of an amalgam consisting of various, and not always convincingly compatible, species of realist philosophy as well as elements of what are often considered contrary positions such as constructivism and hermeneutics. Contemporary social scientific versions of realism may provide some basis for countering the persistent attachment in social science to elements of positivist and orthodox empiricist images of scientific explanation, but many of the individuals who have turned to realism have found themselves enmeshed in many of the same problems that, during the middle of the twentieth century, attended the embrace of positivism and characterized the behavioral movement in political science.

Whether social scientists have wished to emulate or distance themselves from the methods of natural science, they have characteristically, for at least half a century, turned to the philosophy of science for an account of the nature of scientific explanation. During the nineteenth and

early twentieth centuries, images of explanation in natural science were somewhat vaguely depicted in the literature of both philosophy and social science. By the middle of the twentieth century, however, logical positivism and logical empiricism (L P/E), represented by philosophers such as Rudolf Carnap, Carl Hempel, and Herbert Feigl, had been transplanted from Europe to the United States, where this school of thought not only contributed to the institutionalization of the philosophy of science as a distinct field of study but also established a philosophically dominant reconstruction of the logic and epistemology of natural science. This account, which stressed the unity of scientific method, became authoritative for disciplines such as political science, which, for various reasons, were anxious about their scientific identity. If political scientists, during the behavioral era, had repaired to the philosophy of science merely for rhetorical validation, it might not have been any more significant than the potted accounts of scientific method that are typically inserted into introductions to textbooks in the natural sciences. Social scientists, however, often viewed the philosophy of science not only as a description of scientific practice but also as the basis of methods and precepts involving, what was often referred to as, "theory-construction." Philosophies of science are not the foundation of scientific inquiry but, instead, post hoc metatheoretical reconstructions of scientific explanation, which social scientists have extrapolated into normative claims about the standards of inquiry.

The philosophy of science is not simply an evolutionary branch of philosophy. This form of discourse originated as an indigenous scientific rhetoric that, in the work of Descartes, Newton and others, was attached to various substantive scientific claims and designed both to valorize certain scientific theories and to justify claims to scientific knowledge in opposition to rival, and often religious, authorities. When, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, natural science became increasingly secure and paradigmatic, these epistemological arguments began to take shape as an autonomous discourse. They were, however, still often tied to specific scientific theories and, in the work of individuals such as August Comte and John Stuart Mill, were further deployed as justifications for the authority of social science and for certain reformist social programs. It is especially ironic that *political* scientists have failed to recognize the ideological character and background of the philosophy of science that was still apparent in the origins of logical positivism. Positivism, as expressed in the 1929 Manifesto of the Vienna Circle (Hahn, Neurath, and Carnap 1996), was devoted to challenging traditional intellectual and social authority and to justifying what was referred to as the

"scientific view of the world" as well as the liberal and socialist political agendas for which it was viewed as the vanguard. By the time that L P/E arrived in the United States, however, its past was obscured, and in the American political and academic context, its ideological associations were sublimated and transformed.

Although L P/E stressed the nomological and deductive character of explanation, it posited observation, based on an account of some form of immediate experience of facts, both as the foundation of scientific knowledge and as the basis for verifying or falsifying empirical generalizations. Theories were, in the early years, largely construed as somewhat heuristic or instrumental cognitive devices for generating descriptive and predictive statements about observable phenomena rather than as claims that, themselves, could be judged as true or false. Some philosophers even toyed with the idea that theories, once they had functioned as devices for accessing and economically organizing and describing facts, were eliminable, but what Hempel termed the "theoretician's dilemma" (Hempel 1965)—that is, the practical need for theories despite their diminished cognitive status—would be a persistent problem. The exact nature of what was taken to be the observational domain was contested and elusive and ranged from phenomenal sense-data to gross physical objects. The attempt to specify such a domain drew positivism to the work of Bertrand Russell and especially to the early work of Ludwig Wittgenstein, but it was in large measure the failure to secure this theoretically untainted foundation and the shift in Wittgenstein's position that, beginning in the middle of the twentieth century, led to the decline of L P/E.

By this point, however, some of the basic doctrines of L P/E had become deeply embedded in the practices of social science, and this was particularly apparent in the emphasis on the priority of "facts" and in the idea of theories as instrumental conceptual frameworks or constructs for the description and explanation of epistemologically prior data. At the very apex of its influence, however, the basic tenets of L P/E were challenged by individuals as diverse in some respects as W. V. O. Quine (1953), Popper (1965), Kuhn (1962), and Paul Feyerabend (1981). These criticisms, which focused on the character of scientific theory and called into question what Quine referred to as the "dogmas of empiricism," were embraced by some opponents of the behavioral program in mainstream political science. Although by the last part of the twentieth century L P/E had largely been discredited in philosophy, the remnants remained sedimented in much of the language of social science. Eventually, however, social scientists who had taken their cues from L P/E suffered an identity crisis. The collapse of the hegemony of L P/E in philosophy was not,

however, followed by the emergence of another clearly dominant school of thought, but scientific realism became one of the principal contenders. And a number of social scientists have embraced some version of this image of science.

Although empiricism, because of its emphasis on observable facts, has sometimes been equated with realism, contemporary versions of scientific realism, as well as nearly all forms of postpositivism, are defined in part by a challenge to the empiricist account of scientific theory. Realists reject the basic assumptions behind the instrumentalist interpretation of theory and claim that scientific theories are true by virtue of the extent to which they accord with often unobservable structures of reality. They also sometimes claim that their rendition of scientific explanation is not only a description of scientific practice but itself also a kind of empirical hypothesis that is supported by the practical success, and progress, of science in explaining, predicting, and controlling natural events. Although realism involves a rejection of traditional empiricism, its basic philosophical aspirations have been largely the same, that is, to demonstrate how scientific knowledge is possible and authoritative. Philosophical realism has, however, been opposed by forms of antirealism that, while also unsympathetic to traditional empiricism, are skeptical of the metaphysical premises of realism as well as of the claim that the truth of scientific theories, and the doctrine of realism itself, can be demonstrated by the history and practice of science. Antirealists, such as Michael Dummett (1978, 1991) argue that much of the conduct of natural science is based on antirealist premises. Antirealists do not revert to the idea that theories are merely tools for apprehending observable facts, and like realists, they maintain that theories are often actually about unobservable entities. They claim, however, that the value of theories cannot be based on an abstract criterion such as correspondence with the "world" or, like the "constructive empiricism" of Bas van Fraasen (1980), that good theories are not necessarily literally true. Both realists, and antirealists such as Larry Laudan (1977, 1990), are on the whole, however, worried about arguments such as those of Kuhn (1962), which they claim threaten to undermine the objectivity of science by claiming the incommensurability of scientific theories.

These objections to work such as that of Kuhn are, however, something of a red herring, and those who accuse him not only of undermining science but also of carrying a conservative ideological message are far off base in interpreting his work in this manner (Gunnell 2009). It is not the objectivity of science that is at issue but rather a particular philosophical idea of objectivity and the capacity of philosophy to specify scientific criteria of commensurability. Although Kuhn is sometimes

categorized, and criticized, as an idealist because of his argument that factual statements are theoretically constituted, his position, as well as that of individuals such as Wilfrid Sellars (1963), who coined the phrase the "myth of the given" in his critique of the central tenet of positivism, Richard Rorty (1979), and Nelson Goodman (1972, 1978), might be best described as *theoretical realism*. They all agree that what we mean by the "world" and "reality" is basically a function of operative scientific theories and that it makes little sense to speak of an unrepresented world to which scientific concepts must ultimately correspond. There has been a kind of mythology that has been attached to Kuhn's work that ascribes to him an inversion of the positivist theory/fact dichotomy and the view that facts are "theory-laden," but this phrase, once used by Norwood Russell Hanson (1958) but not signifying what critics often impute, misses Kuhn's primary point, that is, that theories in science are claims specifying what "really" exists and the manner of its behavior and that philosophy has no basis for positing a more profound ontology or account of reality and criteria of scientific truth.

Most self-ascribed forms of realism remain tied to the basic problematic of representational philosophy and the correspondence theory of truth, which pivot on the epistemological problem that emerged with Locke and modern empiricism, of how thought and language make contact with an external world. Philosophers as diverse in many ways as Wittgenstein and Donald Davidson (1980, 1984, 1994) have fundamentally called into question the basic premises of representational philosophy. Kuhn's contribution to the transformation of the philosophy of science did much to propagate the core assumptions of antirepresentationalism, which Rorty summed up in his critique of philosophy's claim to have the capacity to specify the basis on which mind could mirror nature. And now even a philosopher such as Hilary Putnam, who had done so much to bolster and popularize the realist position, has, despite some lingering differences with individuals such as Rorty, rejected such a bifurcation of language and the world or at least challenged the idea that philosophy can supply some general answer to the problem. For these philosophers, theories are not claims *about* the world, and theories are not viewed by these individuals, as some critics argue, as *creating* the world. Rather, theories are construed as claims regarding what *constitutes* the world and are often incommensurable with respect to both past theories and competing reality or world-type claims such as those of religion and common sense. For these individuals there is not, and cannot be, any general philosophical or empirical answer to questions such as why one theory displaces another. Each transformation carries with it its own story of conflict, persuasion,

and resolution. If, for example, we detailed the dramatic shift in the middle of the twentieth century that brought plate tectonics and continental drift to prominence in geology, it would be close to meaningless to say, from a philosophical standpoint, that the underlying reason was that the theory corresponded more closely to reality. The term "reality" simply began to refer to a different concept.

Although L P/E is now philosophically obsolescent, there has, at least since the mid-1990s, been increasing difficulty in assessing exactly where the current weight of opinion resides in the philosophy of science and where the lines are to be drawn as far as parsing the arguments within and between versions of realism and antirealism. Some have argued that the only consensus in the philosophy of science is with respect to the assumption that logical positivism is dead (Boyd, Gasper, and Trout 1991). Arthur Fine has suggested that both realism and antirealism are basically obsolescent and that the best approach is to adopt what he has termed the "natural ontological attitude" (1984), which amounts to the suggestion that we should accept scientific claims as true, much in the same sense that we accept commonsense assertions. Realism, antirealism, and L P/E are, however, all representationalist philosophies, and the initial burden in all three cases is to demonstrate that the very questions that they pose about truth and reality are, outside a particular scientific context, philosophically meaningful. The decline of L P/E has, however, left social science with considerable perplexity about its scientific identity, and it has left critics of a "scientific" approach to inquiry with an anomalous target. Although this should suggest a need to revaluate the relationship between social science and the philosophy of science, the situation has, in some quarters, prompted a search for a new metatheory and rhetoric of inquiry—a new scientific ideology. Such a project has, however, emanated less from mainstream political science, in which ideas, or at least slogans, characteristic of L P/E remain dominant, than from a new wave of critics who for various reasons not only find realism attractive but also feel the pangs of scientific insecurity.

The recent popularity of philosophical realism is a significant example of the attempt to reestablish the scientific identity of social science while incorporating recent calls for methodological pluralism, interpretive approaches to inquiry, and more critical forms of social science. But despite all the emphasis in this literature on "putting ontology" before epistemology, these arguments are basically metatheoretical and focused, like earlier work, on constructing an image of a form of inquiry that would provide an epistemological guide to the conduct of research and provide a validation of claims to knowledge. In addition to political

theory, another subfield of political science in which the turn to realism has been apparent is international relations, which has characteristically struggled with identity issues. Just as there is an intellectual lag between philosophy and political theory, the study of international relations tends to trail the discourse of political theory, and in recent years, theorists of international relations have been among the most eager advocates of scientific and critical realism (e.g., Wendt 1999; Patomäki 2001; Wight 2006). The appropriation of realism as a metatheory often manifests, quite starkly, a lack of understanding regarding the character and history of the philosophy of natural science and its applicability to the study of social phenomena. Proponents of realism have also neither adequately articulated and defended this philosophical position nor distinguished it from other perspectives. The most recent literature is to some extent a tributary of an antecedent attempt to apply philosophical realism to social theory (e.g., Keat and Urry 1975; Outhwaite 1975; Layder 1990; Sayer 2000). For at least two decades, a realist perspective has been part of the conversations of political theory (e.g., Shapiro 1990, 2005), but it points to the problematic character of the relationship between philosophy and social science as well as difficulties endemic to philosophical realism as a general position and, particularly, as an approach to the philosophy of science (Gunnell 1998, Ch. 4). Many social scientists who, during the last decade, have become proponents of realism have typically continued to fail to understand fully the character of this philosophy and the debates that have surrounded it. Borrowing from philosophy often continues to be a selective and unreflective endeavor, and the problems involved need to be revisited.

There have been many varieties of philosophical realism (Harré 1986a). As Putnam once noted, it has displayed many "faces" (1987), and he himself, in the course of his long career, has exemplified many of those countenances. Although these visages are not all easily differentiated, it is possible to make some basic distinctions. Ontological or *metaphysical* realism involves the broad, and sometimes ambiguous, claim that there exists, what is often referred to as, a "mind-independent" reality (e.g. Trigg 1989), which is the basis for truth-claims. Most individuals who subscribe to the specific label of *scientific* realism accept a version of this assumption and argue that scientific theories, including statements about unobservable entities, are true or false by virtue of the extent to which they correspond to such a "reality." Some philosophers, such as Michael Devitt (1991), stress the difference between the existence of both scientific and commonsense objects and the way in which they are conceptualized, but Devitt is also a reductionist who claims that all real objects are

basically physical in nature and ultimately explained by physical laws. Although it is admitted that this "world" of objects cannot be articulated apart from the claims of science, as set forth at any particular time, it is posited as a transcendent standard, which is assumed to be more than a regulative ideal. Most realists embrace both *semantic* realism, or the idea that truth is a correspondence between language and reality, as well as *methodological* realism, or the idea that the basic goal of science is truth rather than "saving the appearances" by accounting for and predicting the behavior of observable phenomena.

The normative language and tone of L P/E may have belied the claim of individuals such as Hempel that their goal was neither to judge nor to instruct scientific practice, but today, most philosophers of science (maybe with the exception of some of those who follow Popper) do not present their work as a model for guiding the practice of science. To the extent that recent social scientific invocations of realism point to the deficiencies of the positivist metatheory, such as the instrumental account of theories, and its liabilities when applied to social inquiry, they are helpful. The claim, however, that the alternative is the introduction of another metatheory is where the position goes awry. But while positivism was largely unreflectively and incrementally absorbed into the discourse of social science, contemporary advocates of realism have much more programmatically turned to the philosophy of science. Self-ascribed "realists" in social science have also been concerned with confronting what they believe are some of the relativistic implications of certain arguments in postpositivist philosophy such as hermeneutics and postmodernism, even though, in their deference toward philosophical authority, they are also reluctant to not assimilate these views. In this respect, as well as with regard to their general belief in the need for a scientific metatheory, contemporary advocates of realism largely repeat the concerns that two generations earlier attracted social science to positivism.

Part of the criticism of positivism in social science emanated from the work of individuals such as Winch who challenged claims about the unity of science and argued for the logical autonomy of both social phenomena and social scientific inquiry. While these arguments were welcomed by critics of positivism, they also, like the work of Kuhn, called into question at least implicitly, the basis of claims to epistemic privilege on the part of metapractices such as philosophy and social science. Although Kuhn did not focus explicitly on the issue of the relationship between philosophy and the practice of science, what prompted so many strong reactions against his work was the fact that he had, in effect, transferred the issue of specifying the criteria and locus of scientific truth and reality to science.

This relegated philosophy, and metatheoretical claims in general, to what many considered to be a diminished role. It is worth emphasizing once again that the "relativism" that is attributed to positions such as that of Kuhn and Winch is not something that is a threat to the integrity of the practices that are the object of inquiry but rather a threat to the claims of cognitive authority characteristic of much of philosophy and social theory. As a position in the contest between "rationalism" and "relativism," philosophical realism not only has gained a following in the philosophy of social science but also has been invoked in a number of fields including social science, ethics, literature, and legal theory. The arguments of the philosopher John Searle are typical of this position (1995). Although Searle has advanced a systematic and detailed account of what he designates as the unique character of "mind-dependent" or "constructed" social facts, he has insisted that such facts are erected on the foundation of "mind-independent" or "brute" facts in terms of which they can be both explained and judged on the basis of a correspondence theory of truth. There is a kind of philosophical religiosity attaching to the work of individuals such as Searle who worry about the decline of modern culture in the face of relativistic tendencies. This same tone has carried over into the language of recent social scientific proponents of realism who espouse a "critical" version. It is often difficult to pinpoint exactly what is meant by "mind-independent," which is quite innocent if indicating that it makes sense to speak about what exists apart from someone perceiving it. What it sometimes seems to imply, however, is something that is conceptually independent, which is a highly vulnerable notion.

"Critical realism," which is often closely associated with "scientific realism," was a term originally coined in the early twentieth century by the American philosopher Roy Wood Sellars whose naturalistic image of science was formulated in opposition to nineteenth-century idealism. The phrase is still used to refer to a general contemporary philosophical argument (e.g., Niiniluoto 1999), but in social theory, "critical realism," in its various incarnations, involves the search for a metatheory devoted to sustaining the idea of explaining and evaluating social phenomena in terms of the existence of unobservable structures, generative mechanisms, and underlying causal relations. In some instances, this approach builds on the Marxist tradition of structural explanation, which, as in the case of V. I. Lenin (1950), invoked a realist philosophy of science to support the theory of dialectical materialism as well as entailed claims about exposing the realities behind false consciousness. Although critical realism in social science often seeks support from the literature of scientific realism, many contemporary versions of critical realism are philosophically, to say

the least, eclectic. What is involved is often less a defense of some specific version of philosophical or scientific realism than an attempt to reconcile various and sometimes contending postpositivist epistemologies, account for what is sometimes viewed as the problem of sorting out the relationship between agency and structure, and yet retain a critical perspective with practical implications.

In addition to the criticisms of empiricism and its mythology of the autonomy of facts, there have been, as I have already noted, significant challenges to representational philosophy as a whole and its search for a general interface between thought and language, on the one hand, and reality on the other hand. There is increasing doubt about the belief that it makes sense to ask, as a general *philosophical* question, how first-order discourses make contact with the "world," because they are constitutive of what we mean by the "world." Putnam has explicitly adopted Wittgenstein's view that "*essence* is expressed by grammar" and that "the harmony between thought and reality is to be found in the grammar of the language" (Wittgenstein 2001, 371; 1967, 55). Putnam argues that "there is a way to do justice to our sense that knowledge claims are responsible to reality without recoiling into metaphysical fantasy" (Putnam 1999, 4). This is what Wittgenstein was getting at when he said that contact with the world was only manifest in the "application" of "language-games" embedded in various "forms of life."

The metatheorist Christopher Norris, who has been one of the most prolific secondary summarizers and proponents of realism, is also a fierce critic of what he believes to be the relativistic implications of postmodernism and deconstructionism. He has been adamant in defending hard-core realism against a wide range of intellectual currents that he believes have threatened the idea of reality as a transcendental assumption and, consequently, the intellectual authority of social theory. Although Norris's claims once depended heavily on the work of Putnam, he now chides Putnam for what he takes to be philosophical backsliding, and he continues to press the case for traditional scientific realism and apply it to everything from literary criticism to social science (e.g., 1996, 1997, 2002). Other derivations of realism have, however, been more prone to mixing it with diverse philosophical doctrines, and by the time that realism finds its way into social theory, it has often become a tertiary rendition passed on from the philosophy of social science.

In the philosophy of social science, one prominent and influential version of critical realism, which has developed into something of an institutional academic movement, is closely associated with the work of Roy Bhaskar (e.g., Bhaskar 1973, 1979, 1986; Archer, Bhaskar, and

Lawson 1998; Danermark et al. 2002; Groff 2008). Stressing the need to take account of both the epistemological and ontological dimensions of social inquiry, Bhaskar has insisted on the independence and reality of the objects of science and their knowability, but he has also emphasized the contingent and socially situated nature of knowledge. This project was linked with and informed by a critical and normative goal. Bhaskar has drawn on a wide range of metatheoretical claims ranging from the philosophy of science to hermeneutics in order to formulate a program of critical inquiry devoted to a general project of "human emancipation." Although Bhaskar acknowledges the contribution of arguments such as that of Kuhn, which stress the inseparability of scientific concepts and the "world," he criticizes what he claims are its subjectivist and idealist implications and the inability, or more accurately the refusal, of this approach to advance a general explanation for transformations in science. The somewhat understated assumption in this case is that philosophy has the capacity to achieve such an explanation and to provide ontological and epistemological foundations for science. Bhaskar defends a form of "metaphysical realism" as a transcendental deduction that would sustain particular claims to knowledge and provide a basis for critical social inquiry. While for individuals such as Bhaskar and Norris, realism serves as a distinctly left-leaning political ideology, the same realist arguments are also typically invoked by many on the right. What joins somewhat strange bedfellows is the concern with establishing the cognitive, and practical, authority of metapractical judgment in fields such as philosophy and social science.

One recent but representative attempt to draw on realism as a way of shoring up an image of critical postpositivist social scientific inquiry is Keith Topper's claim that realism can solve the "disorder" that now attends fields such as political science (2005). Topper's work is another example of the endemically conflicted attempt to reconcile the nostalgia for an authoritative critical social science with a commitment to an interpretive humanistic mode of inquiry, which has, for a generation, manifested itself almost ritualistically in the discourse of political theory. What it has produced, however, is largely new versions of the same kinds of philosophical entanglements.

After dismissing what he claimed were the defects and relativistic dangers of Rorty's wholesale rejection of representational philosophy, Topper evoked the image of a realist "family" that was primarily defined by a synthetic reconciliation of causal explanation and hermeneutics. This was quite far removed from a philosophy of scientific realism, which could be associated with the argument of any particular individual and from any

sustained account of the concept of interpretation, but the goal, however, was nothing less than "to redeem a promise stretching back to the birth of political theory itself, namely, the promise of enlisting social inquiry in the specifically critical project of overcoming false beliefs, misunderstandings, self-defeating practices, oppressive social arrangements, asymmetrical power relations, and crippling ideological distortions, all of which intensify human misery and social injustice while diminishing human freedom and dignity" (110). As in the case of many renditions of critical theory, from the Frankfurt school forward, the assumption was that the practical problem of bringing social science to bear on social action and institutions and validating the moral claims of philosophy is primarily a matter of metatheoretical virility, that is, that there is an epistemological answer to the theory/practice problem.

In seeking a specific representative of his multifaceted image of realism, Topper offered an extended exposition of Bhaskar's work as the "exemplary articulation of its commitments," because, he claimed, it manifested "a more ecumenical line of argument, one that resists the tendency to regard hermeneutics, pragmatism, and critical realism as necessarily opposed or incommensurable research programs" (113). Although it is certainly possible to construct analytically some hypothetical mix of these positions, it is not at all clear how they could be conceived as compatible with each other, and referring to these philosophies as "research programs" signals a crucial but undefended step in the presentation. These categories do not resemble anything that someone such as Imre Lakatos might typically have referred to as a "research program" in science. Although Topper inserted a caveat regarding Bhaskar's treatment of hermeneutics and its relation to realism (which he claimed can be amended by attending to the work of individuals such as Charles Taylor, Hubert Dreyfus, and John Gaventa), he quite uncritically accepted Bhaskar's project of providing a philosophical basis for critical theory, which was predicated on "abandoning epistemological foundationalism while remaining loyal to a conception of emancipatory critique" (134). From the very beginning, during the 1960s, of extended discussions of the philosophy of science and philosophy of social science in the discourse of political and social science, a persistent line of argument has been to seek a metatheoretical reconciliation of what were presumed to be the methods of interpretive and naturalistic inquiry and to attach this to an image of critical social science. Bhaskar's project is an example of this approach, and Topper offers yet another gloss on Bhaskar's work without any confrontation with the metaphysical claims incorporated in such arguments or with the very idea

that a coherent foundation of social inquiry and basis of practical purchase can be generated by interweaving species and subspecies of metatheory.

At the heart of philosophical realism lies what John Dewey called the "quest for certainty." Speaking from a Wittgensteinian perspective, Cora Diamond, has pointed out that philosophical realism, like empiricism, adopts a position that is similar to what may be called "elementary realism" or simply the commonsense notion of the difference between subject and object, which informs most practices (1991). What is unrealistic is the attempt to transform some form of elementary realism into a metaphysical proposition. A truly "realistic spirit" in philosophy would be one that recognized the futility of that fantasy. But the metaphysical attempt to transcend conventions continues to be paralleled by the search for a comparable empirical ground, and here political theorists have, as so often in the past history of the study of politics, sought a foundation in psychology. This time, however, the attraction has been to the recent popularity of what is claimed to be the findings of cognitive neuroscience and to various, and sometimes conflicting, philosophical extrapolations from this research.

In 2001, Mark Turner, a cognitive scientist, claimed that "social science as a whole is in a position something like that of biology before the theory of evolution" and that although it was important to pursue postpositivist modes of interpretive research and especially to study what the anthropologist Clifford Geertz referred to as the "thick" dimension of social meanings, it was also essential to go even further and grasp the "neurocognitive level at which these meanings emerge," just as Darwin's theory had penetrated the ground of biological speciation. He claimed that although social science and cognitive science share a concern with "mental events," the "deep play" of social interaction can only be explored by the "founding of cognitive social science" in which the two fields would "converge" (Turner 2001, 11–12, 151). The question, however, of whether cognitive science is to contemporary social science as Darwin's theory was to mid-nineteenth-century biology raises some persistent and significant issues.

From the beginning of the human sciences, there has been a search for laws and underlying causes of social action. Psychology dealt with mental phenomena such as belief, intention, and attitude, and whether or not psychology was categorized as a social science, it seemed to offer a deeper and more naturalistic basis for social science's perennial dream of achieving a truly scientific status and, in turn, the kind of epistemic authority that could serve as a vehicle of social transformation and control. All of this was represented, for example, during the early twentieth century, in the work of many Progressive intellectuals such as Walter Lippmann as

well as in the Chicago school of social science and the program of individuals such as Merriam in political science. Merriam early on turned to psychology for a paradigm, and his protégé Lasswell, with his commitment to Freudian theory, perpetuated this quest and contributed significantly to the subsequent social scientific adoption and adaptation of psychological theory.

One immediate impetus behind the contemporary interest in cognitive science within the social sciences has been a declining attachment to rational-choice approaches to social scientific inquiry and, as a consequence, increased attention to the role in social interaction and judgment of what is assumed to be subconscious factors such as emotion. Although enthusiasm for "naturalizing the mind" (Dretske 1995) and expanding the domain of "the mind's new science" (Gardner 1985) is hardly new, variations on this theme and the idea of the possibility of a cognitive social science have now become quite widespread (e.g., Strydom 2007). Both contemporary literature in cognitive science and apposite material in the philosophy of mind highlight the persistently anomalous status of mental concepts in political and social theory and social scientific research as well as other unresolved theoretical and methodological issues in these fields. Cognitive science, however, is a diverse and highly contested field (Harré 2002), and the manner in which social scientists have accessed this literature has often been highly selective, conceptually problematical, and, by design, supportive of prior commitments.

Many of the general difficulties that attend the current interest of social scientists in cognitive science were characteristic of past involvements with psychology. Not the least of these difficulties has been a tendency to draw somewhat narrowly and uncritically from the literature and simply to assume that certain elements of this material are scientifically authoritative and conceptually coherent. There has often been insufficient first-hand knowledge of the literature and of internal differences and controversies. What social scientists find most accessible is often less the specific content of actual research in cognitive neuroscience than hybrid claims that emanate either from neuroscientists engaging in philosophical speculation or from philosophers seeking support for certain philosophical theories. One of the difficulties in borrowing from, or attempting to expand the applicability of, cognitive science is the lack of consensus within the field on both issues and findings (Lepore and Pylyshyn 1999). The field is far from paradigmatic, or even free from ideology. Although cognitive science has been generically defined as "*the study of the mind as machine*" or "how a brain thinks" (Boden 2006), it includes a number of quite diverse research areas (Wilson and Keil 1999). Furthermore, the

questions and answers that dominate these research programs "change on almost a daily basis" (Hardcastle 2007, 295).

One of the most dominant, but still controversial, approaches in cognitive science is connectionism, which is often linked to reductionist approaches, because it seeks to explain a wide range of primate capacities by modeling the brain's neural networks and the strength of synaptic connections that link neurons and "store" information. This research has resonated in some areas of the philosophy of mind because it presents a challenge to what the philosopher Daniel Dennett has dubbed "folk psychology" or the assumptions embedded in everyday human practices. One of the philosophers who has relied heavily on connectionist research is Paul Churchland (Churchland 1995; McCauley 1996).

Churchland argued that "each distinct set of religious, moral, and scientific convictions, and that each distinct cultural orientation resides" in "myriad synaptic connections" that are "steadily adjusted to a configuration that allows it to behave as a normal member of the community" (1995, 5–6). Much like early associational psychologists, he claimed that the "world" causally determines each individual's experience by producing a trained network in the brain. He maintained that what is characteristically referred to as the mind is the brain functioning as a high-level computer and that despite the assumptions of folk psychology and its philosophical analogues, there is no "self'" or agent manifesting intentions and purposes. Much of human cognition, Churchland argued, is beneath the threshold of language and other conventions. He claimed that in effect there are "'social areas' in the brain," but he presented this directly in opposition to arguments such as those of Noam Chomsky and similar claims about a universal grammar and innate rules embedded in a special language module. He claimed that experimental modeling has demonstrated that connectionist architecture can account for the complexities of grammatical structure and syntactic compositional abilities. In the case of the conventional dimensions of life such as morality, he claimed that behavior is primarily a matter of applying "learned prototypes" that determine "what social skills will make one the maximally successful social agent." He rejected arguments that view consciousness as something irredeemably subjective and ultimately ineffable. Although he subscribed to the notion that individuals have a certain first-person authority and unique perspective with respect to what they are experiencing at any particular time, he insisted that this does not mean such phenomena are nonphysical and impervious to third-person scientific examination. His goal has been the "scientific reduction" of all everyday

mental concepts to "an exquisite neurocomputational dance" (18, 54, 99, 107, 114, 118).

Churchland accepted the thesis that an electronic machine could in principle be conscious, but he rejected any identification of consciousness with language and other symbolic cultural units. He nevertheless claimed that the "contents of consciousness . . . are profoundly influenced by the social environment" and that this in turn shapes the networks of the brain and "constitutes a form of extrasomatic memory, a medium of information storage that exists outside any individual's brain." This provides a way for "human cognition to be collective" and for groups of people to be transformed into what is functionally a "single brain." Churchland, however, denied any theoretical autonomy to symbolic forms, and he claimed that his vision promises a brave new world of "public policy" and the "prospect of major cognitive growth for entire societies." He suggested that it is even possible to underwrite a new basis of "moral realism" by grounding ethical principles on "genuine knowledge" derived from science (267, 269–71). For Churchland and his collaborator and spouse Patricia Churchland, it will be possible even in practical life to dispense with folk psychology and the explanation of human behavior in terms of concepts such as intention and purpose.

The Churchlands have insisted that the human sciences cannot remain theoretically independent. They argue that a connectionist understanding of things such as emotions "will give us a much more penetrating expectation of how any person's daily mental life will unfold, and a much more effective practical grip on the manifold factors that will influence it." Although they once associated their views with "eliminative materialism," they have more recently urged for their position the label of "good-guy materialism," since they claim that work such as that of Antonio and Hanna Damasio has demonstrated that emotion is "an essential ingredient in what we call rational deliberation." And they maintain that in the end, "moral knowledge must be just one species of scientific knowledge, since the social world is a subset of the natural world" and "social reality is just one aspect of natural reality" (McCauley 1996, 267, 269–71).

Social scientists have derived diverse conclusions from arguments such as that of Churchland, but the sociologist Stephen Turner called on his work in defense of both an individualist social ontology and attempts to combat relativist trends in social theory (2001). Turner presented his claims as a challenge to an abstractly defined position putatively represented by a wide variety of theorists including Emile Durkheim, Pierre Bourdieu, Peter Winch, Thomas Kuhn, Michael Polanyi, Quentin Skinner, Clifford Geertz, and Michel Foucault who, in his view, all subscribed

to an idea of the mind as a social construction. He claimed that Churchland had demonstrated that, in the last analysis, "humans are multilayered neural networks that learn, under the pressure of experience, by the gradual modifications of the strengths or 'weights' of their myriad synaptic connections." He argued that because "every mind is the product of a distinctive and individual learning experience," rather than of the "downloading" and "sharing" of a collective mental object, it is necessary for social science to undertake "a revised understanding of a great many of our core concepts" such as practice, rules, habit, tacit knowledge, and paradigms that imply the existence of collective consciousness and a irreducible relativity of perspectives. Similarly, concepts such as belief, which are elements of everyday language as well as central parts of the vocabulary of much of social scientific research and assumed to play a causal role in human behavior, are "appropriate candidates for the most drastic sort of elimination." These, he asserted, are epiphenomenal constructs and can be replaced by references to "nodes" in a neural network. For Turner, the ubiquitous problem of relativism is a product of what he termed the "premises model" or the idea that individuals are imprisoned within incommensurable collective representations. He argued that people are not separated by different images of reality and a kind of "normativity" that "goes all the way down." Difference is based, instead, on variations in "weighted patterns of synaptic connections produced by different inputs and feedback," and the latter can be explained in terms other than the totalizing images advanced by various forms of social constructivism (1, 9, 99).

What has been most popular among social scientists, however, is Antonio Damasio's attack on dualism and what he claims was Descartes' "error" and his contribution to the "abyssal separation between body and mind" (1994, 1999). Damasio based his claims on his experimental studies of how brain damage affects reasoning and behavior. These accounts are compelling, but the philosophical accretions are far more contentious. Damasio claimed that gross sensory experience creates "somatic markers," which give rise to emotions that in turn are evolutionary predecessors and unconscious determinants of more advanced forms of cognitive processing. Although this claim has inspired flights of imagination among social scientists and social theorists, the conceptual problems involved in his use of terms such as "mind," "mental states," "reason," "feeling," and "emotion" are significant. This is particularly the case with his oscillation between, on the one hand, everyday general usage of "mind" as meaning something such as the capacity for "mental phenomena" or "cognition" and, on the other hand, statements such as "having a mind means that

an organism forms neural representations which can become images, be manipulated in a process called thought, and eventually influence behavior" (1994, 90). What Damasio referred to as "mind" was actually an appearance that "we experience as the mind" but that is really "neural processes" in the brain. The brain, he claimed, is *not* just one part of the body but a special receptor to which other states of the body are conveyed. Similarly, he defined the self as "a perpetually re-created neurological state." He noted that he was "not saying that the mind is the body" but rather that the body as a whole affects the brain in various ways and "constitutes a *content* that is part and parcel of the working of the normal mind." The main thrust of his argument was against the idea that reason and emotion are separate and distinct processes, and his emphasis was on evidence suggesting, for example, that brain injuries that impair practical reason are related to an inability to "experience feelings." Emotion and reason, he concluded, are interdependent, and both are grounded in various "brain systems." There is, he maintained, a "close bond between a collection of brain regions and the processes of reasoning and decision," and "feelings form the basis for what humans have described for millennia as the human soul or spirit" (xii–xiii, xvi, 78, 100, 226–27).

Damasio insisted that feelings are not some "elusive mental quality" but something with a "neural substrate" and that their "essence" can be seen by any individual "through a window that opens directly onto a continuously updated image of the structure and state of our body." For Damasio, the "essence" of emotion is "the collection of changes in body state that are induced in myriad organs by nerve cell terminals, under the control of a dedicated brain system which is responding to the content of thoughts relative to a particular entity or event." He insisted that "the truly embodied mind I envision, however, does not relinquish its most refined levels of operation, those constituting its soul and spirit," which give rise to love, generosity, kindness, free will, altruism, and other such qualities. Like Churchland, Damasio expressed high hopes for the social policy applications of neuroscience and its relevance for explaining and formulating ethical principles. Although he claimed that conventions and rules are tied to "innate regulatory biological processes" and arise from "the behavior of biological individuals, the behavior is generated in collectives of individuals interacting within specific environments," and understanding this ultimately requires the "methodologies of the social sciences" (xiv, 139, 252, 124–25).

One of the first most visible but weakly defended social scientific applications of cognitive science was George Lakoff's explanation of the success of conservatives and the failure of liberals in recent American

elections (1996). This was advertised as "the first full-scale application of cognitive science to politics." Lakoff relied significantly on the work of Churchland and Damasio, and he argued that his own field of "cognitive linguistics" revealed the "unconscious" basis of the "conceptual metaphors and categories" that constitute "common sense" political judgments. According to Lakoff, conservatives were able to exploit "categories and prototypes" dealing with matters such as the family and to deploy metaphors that were grounded in "cognitive constructions" rather than in "objective features of the world." Lakoff maintained that even though he could not "hide" his "own moral and political views," which he admitted were decidedly liberal, "cognitive science was, itself, apolitical," and this knowledge, devoted to the study of the "embodied mind," would significantly contribute to the understanding of moral and political life (3–4, 7–9, 18–19). None of Lakoff's basic arguments about the success of conservative ideology actually required reference to neuroscience, but other political theorists and political scientists have been quick to embrace neurocognitivism in support of diverse empirical and normative claims.

Political scientists George Marcus, Russell Newman, and Michael MacKuen (2000) relied heavily on work of Damasio and similar research in claiming to present "a theory about how emotion and reason interact to produce a thoughtful and attentive citizenry" and to explain why the American political "system works as well as it does given the limited attentiveness and knowledge of the average citizen." Although emotion, they suggested, is usually viewed as inhibiting reasoned decision and is depreciated in political science by the dominant "rational choice model," the tendency "to idealize rational choice and to vilify the affective domain is to misunderstand how the brain works." They claimed that, by "drawing on extensive sources in neuroscience, physiology, and experimental psychology," they were led "to conceptualize affect and reason not as oppositional but as complementary" and to develop a model of "Affective Intelligence" that is methodologically "commensurate with rational choice approaches." They claimed that "emotional evaluation not only precedes conscious awareness" but also constitutes the basis of much judgment that never reaches the conscious level. These authors admitted, however, that "we have yet to fully work out how the neurological specifics translate into political life" and that the "array of methods available to neuroscientists to study the brain is not as yet generally suitable for political science research" and that political scientists interested in emotional response would have to rely on such things as survey research (2, 10, 39, 126–29, 152). Although avoiding political theory narrowly conceived, an edited volume in 2007 (Neuman et al.) brought together a wide range of

essays on what was claimed to be the "effect" of "affect" in politics. This volume certainly upped the ante as far as citing various sources, but it followed much the same lines as the earlier work.

Although the first person to refer to "neuropolitics" was Timothy Leary (1977), the political theorist William E. Connolly (2002) has employed the term in his claims about the interaction between physiology and culture and especially between emotion and reason. Connolly noted that his interest in this material was "hitched to an agenda to advance a political pluralism," and he suggested that it might support the idea of a "deep pluralism" that would take account of the "layered character of thinking" and of "how biology is mixed into thinking and culture" through affective primary responses that are situated below the level of logical thought. He argued that "the contemporary revolution in neuroscience offers the possibility of opening up a new discipline," which could bridge the gap between empirical social science and interpretive social theory. Relying on Damasio's work, Connolly suggested that research in neuroscience pointed to a connection between conscious and preconscious aspects of perception and judgment and that it indicated support for a postmodernist and poststructuralist antiuniversalist ethic that would call into question rationalist theories such as those associated with the concept of deliberative democracy (xii-xiii, 2–3, 124).

Rose McDermott (2004) also made a case for what she claimed to be the "meaning of neuroscientific advances for political science," and once again a principal source was the work of Damasio. McDermott's focus was on how "emotion can provide an alternative basis for explaining and predicting political choice and action" and how "emotion theory can enhance our understanding of decision-making" rather than being construed as a hindrance to an optimal model of rationality. McDermott claimed that this "promises the unfolding of the first major theoretical innovation in the social sciences of the twenty-first century: the new neurological revolution is upon us." She argued that because emotion is "part of rationality itself," studies of emotion have important implications for rethinking or amending rational choice theory as well as for engaging matters of public policy and achieving public happiness by creating something like a neo-Benthamite felicific calculus (691–92).

In 2006, the political theorist Leslie Paul Thiele picked up on the themes articulated by individuals such as Marcus, his cowriters, and Connolly and mounted an extended effort to demonstrate that at the "heart" of practical judgment is less the exercise of deliberative analytical skills and the application of principles than the manifestation of a kind of "tacit," "intuitive," or "implicit" knowledge, which is significantly

informed by emotion. Thiele marshaled almost every conceivable (but not always obviously compatible) source from Aristotle to Michael Polyanyi and H.-G. Gadamer, but the principal support was drawn from the literature of cognitive science. Thiele claimed that the basis of the human capacity for practical judgment was biologically "innate" and, as a product of primate evolution, lodged in certain structures of the brain, where it functioned as an unconscious extension of the "rudimentary forms of normative judgment exercised by other animals" (72, 77, 117). He maintained that the "role of the unconscious" was crucial and that "conscious perception" was only the "tip of the iceberg" of the brain functioning "like a parallel-distributed processor" that at the same time, he argued, had a "modular" structure whereby, for example, the "brain's right hemisphere copes with innovation" while the "left" part is more "conformist" (119–24). Because "reason never carries the whole show," explanation could be facilitated in part by recognizing the importance of "unconscious affects" and "exploiting this emotional intelligence" and its place in the construction of the "self" as a narrative lodged in "patterns of connectivity between neurons in the brain" (175, 200, 204). What was needed, he suggested, was "whole-brain judgment" (175, 200, 204).

These selective examples of the intersection of political theory and cognitive science are part of a growing literature that advances arguments to the effect that political judgment is divided between, yet shares elements of, conscious action and a primal unconscious that is located in neural processes. What is striking about this literature is the ad hoc character of the claims that often seem to lack not only a carefully thought out theory of a "mind behind the mind" but also an understanding of the contested literature in the philosophy of mind and philosophy of language, with which many of these claims are entangled. While the thrust of claims such as those of Churchland and Damasio are reductionist, a number of philosophers have attempted to rescue the mind—but with equally problematical results that often remain rooted in the remnants of representational philosophy.

Jerry Fodor, for example, has been one of the strongest philosophical supporters of the "nativist" assumption that the human ability to acquire and utilize language is lodged in an innate mental capacity that cannot be physiologically located (1975, 1983). Although Fodor is often prominently associated with the computational theory of the mind, he is a strong opponent of the theories of artificial intelligence on which much of cognitive neuroscience is predicated, and he rejects the general idea that consciousness can be explained on a naturalistic basis. He not only challenges connectionism as an account of "how the mind works" (2000) but

has argued that the computational model can be neither extended globally to all forms of cognition nor integrated with evolutionary biology. Fodor's work has been devoted to a defense of the basic coherency of folk psychology. He claimed that language and actions are causal products of thought and real intentions, which gain their meaning from corresponding mental states that in turn can be physically realized in multiple ways but that both represent and are caused by external phenomena. These mental representations are, Fodor claimed, cast through a computational process in symbols of a syntactically structured universal "language of thought" or "mentalese." Part of Fodor's program however, like that of some of his opponents, has been to combat what he believes to be the relativistic implications of a social theory of the mind.

Probably more than anyone else, Steven Pinker, a psychologist and cognitive scientist, has attempted to speak to a wide audience with his claims about the existence of universals in human culture and particularly of a "language instinct," which he advances as the core of the "mind" and the seat of the human capacity to attach words to the world (1994, 1997, 2002). He has been adamant in his rejection of what he characterizes as the image of the mind as a "blank slate" and the assumption that there is no "human nature." Pinker, like Fodor, is also intent on combating relativism and what he views as its current manifestations in trends such as social constructivism. Unlike Fodor, however, as well as Chomsky who was their mutual mentor, Pinker continues to insist that language, in the sense of embedded rules that precede a learned lexicon of words, is an "evolutionary adaptation," but, like Fodor, he has argued that language does not determine thought, which is ontologically prior. There is, he claims, "nonverbal thought," which, again like Fodor, he speaks of as "mentalese," and a "single computational design of universal grammar" that exists before and without conventional languages and that transcends the cultural variations.

Searle's commitment to philosophical realism has been joined to his explicit attempt both to counter the growing tendency to reduce mental states to brain states and to combat any line of argument that suggests that the mind is a social construction (1992, 1995). Although he went to great lengths to reconcile the physical and mental domains, his ultimate goal was to defend the autonomy of mind and consciousness as the font of language and convention. Searle designated his position as "biological naturalism," which entailed that while all mental states are ultimately caused by neurobiological processes in the brain, conscious states and processes involve a higher, but not experimentally accessible, level of the biological system. They are distinguished by a first-person

ontology that gives rise to a sense of self and the capacity for intentionality that is expressed in human behavior. For Searle, mental causation is a basic fact of the world and the ground of the explanation of speech and action, and in this respect he implicitly gives support to folk psychology as well as to the underlying assumptions and conceptual repertoire that inform much of social science and social theory. But despite how far Searle's position is from that of someone such as Pinker, they both agree on the intellectual and social dangers of relativism and the idea of the mind as a socially constituted text. Searle claimed that culture is part of the "real world" and rests on natural facts that "are totally independent of us." What was especially important for Searle was to account for "collective intentionality" or "we-intentions" that characterize institutional facts but that, he claimed, are nevertheless "biologically innate" and located, like all instances of agency, in the minds of individuals. For Searle, "language is essentially constitutive of social reality" and the move from brute to institutional status is a "linguistic move," but he stressed that there are thoughts that are independent of and prior to language. He also placed great weight on what he termed "the background," which he described as an unconscious "preintentional" causal realm of "capacities" that, while functionally equivalent to embedded rules and conventions, such as those posited by Chomsky and Fodor, are not actually linguistic or rule governed.

What is apparent is that the idea of the "mind as brain" has not won out in philosophy, but what has seemed to often carry the day and what is common to most of this literature is the emphasis on positing something that lies beyond convention and that can serve as a bulwark against the threat of relativism and that in turn can be supported by scientific authority. It involves an attempt to question the theoretical autonomy of conventional phenomena and reach beneath to something deeper and firmer on which to base explanation and judgment. Despite the often conflicting, and sometimes questionable, claims of experimental research in cognitive science, there are few who challenge the basic validity of this line of research. What is pointedly challenged, however, are some of the philosophical premises and the conceptual coherency of the claims. A recent article ("Neuropolitics Gone Mad") in a scientific journal castigated neuroscientists for jumping on the bandwagon of claiming that the field can contribute to explaining phenomena such as elections and for giving credibility to such claims (Butcher 2008).

One very prominent source of both criticism and an alternative concept of mind and the meaning of mental concepts has been the work of Wittgenstein, who is also viewed by many adherents of cognitive science

as one of the principal inspirations for the positions they wish to combat. Wittgenstein ended his most important work with the statement that "the confusion and barrenness of psychology is not to be explained by calling it a 'young science' . . . for in psychology there are experimental methods and *conceptual confusion*" (2001, p. 195). Wittgenstein was one of the most prominent critics of Cartesian dualism, but although much of cognitive science claims to be devoted to challenging dualism, some critics have argued that it is still a prisoner of the Cartesian legacy. This claim has been extensively pursued in the joint work of a neuroscientist and a Wittgensteinian philosopher who argue that the reduction of mind to the brain as the bearer of psychological attributes is actually a new form of dualism. M. R. Bennett and P. M. S. Hacker (2003) claimed that what many neuroscientists, such as Damasio, ascribe to the brain are properties and powers, which are properly attributed to whole human beings rather than to particular organs of the body. These critics, no more than Wittgenstein, deny that there are physiological and neural correlates of psychological concepts such as intention, belief, remembering, and emotion, but they insist that there is a conceptual mistake involved in seeking to explain these attributes in terms of functions of the brain or, alternatively, to conceive of the mind and consciousness as a supervenient entity or inner eye with which we view our private experience. To have a mind, they argue, is to have a certain range of characteristic human capacities. For example, they argue that emotions are, despite claims ranging from William James to Damasio, neither brain states nor somatic reactions but symbolic expressions. Much of the conceptual difficulty, they suggest, stems from the continuing assumption, which Wittgenstein attempted to dispel, that there must be an ostensive reference for all terms and that mental concepts such as intention and emotion imply a physiological reference when in fact they are simply terms that have a place in the human practices in which they are embedded.

Wittgenstein claimed that although the vocabulary of mental terms does have uses in our language, "the psychological verbs to see, to believe, to think, to wish, do not signify phenomena" (1967, 471) either inner or outer, and that it is important not to be seduced by the illusion that mental terms such as "intention" must refer to some state or process that lies hidden behind language and action. Wittgenstein posited intentionality as a function of language and "embedded in its situation, in human customs and institutions," that is, in what he referred to as the "forms of life" that are "given" and manifest in social practices. The idea of the inner world of the mind, he maintained, is just "part of the mythology stored in our language" (1993, 133). With respect to claims about factoring

subconscious emotion into an explanation of social action, it is essential to note that correlations between brain states and what is categorized as emotional behavior, even if such correlations could be achieved, are not in some obvious manner explanations of that behavior. Charles Taylor, for example, claimed that "our language is constitutive of our emotions" and is the medium in which they are "experienced" and "articulated" (1985, 74), and Rom Harré (1986b) has argued at great length for a "discursive" theory of emotion that views emotion as a "social construction." The more positive dimensions of what has been referred to as a "discursive" theory of the mind and an approach to psychology based on Wittgensteinian premises have been developed by Harré and others (Harré 1986; Harré and Gilbert 1994; Harré and Tissaw 2005; Racine and Muller 2009).

What could be viewed as an alternative to the sometimes dichotomous choices of naturalism and conventionalism has been advanced by Dennett who, while fully accepting many of the claims of neuroscience, has been the proponent of an argument that gives some support to the theoretical autonomy of social phenomena (1991, 1995). His position is, in one fundamental respect, distinctly reductive and materialistic in that he rejects any form of dualism that assumes that consciousness involves "qualia" or subjective experiences that cannot be studied in a naturalistic manner from a third-person stance. He maintained, however, that the *contents* of consciousness are products of culture and must be understood and explained accordingly. Dennett drew heavily on Richard Dawkins's account of how the "selfish gene" ultimately gave rise to transorganic "systems of representations" or "memes" that eventually parasitized the brain and had a recursive effect on the organic system as a whole (1989). Dennett claimed that the content of human consciousness is in effect a huge complex of memes or basic but diverse ideas and conventional units of culture. Although Dennett does not accept folk psychology as an explanation of how the mind works, this is not because, any less than folk physics, it is a bad model or heuristic for accounting for and predicting human behavior. But explicitly following Wittgenstein, he wishes to refute the often-entailed idea that minds are entities that operate in some private inaccessible space under the control of a subject or ego that functions like a homunculus in a Cartesian theater. Dennett, again relying on Dawkins, defended a kind of universal Darwinism and suggested that memes eventually transform the architecture of the brain and that they themselves evolve in a manner somewhat analogous to genes as they seek their own advantage and can even override biological imperatives. The theory of memes is far from well developed, but it may offer the beginning of an avenue of research that can reconcile what some take to

be the conflict between naturalistic and interpretive social science (e.g., Blackmore 1999). The first problem with suggesting, as in the case of Mark Turner, an analogy between something such as the contribution of Darwin's theory of evolution to biology and how cognitive science might reconstitute social science is that cognitive science is not characterized by any such distinct theory. And even if one of the theories within cognitive science became paradigmatic, it would not necessarily entail the reduction of social phenomena to appearances but only yield a biological explanation of the grounds of human conventionality. But maybe such a hasty analogy might more closely resemble the saga of social Darwinism's misplaced application of a scientific theory.

Social science, social theory, and philosophy have a great deal of difficulty facing up to the reality of conventionality, that is, to the fact that they cannot move beyond language to a deeper perception of phenomena that would support their explanations and judgments. This problem of bumping up against the limits of conventionality has historically been especially acute for metapractices such as philosophy and the social sciences because of their persistent anxiety about establishing their cognitive authority with respect to their subject matter. This yearning for the transconventional may be endemic to human activity, and particularly to the urge to philosophize. As Wittgenstein noted, there is a persistent "longing for the transcendent, because in so far as people think they can see the 'limits of human understanding,' they believe of course that they can see beyond these" (1984, p. 15). What is produced by seeking to move beyond "the limits of language" is, however, "nonsense" (2001, p. 119). Wittgenstein's vision of philosophy tells us a great deal about the character and possibilities of metapractices as a whole and, at the same time, it provides a defense of the theoretical autonomy of conventional objects. This involves both the rejection of the Cartesian image of the mind as well as behaviorism and other reductionist accounts, and it entails the rejection of the realist metaphysics and other forms of representational philosophy. Yet it has been difficult to extricate the reception of Wittgenstein's work from the past agendas of political theory. Despite the typical gravitation of social theory toward philosophical authority, the reception of Wittgenstein's work has been skewed by the persistent belief that philosophy can yield a ground of judgment that either transcends or underlies conventionality.

ENGAGING WITTGENSTEIN

> I should not like my writing to spare other people the trouble of
> thinking.
>
> —Wittgenstein

IT HAS BEEN NOTORIOUSLY DIFFICULT TO RELATE WITTGENSTEIN'S WORK
to the practices of social science and political theory. This is in part due to
his style of writing, the lack of doctrinal philosophical claims, the general
absence of explicit discussion of either social science or politics, and his
sometimes pointed reticence to claim practical relevance for his work.
Above all, however, it was Wittgenstein's commitment to the autonomy
of conventions, and to the impossibility of their reduction and transcen-
dence, that has been difficult to reconcile with many of the typical con-
cerns of social science, including both scientism and critical theory. As
a consequence of its anxieties about its identity and epistemic author-
ity, social science has characteristically sought answers in the literature of
philosophy, but the work of Wittgenstein tends to subvert the purposes
of this quest. There have, however, been significant instances in which
political and social theorists have creatively adapted his work. The most
effective use has been by individuals such as Linda Zerilli and others who
have applied his insights to specific issues and concepts in areas such as
feminist theory, the analysis of judgment, and the study of citizenship
(e.g., Zerilli 1998, 2005; O'Connor 2002; Scheman and O'Connor 2002;
Norval 2007). Yet more recently, Christopher Robinson has undertaken
an extended creative examination of the promise of Wittgenstein's work
as a way of seeing politics and encountering it philosophically (2009).
These efforts, however, have often been less visible than attempts not
only to resist the critical implications of Wittgenstein's work for some
of the main agendas of political theory but also to find support in his
work for those agendas. Once we face up to the destructive significance of
those implications, it is possible to perceive a positive valence for political
and social inquiry, albeit one that demands a revisionist account of these

enterprises, which in many respects would not be unlike what Wittgenstein offered in the case of philosophy itself. The continual attachment, and deference, of social theorists to certain elements of philosophy has, however, often resulted in the perpetuation of the very mistakes that Wittgenstein believed had characterized the field.

Nearly four decades ago, Hanna Pitkin embraced Wittgenstein's work as a perspective on political theory, and many of the subsequent uses of his work still reflect her efforts. Her pioneering book *Wittgenstein and Justice* (1972) began by presenting an extended, lucid, and systematic general account of his philosophy. This synopsis was, at that time, even if considered in the context of the literature of professional philosophy, one of the most comprehensive and comprehensible treatments available. It was particularly helpful to social scientists, most of whom had at that point often just begun to approach the Wittgensteinian corpus. The largest portion of Pitkin's book was devoted to relating his work to particular issues "in political and social science, political and social theory" and, especially, to guiding readers through the issues, which, in the early 1970s, were alienating political theorists from mainstream political science. Pitkin's analysis has remained the most ambitious and influential attempt to connect Wittgenstein to social and political theory, and it deserves special and renewed recognition and careful attention. At the same time, however, it manifests many of the problems in joining Wittgenstein and social science, and consequently it also deserves closer critical scrutiny than it has thus far received.

After completing her general systematic summary of Wittgenstein's philosophy, which marked what she referred to as the "continental divide" in the book, Pitkin noted that it was "all downhill." She analogized the latter portion of the project to the branches of a tree that, while radiating from a common "trunk," pointed in various directions with each ending "in the void" and inviting "further growth" (Pitkin 1993, 169). She discussed a variety of matters on which Wittgenstein's ideas might be brought to bear. These included the manner in which politics, or any social practice, involves linguistic performances; how language relates to social plurality and difference; the analytical treatment of political concepts and argument; epistemological issues involved in understanding political action and institutions; and how people may conceptually, and practically, "entrap" themselves yet find "democratic ways" of escaping. Although Pitkin noted elements of Wittgenstein's work that had precipitated and reinforced her personal conclusions about some of these matters, the precise manner in which Wittgenstein's writings bore on political theory, as both a subject matter and field of study, remained somewhat elusive. Her

arguments were in several respects both channeled and constrained by the intellectual context of the University of California at Berkeley during the 1960s. In the field of philosophy, Stanley Cavell exercised a strong influence on the approach to Wittgenstein, and in political science, the issue of the intellectual and professional identity of political theory and its relationship to the discipline as a whole was a prominent concern. Political theorists were dealing with the conflict between "traditional political theory," with its typically historical and normative concerns, and the enthusiasm of "behavioral" political scientists for pursuing a positivist version of a "scientific" and value-free study of politics; a controversy about what constituted democratic politics; and the implications for political inquiry of early postpositivist work in the philosophy of social science. At that time, the linguistic turn in philosophy was viewed by political theorists with significant suspicion and as allied with positivism, and Pitkin's project could in part be interpreted as an attempt to allay those concerns.

Some of Pitkin's principal commitments were not easily reconciled with what might seem, even by her own account, to be the basic import of Wittgenstein's work. These included her attribution of essentiality and universality to what she referred to as "the political," her commitment to the world-historical character of political theory as something possessing a persistent identity from the ancient Greeks to contemporary academic pursuits, and the capacity of political theory as a scholarly enterprise to cut through appearances and provide general explanations and evaluative assessments of its object of inquiry. "The political" is a neologism in the English language, and it has a quite distinctive genealogy in the literature of academic political theory. It was primarily introduced into the American context by émigré scholars such as Strauss and Arendt who were, in turn, indebted to Carl Schmitt. It was given added prominence through its adoption and promulgation by Wolin, who was Pitkin's mentor at Berkeley, and in turn by individuals such as Pitkin herself. More recently Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, and Claude Lefort, have revived and deployed it, and even Derrida has spoken of the "essence of the political" (1982, 15). It has become part of the common currency in the conversations of political theory in general, and Wolin, on numerous occasions, has continued to distinguish between politics, which is ubiquitous and epiphenomenal, and "the political," which as in the case of what he has termed "fugitive democracy," he has described as rare and more fundamental.

Although Pitkin suggested that one way to approach politics from a Wittgensteinian standpoint might be to view it as a "language region," she attempted to give "the concept of the political" a more profound

status (204, 208). In part what she endorsed was a philosophical account of politics that she explicitly associated, in various ways, with individuals such as Wolin, Arendt, Strauss, and Voegelin and that, she maintained, contrasted with the approach of behavioral political scientists such as Dahl and Easton who focused on power, interest, hierarchy, and other aspects of what she referred to as "everyday" politics. She suggested that Arendt and Wolin had adopted this usage, turning the adjective "political" into a "substantive" rather than using the noun "politics," not only to emphasize normative dimensions of public life and citizen participation but also to divert attention from the "reality of practice and institutions we still call, from habit, 'political'" and might think of as ordinary politics. For Pitkin, as for many political theorists, everyday politics was derivative, and what she wanted to pursue instead was, to use her own phrases, "*the* political," the "idea of the political," "what *is* political," "the substance of the political," "the nature of politics," "the nature of the political itself," and the "essence of what is political" (212–218). She agreed with Wolin that while there was "plenty of politics," the "political itself" had all but disappeared, and it was a concern with the latter that tied an authentic contemporary practice of political theory to the classic canon of political thought.

Although at this time there were pointed internecine ideological and professional battles between figures such as Wolin and Strauss regarding the exact character of the great tradition and the identity of political theory, they were often at one in their principal intellectual commitments and their antipathy toward mainstream political science. The tendency to attribute to politics more than a conventional status and to assume for political theory more than an institutional existence involved the very type of problem that Wittgenstein called a "grammatical" confusion and the propensity to believe that there must be a common essence behind diverse uses of a term such as "politics." It was a striking example of the kind of mistake and the "mental cramp" (1958, p. 1) induced when "language *goes on holiday*" (2001, 38). Just as Pitkin abstracted and universalized politics, she, like Wolin, cast political theory in the form of a decontextualized "vocation" and "tradition," but this too was only a retrospective extrapolation of a generic or functional image, that is, an analytically defined tradition presented as an actual preconstituted historical tradition. The practice of political theory to which Pitkin alluded, that is, the "enterprise" for which Wittgenstein's work putatively held significance for understanding and pursuing, was a blur of images of the classic texts, a variety of modern thinkers such as Freud, and contemporary academic practices.

One of the more subtle ways in which Pitkin invoked Wittgenstein was also problematical. This was to privilege the perspective of metapractical

claims such as those of political theory. But, given Wittgenstein's many remarks about the limitations of philosophy in this regard, this use of his work was at best contentious. In her discussion of anti- and postpositivist claims about social scientific explanation, Pitkin lumped together a number of quite diverse arguments (including those of Winch, Alfred Schütz, Richard Taylor, Strauss, Voegelin, A. R. Louch, John Gunnell, and Charles Taylor). She suggested that while much of this work, which in various ways focused on language and the concept of human action, challenged scientism in social science and, either explicitly or implicitly, reflected certain aspects of Wittgenstein's work, it severely strayed in other respects. What she specifically attributed to these individuals was the claim that the "scientific study of social and political things is inadequate or impossible" because "actions must necessarily be identified in the actors' concepts" and "are logically incompatible with causal explanation." These individuals were too disparate to be assimilated in this summary manner, and none ever advanced some of the claims Pitkin characterized them as holding, such as "only the individual actor knows what he is doing" and, for example, in the case of anthropologists whose account of the actions of their subjects diverged from the manner in which the subjects understood themselves, "the natives must be right" (241–63). Pitkin's concern, however, was to demonstrate that because the positions of the social scientist and the social actor were different, social theorists "continue to need both detachment and engagement as separate perspectives." None of these individuals had actually argued otherwise, and most had in fact defended the perspective of the investigator as privileged, but Pitkin wished to press the point and insisted that "it is perfectly possible, and desirable, to study man objectively, to know ourselves objectively," and to provide causal explanations that go beyond the awareness of actors (273, 285). This claim was in part an attempt to find some basis for a rapprochement between "scientific" and "traditional" political theory and in part an attempt to vouchsafe the cognitive authority of political theory, but it was far from clear how it was derived from Wittgenstein. He certainly claimed that philosophy could achieve clarity, but he offered little that defended its capacity to change the practices it scrutinized.

At the end of the volume, Pitkin turned to the more general question of what, apart from clarifying particular issues, might be "Wittgenstein's deeper significance for political theory." In her view, this involved an increased conceptual awareness that would aid in "the critical assessment and understanding of what political theorists of the past have said." This claim implied, once again, that there was some significant connection between canonical authors and contemporary academic political theory,

but even by the early 1970s, both the identity and meaning of the canon and the status of the "vocation," as well as the relationship between them, were becoming contested issues. There was, she noted, also the question of Wittgenstein's contemporary significance for "the actual substance, the enterprise of political theory itself." Did his work have anything to contribute to "the production of new and important political theory" or was it even "hostile to the innovative and synthesizing vision of great political theory" represented by the work of individuals reaching from Plato to Marx? Even though Pitkin maintained that Wittgenstein could be construed in some general way as speaking to the "human condition" and the "modern predicament," it was necessary, since "Wittgenstein was not himself a political theorist," to ask "could there be such a thing as a Wittgensteinian political theory?"

If Pitkin gave any definite answers to these questions, they were equivocal. She suggested that a Wittgensteinian political theory would have to be very different from "traditional political theory" with its claims about such things as the right form of political order and that, instead, it might be best to "think about a Wittgensteinian way of theorizing about the political." Pitkin took this to indicate a need to focus on the fact that "the political is necessarily and characteristically plural and inconsistent" yet, at the same time, the necessity of searching "for some foundation in stable truth." Like Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, Wittgenstein pointed at least obliquely, Pitkin argued, to the problem of "human alienation," a concern with the "discovery of our conventions," tolerance of other cultures, and a recognition that social change requires action (302, 315–16, 325, 326–40). These were ambiguous and not very concrete claims, and two decades later, the exact connection between Wittgenstein and political theorizing still seemed difficult for Pitkin to articulate. In the preface to the last edition of her book, she did not, despite the considerable evolution that had marked the conversations about the issues she had discussed, choose to revisit any of the claims that she had originally advanced. She once again emphasized the various ways in which Wittgenstein's "philosophy, and particularly his vision of language," had "mattered" to her personally and "sustained both my stubbornly persistent democratic hopes and my academic work," but the basic issue of a Wittgensteinian political theory remained opaque. In many ways, however, Pitkin set the stage for subsequent attempts to enlist Wittgenstein in the service of political theory.

In the year following the publication of Pitkin's volume, Richard Flathman, also a student of Wolin, introduced an anthology on "concepts in social and political philosophy" with an extended and cogent summary of

Wittgenstein's philosophy. Flathman, like Pitkin (1967), had previously applied postpositivist ordinary language philosophy and the work of J. L. Austin to an analysis of a political concept (1966), but he now focused on what he claimed were the "therapeutic" intimations and possibilities in Wittgenstein's work and the manner in which social theory in the form of linguistic analysis could not only further an understanding of human activities but come to "*know* the correct and incorrect uses" of concepts (1973, 32). Flathman suggested, however, that Wittgenstein's work might support more than merely "conceptual therapy." He maintained that contemporary "philosophy, particularly political and social philosophy, can legitimately aspire to further, in some respects more ambitious, objectives and accomplishments" and even usher in a new era in "the long tradition of political and social philosophy." He claimed that Wittgenstein had provided "epistemological premises and even a method for political and social philosophy and social science" and that his "teaching can be viewed as an invitation to an active critical study of political philosophy and political philosophers." Flathman noted, however, that virtuosity in this area required "analytic and synthetic powers that are bequeathed to no more than a small number of human beings" (1, 8, 198). These were tentative but optimistic promissory notes that, as in the case of Pitkin, attempted to align Wittgenstein with certain reigning images of academic political theory, but no more than Pitkin did Flathman come directly to grips with exactly how Wittgenstein's work sustained these images. In an early assessment of some of the emerging literature on Wittgenstein and political theory, George Graham applauded the contributions, but as in the case of Pitkin and Flathman, there was no mistaking his worry that some of this work did not adequately confront the danger that Wittgenstein's ideas might threaten to undercut the foundations of normative judgment (1975).

This worry was expressed in a far more strained and ambivalent attempt to draw on Wittgenstein—but once again within the context of assumptions about an epic tradition of political theory. John Danford had initially studied with Pitkin before entering graduate work at the University of Chicago, where he adopted a Straussian perspective. He was seeking a path between the, in many ways, similar but often contending schools of Berkeley and Chicago, which were both devoted to defending the study of "traditional" political theory. Danford asked, "why did Wittgenstein never write a word of political philosophy?" and his answer was that Wittgenstein sought neither transcendent truth nor direct engagement with public concerns (1978, 11). This, however, did not inhibit Danford from claiming that Wittgenstein's analysis of language could be

construed as forcing a rethinking of the seventeenth-century philosophy that had, according to Strauss, spelled the decline of classical political theory and issued in the "crisis of our time." In the context of the debates about political theory, Danford was on the side of "tradition" rather than "science," and his basic argument was, in the end, a version of the Straussian claim that the "science of politics," as it was "now constituted by American political science, was radically defective" because of its relativistic and antinormative stance and the danger of falling into an "abyss of fundamental nihilism." He claimed that although there was, in some respects, a "broad affinity between the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein and the general approach of Aristotle," Wittgenstein was ultimately, and unfortunately, within the grip of modernity and its denial of the essentiality of both truth and politics.

The individual who most directly attempted to relate Wittgenstein's work to a distinct ideological position was the Hungarian scholar J. C. Nyriri. His general concern was with the issue of the "social embeddedness of individual behavior," and he initially argued that Wittgenstein, in both his personal orientation and the substance of his work, represented, and provided, a "logical foundation" for "a conservative-traditionalist view." This analysis was advanced in the context of Nyriri's assessment of social decay in Hungary from the 1960s to 1980s, and he concluded that Wittgenstein's work flew in the face of Enlightenment rationalism and the liberal idea of progress and hearkened back to the perspective of individuals such as Spengler. It also was tied, he claimed, to Jewish neoconservatism and to a turn to religion and mysticism that had contributed, from Marx to Thomas Kuhn, to the Jewish background of much of the work in the sociology of knowledge and its emphasis on collective reason. In later essays, Nyriri concluded that the conservative dimensions of Wittgenstein's work were to be explained by an even deeper commitment to the historical and ontological priority of oral communication, which led, much as in the case of Heidegger, to a critique of modernity and technology (1992 1, 15).

Although all of this may have had some relevance for understanding the sources of Wittgenstein's thought, it was a diversion from any careful focus on his work. The greatest problem with Nyriri's argument was that, as he himself and numerous commentators have indicated, it is easy to draw quite different "political" conclusions from the same evidence. Did Wittgenstein's emphasis on convention suggest compulsion and conservative rigidity or radical spontaneity? Aryeh Botwinick, for example, claimed that Wittgenstein's long struggle with, and failure to solve, the problems of skepticism and relativism entailed a pragmatic validation

of participatory democracy (1985), while others have gone further than Nyriri and argued that Wittgenstein's privileging of language and holism was, as in the case of Heidegger, the philosophical counterpart of totalitarianism (Redner 1997). This latter general line of argument has been vigorously pursued by some followers of Karl Popper.

Although there is significant biographical and contextual evidence that can be adduced to explain the animus of Popper toward Wittgenstein, including the notorious "poker" incident (Edmonds and Eidinow 2001), there were deeper intellectual issues than the ostensible conflict regarding the question of whether or not there are genuine and autonomous philosophical problems. Most fundamentally at stake was the issue of social ontology and the relationship between philosophy and its subject matter. These issues were most strikingly evident in the work of Popper's students, among whom Ernest Gellner was a prominent example. Gellner consistently interspersed his philosophical and anthropological writings with attacks on what he took to be the Wittgensteinian heritage in philosophy and its dangerous implications for both social practices and the study of those practices. From *Words and Things* (1959) to his posthumous final volume, he was one of the leaders in the Popperian assault on all those who he charged with acceding to value relativism and embracing an organic vision of society rather than liberal individualism, and he dwelled on what he took to be the respective ideological and epistemological consequences, and instigations, of these positions.

Gellner claimed that Wittgenstein, located within the dualistic world of Hapsburg culture, was unconsciously faced with a choice between "abstract, universalistic individualism on the one hand and a romantic communalism on the other." While in his early work Wittgenstein had, Gellner argued, embraced the former and found his identity as a "transcendental ego," he was also a "Viennese Jew" who eventually fled from "solitude" toward "communal-cultural mysticism" represented in the position of the "nationalists/populists." It was this social identity that he transformed into a theory of knowledge and "a coded theory of society." Although Gellner acknowledged that Wittgenstein was not actually very interested in social and political issues, he claimed that the account of language in Wittgenstein's later work entailed that "there cannot be truth outside of culture" and that his "originality" was to push this denial of extracultural standards of validity to its extreme and in the same manner that led to "fascism." This acceptance of culture, common sense, and the forms of life as basic and privileged amounted to a denial of philosophy's search for "culture-transcending truth." Gellner argued that it was Wittgenstein's work that inspired Winch's "relativistic idealism" and his claim

that all social visions are equal and valid and that, subsequently, gave rise to contemporary forms of hermeneutics, social science, and philosophy that amount to "a kind of hysteria of subjectivism" (1998, 5, 72, 75–77, 95, 119, 145, 177, 191).

Like Gellner, Allan Janik also attempted to find the meaning of Wittgenstein's work in the context of Vienna (Janik and Toulmin 1973), and he later addressed what he believed was the significance of this work for political theory (1989). Janik admitted that there was "something very odd about approaching a subject that played no role whatever in Wittgenstein's life and thought," but he claimed that there was, nevertheless, a "metaphysics of the political" to be found. Janik, however, gave short shrift to various efforts to find ideological implications in Wittgenstein's "radical conventionalism." He suggested instead that, paradoxically, "it is precisely this a-political stance which constitutes his importance for political philosophy" and speaks to "the role of The Political in human experience." Janik argued that what Wittgenstein revealed was that rules and concepts can always be contested, and thus, because disagreement is possible and even inevitable, "a speaking being must *eo ipso* be a political being." The "political nature of concepts" was, he claimed, "rooted in certain general facts of human nature" that lie deeper than politics in the "mundane sense" (1989, 93–94, 96–97, 102, 107). Janik later reiterated this line of argument and, explicitly rejecting "the politics of politicians," in favor of a generic definition of politics as competition, said "I take the fact that language-games can 'combat' one another as proof positive that Wittgenstein recognized the political dimension of language" (2003, 99). The philosopher Joseph Margolis advanced a somewhat similar circular argument. While also denying that Wittgenstein reflected, or could be used to underwrite or undermine, any particular ideology, he claimed that his work indicated how all claims to knowledge are socially constructed and are thus necessarily "political" in that they are embedded "in the larger forms of social life" (1996, 213). The arguments of Janik and Margolis, however, were based simply on construing "political" so arbitrarily and abstractly that Wittgenstein became, by definition, a political theorist.

So the question was whether Wittgenstein's work provided a deeper sense of what was political and a securer epistemic basis for inquiry or did his work lead in the direction of relativism and nihilism and the loss of a defensible sense of truth. There were, however, at least two articles, a decade apart, that potentially deflected these lines of argument. They offered carefully developed claims about how Wittgenstein provided intellectual resources for various specific aspects of political theory and social science, but they diverged from much of the literature by raising

questions about his relevance for the characteristic image of these fields as having some epistemologically privileged perspective. James Tully (1989) argued forcefully that Wittgenstein's work was not supportive of rationalist positions such as those of Habermas and Charles Taylor, and Joshua Foa Dienstag suggested that the ultimate import of Wittgenstein's philosophy was to suggest that political theory must engage politics on a level playing field and that it "buys its participation in politics at the cost of giving up its traditional claims to superiority" (1998). More typical, however, have been continuing attempts to rescue, at least in some attenuated sense, the idea that political theory either occupies some position that provides cognitive privilege or possesses the capacity to access criteria of judgment that supersede those of everyday practices.

Alice Crary stressed the striking convergence of left and right ideological criticisms of Wittgenstein regarding the manner in which he could be construed as granting autonomy to conventional practices such as politics and holding them "immune to external criticism." She maintained, however, that these "inviolability interpretations" were misplaced and that notwithstanding his pointed rejection of a transcendental perspective, Wittgenstein offered a path toward the possibility of rational critique. She claimed that Wittgenstein's work, much like that of Rorty, possessed "edifying" potential, but she did not concretely specify what this involved and how it might be manifest. Crary suggested that "the contribution Wittgenstein's philosophy makes to political thought is a function of what it teaches us . . . about how the exercise of rational responsibility requires a distinctly human form of activity in language." In addition, she noted "I suspect (although I cannot further discuss the grounds for my suspicions here) that this lesson is one which we would find reflected in forms of social life that embody the ideals of liberal democracy" (2000, 120, 140–41). Crary has continued to argue that despite the lack of explicit discussion of ethical matters in Wittgenstein's work and despite the persistent worry that his account of meaning as use leads to a relativistic stance that renders human practices immune from external rational criticism, his work as a whole carries an ethical message regarding human responsibility that transcends any particular conceptual and linguistic domain (2005).

Naomi Scheman claimed that Wittgenstein did offer an answer to the ambiguous position and status of the academic intellectual—what she referred to as the situation of "privileged marginality." She recognized that the issue "of where one can stand to obtain a perspective on a set of practices that is simultaneously informed and critical is a deep and central question for political theory." If the criteria of judgment were to be found, as Wittgenstein seemed to imply, within conventional practices,

how, she asked, is it possible to posit a basis for disapproving of a form of life without being drawn toward an external ideal realm that causes us to ignore the complexities of the world in which real decisions must be made? "How," she asked, "can we make intelligible that depth and extent of dissatisfaction with the rough ground of our forms of life without invoking transcendent standards?" or, as Wittgenstein put it, without retreating to the unblemished surface of "ice"? Scheman contended that, first of all, we must reject Manichean readings of Wittgenstein revolving around poles of political acquiescence and critical deconstruction. She argued that despite Wittgenstein's personal inhibitions regarding practical involvement, "we" professional philosophers and academicians potentially occupy "social locations" that are "privileged *as marginal*" and that this at once makes it possible to "politicize" that location and "gives what we say and do a claim to legitimacy." Like "diasporic Jews," philosophers can claim a "home," which is neither an existing place nor a utopia. In modern societies, the philosopher is neither "native" nor "stranger" and may engage in critical transformative work (1996, 390–91, 394, 399, 403).

At least three basic problems were elided in Crary's and Scheman's discussions. First, they did not deal with the actual situation of the philosopher's relationship to politics in any specific setting, and they did not address the institutionalized academic practices of political and social theory. Second, they seemed to assume that philosophers have some inherent capacity for perspicuity. And, finally, they did not consider the implications of "privilege"—marginal or otherwise—for the democratic practices and principles that they so clearly wished to support. Scheman suggested that the academic intellectual, like the Wizard of Oz, might create an illusion of authority that would facilitate self-realization among others and contribute to the fulfillment of their potential. But this would seem to imply that, for the political theorist, there really is no place like home and that political theory is at best a kind of serendipitous humbug.

The most questionable uses of Wittgenstein continue to be those that attempt to draw some sort of broad support for a particular set of prior commitments and images of theorizing. A somewhat egregious example of the latter was Mouffe's analysis of what she referred to as the "democratic paradox." While formerly seeking to ground images of critical theorizing, radical but pluralistic democracy, and "the political" on Derrida's accounts of linguistic "undecidability," she later turned to Wittgenstein for support. Although Mouffe eschewed attempting to "extract" a specific political theory from Wittgenstein and rejected the idea of "elaborating one on the basis of his writings," she claimed that Wittgenstein pointed "to a *new way of theorizing* about the political, one that breaks with the

universalizing and homogenizing mode that has informed most of liberal theory since Hobbes" (2002, 60–61; also 1996, 2001). Mouffe built in part on what she took to be Pitkin's suggestion that Wittgenstein's work entailed the "need to accept plurality and contradiction and the emphasis on the investigating and speaking self." Although she accepted Tully's critique of rationalists who predicated freedom on critical "self-reflection," Mouffe claimed to find in Wittgenstein a basis for a "'radical-pluralistic-democratic' vision" and for advocating a "form of life" constituting a "democratic consensus" that embodied an "agonistic pluralism." The pragmatic turn in philosophy, which detranscendentalized reason and embraced a practice-based rationality, converged, she argued, with the linguistic theory of Derrida and offered the political theorist an opportunity not only to embrace democracy but also to participate as a critical spectator (2002, 71, 77).

Any number of thinkers could have been employed to adduce Mouffe's support for these abstract images of political theory and democracy. There have been a wide range of attempts to enlist Wittgenstein in support of democracy, often based on general ideas of plurality, as well as in defense of various notions of critical theorizing—whether of a foundationalist or reverse foundationalist and deconstructive sort, but they suffer from the same kinds of difficulties as the literature discussed above (e.g., Holt 1970; Rubenstein 1981; Easton 1983; Brill 1995; Glendinning 1998). They also parallel a considerable body of literature in philosophy, which seeks to place Wittgenstein in the company of either pragmatism or deconstructionism. One difficulty with both strategies is that they seek to access Wittgenstein through work that claims to be inspired by him, such as that of Rorty, or that might seem in some way to resemble him, such as that of Derrida. However, as Zerilli has pointed out, Wittgenstein's "practice of thinking exemplifies a conception both of plurality, which is not reducible to the (deconstructive) notion of undecidability, and of judgment, which is not reducible to the (pragmatist) understanding of 'form of life'" (2001, 25). What many political theorists and philosophers are doing with Wittgenstein represents exactly what he deemed to be one of the persistent pathologies of philosophy, that is, to take the natural attitudes of certainty and doubt that make sense in ordinary particular circumstances and raise them to the level of universal, dichotomous ontological and epistemological positions.

Nigel Pleasants has offered an extended and effective critique of the uses of Wittgenstein in service of a vision of critical theory (1999). He argued that a wide range of defenders of some version of critical theory have attempted to insinuate Wittgenstein into their arguments by

suggesting that his work at least points toward a theory of language or a social ontology that provides transcendental foundations of judgment. Pleasants claimed that this strategy is, however, undermined by Wittgenstein's pointed rejection of theory and explanation in favor of description and by the absence in his work of any metaphysical or psychological argument of the kind sought by critical theory. On the contrary, Pleasants maintained, Wittgenstein renounced the idea of philosophy as a master-science based on a deeper "realism" of either structures or consciousness. The only type of critique that Wittgenstein's work supports, Pleasants suggested, is "immanent critique," which exposes internal contradictions and self-generated dilemmas such as those represented in the idea of a private language. Although Pleasants presented a persuasive critical analysis of neofoundationalism in contemporary critical theory, the antitheoretical stance that he attributed to Wittgenstein must be examined more carefully. Wittgenstein often claimed to eschew "theory," but what he was referring to in these instances were primarily scientific theories and metaphysical theories. Although Wittgenstein certainly did not embrace a rationalist position, his view of the relationship between philosophy and its object of inquiry was, as I will attempt to demonstrate in Chapter 6, more complicated than Pleasants allowed.

Much of the desperation that continues to attend attempts to appropriate Wittgenstein ends by construing him in some very generic way as "political," such as suggesting that his challenge to skepticism makes philosophy "an intrinsically political activity" (e.g., Pohlhaus and Wright 2002). Despite the fact that Wittgenstein seemed to offer only "meager and enigmatic fare" for political theory, an edited volume was devoted to specifying the "relevance to political thought of the methods Wittgenstein outlines" (Heyes 2003). This book included a reprise of Tully's criticism of the view "that our way of political life is free and rational only if it is founded on some form or other of critical reflection," and it included essays, such as that of Zerilli, addressing some of the ways in which Wittgenstein's work might apply to some specific issues. It also sought to rescue him from images that cast him as a "skeptical conservative or hapless relativist," but much of the volume was still concerned with "indirect," and maybe tenuous, connections between Wittgenstein and political theory, and it persisted in suggesting that what makes his work "political" is basically its potential for various forms of critical theory. One of the most interesting confrontations with Wittgenstein's work and how it might relate to the study of politics was that of Gavin Kitching (2003). This book consisted of a series of essays, largely in their original form, written over a period of 20 years as the author struggled to relate his evolving

understanding of Wittgenstein to a range of problems in political and social inquiry ranging from an early commitment to structural Marxism to the puzzles presented by postmodernism. His principal concern was to wean himself and other Marxists off scientism and to stress the need for moral reasoning in producing a more intellectually defensible and less arrogant and authoritarian political practice.

In a volume devoted to Cavell's significance for political philosophy, the essays abounded with references to "the political," and Cavell himself fastened onto this phrase as if it were a term of art (Norris 2006). There are two credible and common meanings for the word "politics." One is the name of a specific, indigenous, preconstituted, self-ascribed, and historically and culturally distinguished, conventional, and changing form of human activity, defined in part in terms of its relationship to other practices, activities, and spheres of life such as religion and economics. In this sense, it is something that has a history but that, in some places, may not exist. The other meaning is based on a derivative functional, analytical, or categorical use or projection of the term, which usually involves taking some attribute associated with the historical practice of politics (power, the pursuit of interest, public life, etc.), abstracting it, reapplying it in a generic manner, and often reifying it. This form of misplaced concreteness is what tends to be represented in claims about "the political" even though they masquerade as something more basic. While there are claims, such as those of sociobiology, that endow politics with what might be called a theoretical status, that is, that suggest some underlying substantive connection between instances of politics, they are dubious, but the kind of universality implied by many uses of the term "the political" are more metaphysical than empirical. Cavell is certainly a sensitive and creative interpreter of Wittgenstein, but when someone argues that Wittgenstein's "legacy for political philosophy" and contribution to the "ethos of democracy" can be perceived through Cavell's rendition of Ralph Waldo Emerson coupled with Derrida's conception of "democracy-to-be," and as taking the form of a reminder of the aesthetic dimension of our judgments and the "undetermined" but "processional perfectionism" of democratic life manifest in contemporary demands such as that for cultural recognition (Owen 2001), the spirit of Wittgenstein, let alone the body of his work, is lost. There is no doubt, as so many have pointed out, that Wittgenstein heightens our sense of values such as "multiplicity" (e.g., Mulhall 1994; Tully 1995), but the significance of Wittgenstein is often missed when he is appropriated to validate a range of preconceived positions. What most commentators have sought in Wittgenstein is, paradoxically or ironically, the very kind of answers that he so pointedly

claimed philosophy could not provide. Consequently, social and political theorists either strain to appropriate his work or vilify him as the progenitor of relativism. The antipathy for Wittgenstein, and for his legacy as represented in the work of individuals such as Winch, Kuhn, and Rorty, is really the expression of resentment for what his work does not support. While so much of the criticism has ostensibly revolved around the fear that his work undermines qualities such as objectivity, certainty, and truth in human practices, the real concern is that it undercuts the claim of metapractices to special and foundational access to the criteria for applying these concepts, which is a concern that is well-grounded.

Wittgenstein rejected the "craving for generality" (1958, p. 17) that had characterized and continued to inform much of philosophy and its search for an "essence" to language (2001, 97) and for a metaphysical answer to the relationship between language and the "world." He was, nevertheless, exploring and seeking to reveal what *kind* of thing language is and how it operates in human life, and this entailed an account of conventional phenomena such as what he referred to when he spoke of "language-games" and "forms of life." As unsystematic as his style may have been, Wittgenstein was presenting, or at least engaging, crucial elements of a theory of social reality. It may be difficult to specify the genre to which his literary contribution belongs, but he indicated that even if it were a "collection of wisecracks" (Geir 1981, 7), they did in effect "form a system," and the ultimate task in drawing on Wittgenstein is to render that system more systematically. Wittgenstein's "investigations" exemplified a kind of phenomenology of conventionality. Much of what he meant by "ordinary" were the particulars or surfaces of various forms of conventionality, but in describing such phenomena, he found it necessary to go beyond dominant philosophical and commonsense notions of language and linguistic meaning. He was not committing himself to some kind of idiographic exploration of linguistic usage. In frequently noting that meaning is use (e.g., 2001, 343), he was not positing an alternative to claims such as one that equated meaning with reference but rather saying something general about the meaning of meaning and the representational function of language. His work was a combination of the general and specific, the explanatory and descriptive, and in this sense equivalent to what might be understood as theory in any realm—including natural science. This involved, however, not only an account of the kind of phenomena that philosophy, or any metapractical activity, addressed but also a confrontation with the issue of the epistemic and existential relationship of those practices to their subject matter.

As I will continue to stress in the following chapter, the fundamental difference between natural science and metapractices such as social science and philosophy is not a difference between theoretical and nontheoretical endeavors. What most distinctly defines metapractical inquiry is the discursively autonomous character of the object of inquiry. When this basic point is articulated in terms of claims about such things as the intentional or purposive character of social phenomena, its full implications are often obscured. There are many attributes of social phenomena that must be taken into account, but it is their preconstituted and preconceptualized character that is most significant and that most fundamentally distinguishes them from natural phenomena. Wittgenstein's image of an *Ubersehen* or *übersichtlichen Darstellung* as the goal of philosophy involves sacrificing detail for what in some respects might be considered a superficial and necessarily tentative and partial overview, a way of seeing, an approach that focuses on grasping the character of a *Weltbild* or set of assumptions about reality. But behind such representations is, necessarily, a general conception of what *kind* of thing is represented.

The recent emphasis on practices as the basic elements of social reality and the claim that Wittgenstein can be construed as a "practice theorist" or a theorist of rules and institutions (Schatzki, Cetina, and von Savigny 2001; Schatzki 1996; Bloor 1997) move the discussion of Wittgenstein in the right direction, but practices and institutions are, in the end, simply some of the forms in which conventions are manifest. Conventions are the theoretical objects (Gunnell 1998, Ch. 2). One implication of Wittgenstein's conventionalism is that we should not seek a theory of politics, or "the political," or even a theory of democracy, since politics is only a historically contingent genus of practice, and democracy is only a species of that practice. Politics in general and democracy in particular have no theoretical status, but political theorists continue to be tempted to essentialize and universalize both "the political" and the activity of studying it, and it is particularly paradoxical when they turn to Wittgenstein for support. There is a similar problem in seeking support for traditional images of critical theory. The dilemma that lies at the heart of much of the discussion in contemporary democratic theory is still that of how it is possible to, at once, endorse both conventionality and democracy and yet hold to the possibility of some form of metapractical judgment that exceeds that of "normal" claims in the practices that are scrutinized. This is, however, a dilemma for which there is no philosophical or theoretical solution. As Wittgenstein said, "don't try and shit higher than your arse" (Edmonds and Eidinow 2001, 16). One way of posing and joining this issue is to

think about the constant tension in Wittgenstein's work between what might be called the contemplative and therapeutic attitudes.

There are his claims, on one hand, that what must be accepted as given are the "forms of life," that philosophy leaves everything as it is, and that the task of philosophy is only to describe. On the other hand, there is Wittgenstein's image of philosophy as a critical activity that seeks to restrain language from going astray, release us from the pictures that hold us captive, and show us the way out of the fly bottle. How can the philosopher, the second-order commentator, mediate between the "ice" and the "rough ground," that is, stay focused on and accept the "ordinary" while at the same time map that ground and demonstrate how the terrain is often perceived in a distorted manner? How can philosophers be true to both achieving clarity about human conventions and yet critically intervening in the forms of life?

An argument, such as that of Pleasants, which suggests that Wittgenstein's work leads to a notion of immanent critique is in some ways persuasive but not without its problems. While the concept of immanent critique might refer to conduct *within* a practice, it is usually conceived as a nonfoundationalist mode of critique from an external metapractical position. In this respect, it in no way solves the fundamental practical issue of the relationship between second- and first-order practices. One might go a step further, as some have, and urge that what is entailed by Wittgenstein's work is the demand that the philosopher must enter the "cave," descend into what he referred to as the complex labyrinth of "the city" (2001, 18), and become something resembling either an organic intellectual or a Socratic participant. While this may, from some perspective, be a defensible recommendation for dealing with the metapractical dilemma, it has little basis in Wittgenstein's work, and apart from a few exceptions, it has little to do with the actual situation and conduct of contemporary social science and political theory. He did not suggest that philosophy can or should become part of what it studied, and much of his analysis presupposes that what is at issue is the *relationship* between philosophy, as a distinct practice, and the practices about which it speaks. The basic but endemic practical paradox of metapractical activity is that it, at least historically, originated in or sprang from its subject matter to which it now seeks to speak and affect. The corollary epistemic paradox is that it seeks to understand the subject matter and convey that understanding both to other metapractitioners and to social actors but at the same time must render that understanding in a language that is, in varying degrees descriptively and theoretically different from that of the actors. This is the

kind of relationship that political theory must forthrightly confront, and Wittgenstein does, at least, offer a way of thinking about this matter.

When Wittgenstein made statements about the contemplative character of philosophy, his point, which I will attempt to demonstrate yet more fully in the next chapters, was that the activity of philosophy does not as such, that is, by virtue of its existence and claims, transform the "world" of the practices about which it speaks. While in natural science, for example, the "world" *is*, in effect, transformed discursively, the criteria of truth and knowledge in the practices addressed by philosophy are neither automatically grounded in nor disestablished by philosophical analysis. This in no way prohibits a practical relationship between philosophy and the discourses and practices about which it speaks, but it does suggest that the relationship cannot be conducted on the presumption of the inherent authority and efficacy of the former. But while philosophy qua philosophy does not have an impact on its object of analysis, the product of philosophizing may very well have practical implications and possibilities—and purposes. This raises significant and complex empirical and normative issues about whether and how philosophy does impact its subject matter and about the extent to which it should have such an impact. Wittgenstein, in his own work, however, was primarily concerned with reforming philosophy rather than transforming its objects of analysis.

When Wittgenstein was talking about philosophy, he was, almost without exception, talking about a quite specific intellectual practice and not about some abstract or functional category of reflection. He was referring to what he did and had done: the work of Russell, Frege and the like and, at the very far limits, someone such as Plato. There can be no doubt that much of what Wittgenstein wanted to accomplish was a change in philosophy itself, and he believed that ultimately this could only be done by a truly immanent critique, by criticizing it *and* practicing it differently. As he said, "bad philosophers are like slum landlords, and it is my job to put them out of business" (Edmonds and Eidinow 2001, jacket). For Wittgenstein, philosophy's mistakes were in many respects the same as those that led people astray in various social practices. Philosophy's transgressions, however, were more serious. It often pushed the mistakes to grand proportions and perpetuated the myths and bewitchment that ordinary language allowed or invited. The history of Wittgenstein's work and its impact on the philosophical enterprise is a testament to the powers of criticism *within* a practice; it is a model for any activity such as political theory and indicates that reforming a metapractice must precede the reform of its subject matter. The lesson that the "vocation" of political theory might first draw from Wittgenstein is the necessity for

an immanent critique of its own identity rather than seeking grounds for justifying its existing practices and its claim to authority over other practices. What philosophizing, or any metapractical activity, could, and should, accomplish with respect to other activities is far less clear in Wittgenstein's work.

It is reasonable to ask, as many have, why Wittgenstein should be construed as having anything important to say about this matter, since this was not something with which he had much actual experience. He did, however, confront the issue. When he said that "the philosopher is not a citizen of any community of ideas" (1967, 455), he meant that for individuals *as* philosophers, this was the case, not that as a person the philosopher necessarily lacked involvement in various social practices. Nor did he mean that the activity of philosophy did not constitute a community of ideas, even if it was a community for which he often had contempt. His point was that part of the principal and typical business of the philosopher was examining other communities, and this involved and required a certain sense, and position, of detachment. It is a mistake to assume that Wittgenstein's rejection of philosophical foundationalism entailed an abolishment of a distinction between philosophy and its object. Michel de Certeau has argued, with respect to Wittgenstein, that "by being 'caught' within ordinary language, the philosopher no longer has his own (*proper*) appropriable place. Any position of mastery is denied him . . . Philosophical or scientific privilege disappears into the ordinary" (de Certeau 1984, 11). But the philosopher is not "caught" within ordinary language except in the sense that this is where analysis begins—and to which it must return. This does not mean that the site of the philosopher is abolished—only that it has no given special authority in relationship to its object of inquiry.

Since philosophy is a metapractice, "philosophical investigations" are, as Wittgenstein pointed out, "conceptual investigations," that is, investigations of concepts and of the practices in which they are embedded. The problem with metaphysics, or much of philosophy in the fashion that Wittgenstein encountered it, and maybe formerly practiced it, was first of all that "it obliterates the distinction between factual and conceptual investigation" (1967, 458). That is, like his own early work in the *Tractatus*, it tried to say something about the "world" rather than about the first-order concepts that are constitutive of the world. Making concepts and talking about concepts are two different things, whatever at any time the ultimate practical relationship between the two activities may be. Wittgenstein's animus was against philosophy attempting to appropriate for itself the role of a discourse such as natural science or religion. The

task was, on the contrary, "to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use," and by "everyday" and "ordinary" Wittgenstein did not mean simply what we might think of as the language of common sense but of first-order discourses in general (2001, 116). The task of philosophy was the exploration of a conceptual universe, and "a philosophical problem has the form: 'I don't know my way about.'" The task was to create descriptions, "sketches of landscapes," that might compose an "album" (2001, v, ix, 123).

Doing philosophy can, as such, "in no way interfere with the actual use of language, it can in the end only describe it. For it cannot give it any foundation either. It leaves everything as it is" since "philosophy simply puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything" (Wittgenstein 2001, 124, 126). What Wittgenstein sought was an overview, survey, or "perspicuous representation" or "presentation" of what is "given," that is, the "forms of life" and the "language-games" associated with them—what, again, might be called a "natural history" (2001, 25, 415) of first-order practices. It was an interpretive enterprise, and this presupposed, as part of the very concept of interpretation, the prior discursive identity of the object of inquiry and a fundamental difference between first- and second-order (as well as second- and third-order) discourses and practices. Interpreting is a distinct kind of practice, and an interpretation is another text. But the interpretation, description, and theoretical criteria on which they rest are hardly necessarily innocuous. At one point Wittgenstein said of his work, "I destroy, I destroy, I destroy," but he later noted that what is destroyed is "nothing but houses of cards and we are cleaning up the ground of language on which they stand" (1984, p. 21; 2001, p. 118). "A *picture* held us captive," and it was rooted in our language. This imagery of destruction applied, as already noted, more to the activity of philosophy than to what philosophy studied, but it did not imply that philosophy had no significance beyond the boundaries of its own practice. Wittgenstein was personally quite pessimistic, or maybe reticent, about the external impact of philosophy, but it was definitely an issue with which philosophy had to come to grips, even if it might be less pressing than in the case of social science whose congenital concerns were more transformative.

The descriptions produced by a second-order discourse are, in principle, in conflict—terminologically, conceptually, and theoretically—with the self-understanding and activity of the first-order practice, which is its object of inquiry, but such reconstructions are only practically meaningful if they in some way touch, or are in dialogue with, their subject matter. Wittgenstein at least hoped that he could "stimulate someone to

thoughts of his own" (2001, x), but what he personally hoped for, or did not hope for, with respect to philosophy's influence is actually quite irrelevant. The relationship between philosophy and its object is radically practical, contingent, and historically variable. As practiced today, philosophy often has little impact on what it studies, but it often has a great impact on other second-order practices such as social science. But philosophers were, in Wittgenstein's view, interpreters, and interpretation is a metapractical enterprise.

In the vast corpus of commentary on Wittgenstein, few issues have received more attention than his discussion of rules, and Saul Kripke's analysis of this matter has itself become almost an independent object of discussion (1982). The issue involved in defining the skeptical paradox that Kripke so notoriously attributed to Wittgenstein is reflected in the work of a wide range of diverse philosophers including Derrida, Quine, and Davidson. The apparent quandary is that all attempts to say what it would mean to follow a rule, or grasp the meaning of a word, end in indeterminacy and a lack of definite criteria of judgment. Some see this as a problem, which they believe may have a solution, while others embrace it as part of the human condition. In both cases, however, there is a failure to distinguish between meaning generated *within* a practice and meaning *attributed to* a practice from an external perspective. Both those who seek a definitive foundation for meaning and those who deny such foundations commit the very kind of mistake to which Wittgenstein so often pointed, that is, transforming an instance or dimension of meaning into a universal or elevating a practical problem into a transcendental dilemma. And both views are still bound to the framework of traditional theories of meaning. The image of the porous nature of meaning, about which some agonize and which others celebrate, is actually simply the vacuum created by the demise of universal philosophical criteria. In most practical instances, meaning is far too intractable, while interpretation, it might be argued, is often free to proliferate.

As I will further elaborate in Chapter 6, every instance of the use of the concept of interpretation in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* is in the context of discussing a metapractical or second-order claim, and here meaning can always be contested and appear indeterminate. Within practices, meanings change and are contested, and miscommunication takes place, but it is the stability and determinacy of meaning that is constitutive of practices. Interpretations of practices, and texts, may also be quite stable, but indeterminacy is, in many respects, at the very core of interpretation. Interpretation involves the reconstruction of meaning. It is a secondary kind of meaning or another text, which always stands as an

entity separate both from what is interpreted and from other interpretations. It is when we confuse the paradigms of interpretive and practical meaning that problems arise. At some level of abstraction, it is surely possible to see similarities between Wittgenstein and someone such as Derrida (Staten 1987), since both reject traditional theories of meaning, but there are fundamental differences. One such difference is Wittgenstein's insistence on not raising the fluidity of meaning to an ontological proposition and on distinguishing between interpretive and indigenous meaning. We might say that Wittgenstein's answer to Derrida is embodied in his aphorism that "all that philosophy can do is to destroy idols. And that means not creating a new one—for instance as in the 'absence of an idol'" (1993, 88). The idol that Wittgenstein destroyed is, however, still lurking in much of philosophy and, consequently, in much of political theory. This is why many philosophers, despite their emphasis on the constructed character of social phenomena and the interpretive character of social science, not only stress what they believe to be the "brute data" of natural science and common sense but opt for a version of philosophical realism on which to predicate conventions and to find a ground for critically assessing them (Stone 2000). This position, however, tends to reverse the actual situation. Social phenomena, unlike natural phenomena, are not automatically hostage to claims about them. Since the former are conceptually preconstituted, the business of "knowing" them is quite another business altogether—but less because of the obvious fact that they can be interpreted in various and incommensurable ways than because there are limits to significant interpretations, which are imposed by the conceptual and discursive autonomy of the subject matter. Here the "world" constituted by social phenomena really does constrain a metapractical construal of it—but not in the way positivism claimed or in the mystical manner posited by varieties of metaphysical and scientific realism.

Much of Wittgenstein's work was devoted to a critique of philosophy, and this holds two important and closely related lessons for political theory. First, the seductions of philosophy have over the years resulted in political theorists adopting many of the philosophical doctrines and mistakes that Wittgenstein attempted to expose and destroy. Second, instead of chasing after philosophical validation, political theorists should undertake the same kind of reflexive critique of their enterprise that Wittgenstein directed at philosophy. There are, however, as I will attempt to demonstrate in the next two chapters, more positive implications of Wittgenstein's work. As I have already stressed and will continue to emphasize, the importance of Wittgenstein for political theory resides in the implications of his claims for a theoretical account of social reality and

for confronting the cognitive and practical dimensions of the relationship between metapractices and their object of inquiry. It would be a mistake to neglect the therapeutic dimension of Wittgenstein's work, and there may very well be normative democratic implications related both to his account of language and his vision of philosophy, but there have been too many spurious attempts to rapidly extract such justifications.

In a symposium on Winch, Peter Lassman stated that "Winch's work is the best indication that we have of what an approach to political philosophy inspired by Wittgensteinian ideas might look like" (Lassman 2000, 129). I strongly endorse this general proposition, but my focus is on how Winch's short book revealed the implications of Wittgenstein's philosophy for rethinking the traditional distinction between natural and social science and forced a confrontation with the issue of how interpretive practices such as philosophy and social science can do justice to their object of inquiry. There was some early enthusiasm for Winch's work among political theorists (e.g., Gunnell 1968), but even from the beginning there was, as with the response to Wittgenstein, resistance based on the well-founded suspicion that it was not congenial to many of the projects of political theory.

Social Science
and Justice

> Our only task is to be just.
>
> —Wittgenstein

The question of whether social science can be just involves both the problem of how these fields can achieve what Wittgenstein referred to as "clarity" about their subject matter and the problem of their capacity for normatively assessing and judging that subject matter. Winch had much to say on this matter, but despite all the controversy that has surrounded his work, it has not been adequately understood. There is a strange way in which certain books, which have been the subject of much attention, begin to lose their original identity and take on the meanings attributed to them by various critics and defenders. This has been particularly true of Winch's *The Idea of a Social Science*. His arguments have tended to become assimilated to the terms of various stereotypical debates about issues such as relativism and the unity of scientific method. Winch's book began with an epigram quoting G. E. Lessing's statement that "it is unjust to give any action a different name from that which it used to bear in its own times and amongst its own people." Winch certainly did not subscribe to the literal force of that claim, because he clearly recognized the irreducible difference between the language of social science and the language of the social practices it studied, and like Wittgenstein and Weber, he recognized the problems and paradoxes involved in one practice seeking both to give a descriptive and explanatory account of another and to render evaluative and moral judgments.

Winch has usually been read as making an argument to the effect that because of the rule-governed or conventional character of social phenomena, the methods of social science must be significantly different from those of natural science. But although he did claim that "the conceptions

according to which we normally think of social events are logically incompatible with the concepts belonging to scientific explanation" (1958, 95), he actually said very little about the practices of either natural science or social science. He made it clear that he was speaking as a philosopher and presenting a philosophical *idea* of social science, which was opposed to another philosophical *idea* of such inquiry that had been advanced by contemporary positivists such as A. J. Ayer and T. D. Weldon. As much as both critics and defenders of Winch tended to interpret his argument as a claim about how social scientists should proceed with their investigations, he explicitly rejected such a position. Winch's immediate acquaintance with the actual practices of both the social and natural sciences was limited. He pointedly noted that he was writing as a philosopher about an issue in the philosophy of social science rather than engaging in "what is commonly understood by the term methodology" (1958, 136). His principal intention in his sometimes rhetorical elaboration of the idea of a social science was to illuminate "*its relation to philosophy*." Winch's basic argument focused on demonstrating what was common to both philosophy and social science, and this was that they were metapractices. If read superficially, Winch's argument might appear to have been simply a rendition, or prototype, of the familiar claim that while natural science studies physical objects, social science studies "meaningful behaviour" and that consequently, despite the positivist insistence to the contrary, different, or at least complementary, forms of explanation are entailed. His main point, however, was considerably more complex and profound, and in some respects could be interpreted as reversing the common criteria adduced for differentiating between these modes of inquiry.

As I have already noted, there continues to be a persistent and widely shared propensity to assume that the subject matter of natural science is in some manner objectively given, while social phenomena, both because of their conventional character and the hermeneutical or interpretive stance of the investigator, are, like a text, open to infinite exegetical manipulation. Recent versions of support for such an attribution have been derived from sources as diverse as the deconstructive philosophy of Derrida and claims about the indeterminacy of translation advanced by Quine. And Michel Foucault proclaimed that in the end everything is interpretation. The actual situation, as Winch recognized, is at least in one respect somewhat the opposite because there is an important sense in which social facts are more autonomous than those of natural science. This point is at the core of the work of both Wittgenstein and Winch, and it is central to the argument that I am advancing in this book.

The demise of logical positivism has brought an end to the idea that natural science confronts a theoretically independent realm of facts. Natural science, as well as other first-order discourses and practices such as religion, are *constructive* activities, that is, the "facts" posited by natural science are conceptualized within the discourse of science. There is no conceptual gap between theory and fact, apart from what is opened up internally within these discursive regimes. Although, for example, evolutionary biology and intelligent design are often posited as *contradictory*, they are not actually mutually exclusive, because, as distinguished from a case such as that of opposed hypotheses about the causes of global warming, they are not about the same thing. Biology and religion may both use the word "human," but the reference is to different concepts. They may, however, as Winch pointed out, circumstantially come into *conflict* with one another. The only resolution of such conflicts, as in the case of theoretical conflicts *within* a first-order discourse or, as I will suggest below, in the case of conflict between a metapractice and its subject matter, is, as Wittgenstein, Winch, and Kuhn insisted, through *persuasion* (Winch 1987, 1997). What must be resisted, however, is a leap to the assumption that reference to persuasion indicates the abdication of reasoned arguments or a construal of Wittgenstein that would suggest, as Kripke argued, that he was making the skeptical argument that the criteria of truth are the conditions of assertability accepted by a linguistic community. This sort of attribution, however, is typical of the quixotic battles against the chimera of relativism, which is still so consistently, and often carelessly, associated with images of Wittgenstein and Winch (e.g., Phillips 2006; Boghosian 2006).

As Winch, following Wittgenstein, claimed,

> Our idea of what belongs to the realm of reality is given for us in the language that we use. The concepts we have settle for us the form of the experience we have of the world [since] when we speak of the world we are speaking of what we in fact mean by the expression "the world": there is no way of getting outside the concepts in terms of which we think of the world . . . The world is for us what is presented through these concepts. That is not to say that our concepts may not change; but when they do, that means that our concept of the world has changed too. (Winch 1958, 15)

Phil Hutchinson, Rupert Read, and Wes Sharrock (2008) have convincingly demonstrated that many of the criticisms of Winch and Wittgenstein, which attribute to them some sort of neoidealist position, are flawed. Although Wittgenstein spoke about the "arbitrary" character of grammar, he did not mean whimsical. It was only that there was no

necessary relationship between words and things. Neither did he claim that our concepts are not in various ways constrained by an external world or that language creates the world; rather, he claimed that the content of the world is only accessible in language and that it makes little sense to talk about a "world" that stands, in some general philosophically specifiable manner, behind what is manifest in language and convention. This position is only relativistic from the perspective of a philosopher seeking grounds for adjudicating the claims of first-order practices.

Some postmodernist versions of antirepresentationalism, however, miss a crucial point in Winch's and Wittgenstein's arguments when they suggest, because of the manner in which reality and language are internally related, that "interpretation goes all the way down." As I have stressed in the preceding chapters, what "goes all the way down" is not an interpretation but the claims of discourses such as natural science, and as I will emphasize once again in the next chapter, the concept of interpretation implies the existence of a prior language or text toward which interpretation is directed and against which it often collides. It is in the case of metapractices such as philosophy and social science that the concepts of interpretation and representation are applicable, and it is here that it makes sense to pose the general question of how the language of inquiry makes cognitive contact with, and represents, its subject matter. The facts of social science are in one important respect conceptually autonomous, because no matter how they are conceived by the social scientist, they have been preconceived in the concepts and behavior of social actors. All social science, whatever its methods, is interpretive and representative, that is, *reconstructive*, because it addresses the conventionally prefigured conceptual universe of its subject matter. Weber believed that the application of "ideal-types" was the answer to the problem of "re-presenting" social facts, and this approach resembled what Wittgenstein would later say about philosophy's need to create "perspicuous representations." These claims suggest that the subject matter of philosophy and social science is meaningful prior to interpretation, but the question of how to do justice to that subject matter is far from settled.

Winch clearly recognized the metapractical character and logical comparability of philosophy and social science when he said that "to be clear about the nature of philosophy and to be clear about the nature of social studies amount to the same thing." He may have confused readers by using the term "philosophy" both in a functional or generic sense, such as when he equated it with the "theoretical part" of social science (1958, 41) and as a name for a particular academic practice, and part of his agenda may have been to defend the independence of the field of philosophy

from the imperialism of the empirical sciences. But when he said that "any worthwhile study of society must be philosophical in character and any worthwhile philosophy must be concerned with the nature of human society" (3), he meant that these fields were faced not only with the problem of providing a theoretical account of social phenomena but also with the problem of what was entailed in representing and interpreting such phenomena. Winch may not have adequately explained his claim that epistemology and metaphysics, generically conceived, were elements of the practices of both philosophy and social science as well as of their subject matter. His basic point, however, was that in the case of metapractices, the reality claims and criteria of knowledge inherent in their language and conceptual lexicon bump into what could be construed as the "epistemology and metaphysics" that are indigenous to the practices constituting the object of inquiry (5).

It is ironic that Pitkin's discussion of *Wittgenstein and Justice* did not mention Wittgenstein's specific references to philosophy's need and capacity to be "just," which were always, as in the case of his discussion of the *Golden Bough*, about finding a way to represent adequately the subject matter and "not to set up new parties—and creeds" (2005, 309). The basic problem that Winch posed was, as in the work of Weber and Oakeshott, how a metapractice such as social science could and should interpret or represent its subject matter. He stressed that in the case of the natural scientist "we have to deal with only one set of rules, namely those governing the scientist's *investigation* itself," which determines both the form of the practice of science and the theoretical constitution of the subject matter (1958, 87), while in the case of the social scientist, it is necessary to confront the "rules" constituting the social relations that are the object of inquiry. While many opponents of a positivist idea of social science have been sympathetic to Winch's account of the nature of social phenomena and his interpretive stance, many have continued to balk at what they have taken to be his "relativism" (e.g., Jarvie 1970, 1984). It is still common to encounter arguments to the effect that Winch, misled by Wittgenstein, concluded that the existence of conceptual differences among different first-order claims or between first-order and metapractical discourses indicated that one claim is, or must be assumed to be, as valid as any other. What both Wittgenstein and Winch actually maintained, however, was only that there was no neutral resolution of such conflicts. The charge of relativism involved what critics saw as the failure to provide some basis for the cognitive, and consequently practical, authority of metapractical claims. Although critiques of relativism are usually advanced on the pretext of saving first-order practices such

as science and politics from conceptual and moral nihilism, it is worth emphasizing still once more that such claims actually represent something closer to what Nietzsche characterized as philosophy's tendency to manifest a spiritual "will to power."

At the very point at which various forms of philosophical realism are under siege in philosophy, they are, as I have pointed out earlier, coming into vogue in various areas of social theory where there is a continuing concern about the capacity of interpretive practices of knowledge to make both explanatory and normative judgments about their subject matter. Much of social theory, as well as philosophy, have sought, however, to overcome the practical dimension of this tension by finding an epistemological solution that would vouchsafe their capacity to interpret and make normative judgments about their object of inquiry. What Winch broached continues to be a difficult philosophical and empirical issue. Can one devise a language and conceptual repertoire that justly represents and conveys the content of another conceptual domain? Or can one provide an adequate metapractical account of something that one has not directly experienced—whether, for example, an alien society, stereoscopic vision, or, to cite Thomas Nagel's classic example, what it is like to be a bat? Winch was at times less than entirely clear about this matter, but Wittgenstein, as I will argue in the next chapter, consistently distinguished between understanding and interpretation. If we assume that "understanding" means "experiencing," even virtually, the answer must be negative, but if by "understanding" we mean what can produce an interpretation that seeks to provide an intelligible description and explanation, the answer is in principle affirmative. As Winch put it, "Although the reflective student of society, or of a particular mode of social life, may find it necessary to use concepts which are not taken from the forms of activity which he is investigating, but which are taken from the context of his own investigation, still these technical concepts of his will imply a previous understanding of those other concepts which belong to the activities of investigation" (1958, 89). This led Winch to claim once more that the activities of the philosopher and the social scientist are "closely connected" (91). According to Winch, part of what made philosophy a model and analogy for thinking about the idea of a social science was "the peculiar sense in which philosophy is uncommitted enquiry" in that, at least ideally, it seeks not only to elucidate what is involved in making the world intelligible but also to reflect on "its own account of things" and its "own being." He stressed that the latter tends to "deflate the pretensions of any form of enquiry to enshrine the essence of intelligibility as such, to possess the key to reality. For connected with the realization that

intelligibility takes many and varied forms is the realization that reality has no key"—not even that of science (102). And he added that "while non-philosophical unself-consciousness is for the most part right and proper in the investigation of nature [except at critical and revolutionary junctures], it is disastrous in the investigation of a human society, whose very nature is to consist in different and competing ways, each offering a different account of the intelligibility of things. To take an uncommitted view of such competing conceptions is peculiarly the task of philosophy . . . It is not its business to advocate any Weltanschuung . . . In Wittgenstein's words, 'Philosophy leaves everything as it was'" (103).

It is important, however, to emphasize once again what both Wittgenstein and Winch meant by "leaving everything as it was"—and what Wittgenstein meant when he spoke of "forms of life" as "given." While a change in a basic concept of natural science, or any first-order discourse, transforms what in some dimension of that sphere of knowledge is meant by "nature" or the "world," changes in the concepts of philosophy and social science do not automatically reconstitute the conceptual universe represented in their subject matter. This, however, is quite different from the contingent issue of whether the reconstructions of social science and philosophy have, or should have, an impact on that subject matter. It is not only that an interpretation is another "text" but also that its practical relationship to what is interpreted is also always at issue. What Winch insisted on was, first of all, the need for interpreters to render adequately and fairly the object of inquiry and not simply to reaffirm their own beliefs. He, no more than Wittgenstein, was advocating either philosophical "quietism" or political conservatism, and he never rejected a critical stance, even though he tended to emphasize the potential for self-reflection more than the enlightenment of others. Although the case might be made that Wittgenstein personally may have been dubious about philosophy's capacity to interfere with or reform other practices, he by no means doubted the possibility or rejected the idea that "doing justice to them" included a critical perspective as well as an attitude of respect.

In the context of Western culture, it is often difficult to sort out the complexities of metapractical inquiry and its relationship to its subject matter, because both the investigator and the investigated often share a similar basic ontology. This is why anthropology provides a helpful venue for thinking about how social science relates to the practices that are its object of inquiry. It is easy to see that in many relatively insulated non-Western cultures, there is not much sense in trying to differentiate and specify, except in a categorical, metaphorical, or functional respect, the existence and boundaries of spheres such as politics, science, religion, and

the like, which reflect a particular manner of discriminating and order-
ing social relations. And while many in our society might suggest that
political theory is a form of politics, there is usually no difficulty, despite
the etymological connection, in recognizing a difference, both morally
and conceptually, between anthropology and anthropophagy. Philosophy,
however, is not something of one piece. Despite the general logical cor-
respondence between philosophy and social science as metapractices, the
philosophy of *social* science, as opposed to the philosophy of natural sci-
ence, is involved with talking about another interpretive practice, and the
issue of the cognitive and practical relationship between the philosophy of
social science and the practice of social science must be confronted—just
as in the case of the relationship between social science and the practices
it studies.

Winch referenced R. G. Collingwood's "allegation that some accounts
of magical practices in primitive societies offered by 'scientific' anthro-
pologists often mask 'a half-conscious conspiracy to bring into ridicule
and contempt civilizations different from their own.'" He also noted Wit-
tgenstein's remark that, in encountering "philosophical difficulties over
the use of some of the concepts of our language," we are "like savages
confronted with something from an alien culture." He suggested the "cor-
ollary" that "sociologists who misinterpret an alien culture are like philos-
ophers getting into difficulty over the use of their own concepts" (1958,
103, 114). He claimed that the analogy was "plain," but although he was
obviously once again drawing a parallel between conceptual clarification
in philosophy and social scientific interpretation, he did not elaborate on
the character of the similarity. These remarks led, however, quite directly
to Winch's well-known confrontation with the issue of "understanding a
primitive society" (1970).

Winch's essay can be interpreted as a hypothetical attempt to put into
practice his idea of a social science, but he was also, at least obliquely,
addressing a matter left somewhat in abeyance in the book. Although he
had seemed to reject any special authority for social science and philoso-
phy with respect to their practical relationship to their subject matter, he
also implied that his conception of philosophy, and social science, was one
that assumed that they had something to contribute to, as well as to learn
from, that subject matter. Metapractical investigators, he insisted, were
in several respects more than "underlabourers," even though it was neces-
sary to reject the claim that they were "master-scientists" or the creators
of first-order reality claims. Winch focused on anthropology, because it
starkly revealed the problematic involved in social science attempting to
penetrate and render an account of its subject matter in the context of

a clash between the metaphysics and epistemology of social science and that of the social actors. Winch was now clearly speaking more specifically about how social scientists conducted their activity and about how they *should* conduct it. Here both the cognitive and practical dimensions and paradoxes of the relationship were clearly manifest, but the issue of the relationship between social science and the philosophy of social science was also more directly confronted.

Winch's essay was, at least in part, prompted by Alasdair MacIntyre's criticism of Winch on the grounds that his approach in the book was too much like that of anthropologists such as E. Evans-Pritchard who, in their explanations of culture, failed to take various dimensions of causality into account (MacIntyre 1970). Although MacIntyre agreed with Winch that, in the first instance, it was necessary to describe and explain actors in terms of both the "stock" of concepts, which belonged to their self-understanding and in terms of the reasons they provided as the basis of their conduct, he insisted that this did not bar causal explanation, because mental states such as belief could be construed as causes. It is not clear that Winch would have rejected this limited notion of causality, which did not necessarily imply a demand for nomothetic explanation, but MacIntyre also argued that Winch failed to deal with the deeper issue of why people held the beliefs, concepts, motives, and reasons that they did. It was necessary, he claimed, to consider whether the rules that people professed to follow were actually the ones that they did follow and, most important, to judge whether their views of the world were logically and substantively rational. Referencing Marx and Durkheim, MacIntyre argued that Winch neglected such matters as false consciousness and the extent to which imposed social roles and other structural features of society influenced how individuals behaved. Furthermore, MacIntyre suggested that there were certain basic actions (such as going for a walk) that were not conventional or rule-governed. Even though it is questionable whether something such as going for a walk was not within the scope of what Winch referred to as rule-governed, Winch's position did not in any way preclude recognizing the issues that MacIntyre raised. What most fundamentally prompted MacIntyre's criticism, however, was his concern about establishing a realist philosophical epistemic basis for authoritative metapractical claims about social phenomena. His principal concern was with what he argued was the inability of Winch's approach to make comparisons between societies on the basis of universal criteria of truth, reason, and fact. He claimed that, in explaining human action, certain forms of behavior should be taken as rational, because they were substantively and procedurally rational, while actions that did not accord

with objective standards of rationality required further explanation. And it was hard to miss the implication that such "irrational" behavior should be open to reformation.

MacIntyre's argument would be typical of many later criticisms of Winch, which, from various and diverse ideological and philosophical perspectives, wished to establish grounds of cognitive and practical authority for philosophy and social science. It was not that Winch was unaware of this issue but rather that he explicitly confronted and rejected the view that there could be such grounds. Winch claimed that the explanation of social action involved coming to grips with the difference, and relationship between, two modes of "intelligibility" and rationality. Even though we might fruitfully perceive analogies between our view of the world and a culture that manifested a different view, what was required was not in the first instance making alien social actors look like us or judging them in terms of our conception of the world but rather "extending" our perspective or seeking the resources within it that would render their actions intelligible and meaningful. Wittgenstein had insisted that he wished to avoid the assumption of "sameness" and instead "teach you differences," and according to Winch, grasping differences would increase our reflective sensitivity even if it did not lead us to change our ideas about reality and the criteria of truth. And it did not propel us to recreate their world in our image. Winch adopted the work of Evans-Pritchard as a foil, and in response to MacIntyre, he also wanted to point out that his own approach was more radical than that of Evans-Pritchard in that it stressed how an interpretation of another culture required placing the beliefs "in the context of the way of life of those people." It was not so much that language determined a culture as that a culture or form of life entailed certain language-games. As Wittgenstein noted, "in the beginning was the deed" (1984, p. 31).

Winch argued that in studying an alien culture, such as the Azande, an anthropologist should attempt to describe practices and beliefs, such as those associated with what was commonly referred to as witchcraft, in terms that are both faithful to the conceptions held by the actors yet communicable to one's peers who possessed very different beliefs based, often, on modern Western science and Western norms of rationality. This tension was obvious, even in the use of terms such as "primitive society." Despite the tendency to assume that the Azande were in some sense "irrational" and to explain the perpetuation of their behavior and "mistaken beliefs" in functional terms, Winch, in the end, insisted that while one could in some sense translate the terms of their culture into those recognizable to social scientific investigators and their relevant community, the

culture of the Azande and Western thought were at certain key points, as Kuhn would say with regard to successive scientific theories, incommensurable. Many social theorists had already sensed that this was the implication of Winch's book, and the coda represented by this essay would, like the book, be the subject of persistent criticism from a wide spectrum of thought in both social science and philosophy. The issue was less the character and status of Western rationalism, which was itself a matter of some dispute, than the implication that Winch's argument threatened to deprive philosophy and social science of any fixed standard of transcontextual judgment. What Winch was seeking to convey was that part of the dilemma in understanding an alien society was that the investigator was caught, inevitably, in a paradox of commitment. The investigator not only possessed, or was possessed by, first-order assumptions about the world in general but also acted on the basis of metapractical theoretical views about the basic nature of social phenomena, which often deviated from the beliefs of social actors. In addition, there was the issue of the extent to which the investigator embraced some moral *Weltanschuung*, which overlaid the *Weltbild* that informed the investigator's attempt to interpret and judge another way of life.

Winch acknowledged that while Evans-Pritchard did not go as far as some earlier anthropologists, who argued for the superiority of Western causal science on the grounds that it was in some respect a product of evolved "superior intelligence," he nevertheless assumed that the Azande's "magical" account of the world lacked an adequate reasoned conception of "objective reality." Winch's disagreement with Evans-Pritchard turned on the latter's retention of the assumption that it made sense to speak of a given "reality," which stood outside both Azande magic and modern scientific reason and in terms of which the two world-views could be compared. Although Winch pointedly rejected any "extreme Pythagorean relativism," which would deny the cogency of the very concept of an independent reality, he maintained that different and often incomparable theories are constitutive of what we generically refer to as reality or the world—even within the practice of science (1970, 81). The "reality" that Evans-Pritchard evoked was already embedded in the dominant science and common sense of his time and in the ordinary language of his culture. MacIntyre had emphasized that the genesis of the concepts held by a society can be explained historically, but Winch noted that this also applied to the concepts that constituted the perceptions of the social scientist. While the social scientist had an interest not shared by the Azande, that is, studying the Azande, this did not mean that the concepts of the social scientist could be used as the benchmark for explaining and assessing

Azande culture—as if the first-order cosmology of the Azande consisted of hypotheses that, anymore than those of Western science, could be tested against some universal form of experience. To interpret another society objectively, it was necessary, Winch argued, to set aside, in as far as possible, our point of view in order to grasp theirs, and to do so was less like translating from one language into another than moving from our everyday beliefs to an understanding of advanced science or mathematics, but it was even more difficult because at least mathematics, unlike Azande "magic," had a place in our culture.

In a statement that again echoed Wittgenstein, Winch claimed that "reality is not what gives language sense. What is real and unreal shows itself in the sense that language has" and in the criteria of "agreement" that grammar supplies for judging the matter of correspondence between language and the world (1970, 82). Winch stressed that although he defended the position that what might be called "magic" represented "a coherent universe of discourse like science" and that Azande beliefs could not be adequately interpreted in terms of "mistakes" in logic and fact, he did not want to suggest that it, anymore than science, was "immune from rational criticism" based on either internal or external criteria. The criteria for such criticism, however, could not be derived from some neutral transcendental realm of reality and logic. Winch compared the differences between himself and Evans-Pritchard to the differences between the early and later work of Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein, he argued, had finally turned away from a narrow referential account of linguistic meaning and focused instead on the many uses or applications of language and how "what counts as 'agreement' and 'disagreement' with reality takes on as many different forms as there are different uses of language" (90). Even what constituted a "contradiction" might differ between language communities, and it would be a "category mistake" to assume that the culture of the Azande represented a primitive attempt to practice science. Winch argued that a careful understanding of an alien culture might very well demonstrate (much in the way that Wittgenstein had approached criticizing Frazer) that despite some fundamental differences in images of reality between our culture and theirs, there might be more similarities than typically assumed, and that maybe an openness to such parallels could provide insights that would lead to a more nuanced understanding of ourselves. It would be a gross distortion to suggest that Winch claimed that all world-views were equally valid. His point was rather, once again, that there was no definitive metatheoretical resolution to conflicts between such views.

The background of this discussion of rationality involved, and concealed, some important theoretical issues about the nature of language, the process of language acquisition, and the theory of human action. Winch, however, was sensitive to the charge of relativism and was willing to accept that there are certain universal "limiting notions" that are common to all cultures and that have a certain "ethical" import (1970, 107–11). These included birth and death and the fact that all humans have a conception of their own life. This kind of distinction between the particular and the universal was, however, not really a concession to claims about the existence of transcendental standards of judgment or to claims about the superiority of some particular account of rationality. Although in his later work Winch may have been attempting to soften his argument about cultural incommensurability, he was primarily pointing to functional similarities between cultures and to the manner in which all cultures tend to make a distinction between categories of natural and conventional (Winch 1972).

In a yet later discussion (1987), Winch was more explicit in arguing that although in particular instances we can observe people making a distinction between what is actually the case and what might be thought to be the case, we should not be misled into assuming that there are universal criteria for distinguishing between what is true and false. In his discussion of understanding a primitive society, Winch was not denying the existence of distinctions between true and false or even suggesting that Western science, from his standpoint, was no better than magic. He was instead addressing the issue of how an investigator could accurately give an account of the manner in which the distinction is rendered in the context of an alien society. Although Winch's metaphysical realist critics have attributed to him the view that different languages describe different realities, his actual point was, following Wittgenstein, that a language is neither a theory nor a description of reality nor a set of beliefs about reality that can be compared with the facts of reality, but rather a medium or form in which the criteria of real and unreal appear and in which speakers make reality claims and express beliefs with respect to what is true and false. What Winch was in part getting at was the manner in which our language, in which we use phrases such as "claims about reality" or "theories of reality," leads us astray by allowing generic designations such as "reality," "world," and "truth" to act as if they referred to some actual object. It is not that there are different theories of reality in the sense, for example, that we might speak about different hypotheses in natural science. It is in our theories that the sense of reality emerges.

In order to further illuminate these matters and extend consideration of what is involved in "understanding a primitive society," it is worth examining one of the most contentious cases in the annals of contemporary social science. This was the controversy in anthropology revolving around the death of Captain James Cook. Although in this case, as in Winch's work, the cognitive and practical relationships among the philosophy of social science, the practice of social science, and the activities constituting a society were involved, the basic perspective was different. In the case of interpreting the situation surrounding the demise of Cook, the perspective, in the first instance, was from within the practice of social science rather than the philosophy of social science.

In January 1778, Cook and his party, who were in search of a Northwest Passage, landed on the island of Kaua'i in the Hawaiian archipelago and made the first, and friendly but brief, formal European contact with the inhabitants. After eventually failing in his primary mission, Cook returned to the islands in November. He stopped for a short time in Maui before circumnavigating the Big Island, where he was elaborately welcomed when he moored in Kealakekua Bay. He departed in late February, but a week later, after his ship suffered storm damage, he returned. This time he was treated with hostility, and after a period of tension and conflict, he was surrounded by a large number of Hawaiians, beaten, stabbed, killed, and dismembered. There is general agreement that these events, as remembered and recorded in the written documents of the English and the oral tradition of the Hawaiians, took place (e.g., Thomas 2003; Salmond 2003). But how, from the standpoint of contemporary social science, are they or their evidentiary residue to be described, interpreted, and explained? Why did the Hawaiians kill Captain Cook? And in what terms do we judge the justice of this act?

There is a consensus that there were several precipitating incidents including Cook's attempt to hold a Hawaiian chief hostage in retaliation for the theft of a boat, but anthropologists have sought a "thicker" description. Many, most notably Marshall Sahlins of the University of Chicago, have argued that Cook was viewed by the Hawaiians as a deity. Since Cook happened to arrive at the beginning of the four-month celebration of Makahiki, the Hawaiian new year festival, the Hawaiians, it is claimed, perceived him archetypically as the fertility god Lono who was expected to appear at this time of year and sail clockwise, as Cook did, around the islands. Cook and his entourage presented an impressive image, his ships could be construed as bearing a striking resemblance to the traditional symbols depicting Lono, and his point of landing happened to be an area understood to be the "pathway of the gods." Although significant doubts

and ambiguities about Cook's exact ontological status may have begun to arise before his initial departure, his unexpected return, Sahlins argued, did not conform to the ritual and precipitated a "structural" crisis in the Hawaiian view of the world. His reappearance, it is claimed, was understood, at least by those in positions of power, as sinister and in terms of another legend involving human sacrifice and the ritual dominance of the war-god Ku after the traditional exit of Lono and the transfer of authority from the priests of Lono to the Hawaiian chiefs and their own priestly supporters (Sahlins 1982).

There had, from the beginning, been some dissent from the basic thesis of this prevailing account. It had been suggested that Cook was, in fact, not received as a god but as a chief and that the culture did not rigidly determine such perceptions. The most significant challenge, however, was mounted by Gananath Obeyesekere, a Princeton anthropologist, originally from Sri Lanka, who claimed that the dominant reconstruction was simply the latest instance in a long tradition of ethnocentric European portrayals of the apotheosis of Captain Cook and other European adventurers. Obeyesekere argued that this account was a typical example of European mythmaking, which was largely the residue of Western imperialism and which not only assumed a fundamental and invidious difference between Western and non-Western modes of thought but also propagated the idea that Westerners were characteristically viewed as gods by the "primitive" societies with whom they made contact. Obeyesekere argued that Sahlins and others failed to attribute to the Hawaiians, and non-Western cultures in general, a full capacity both for event discrimination and the form of practical judgment that Weber had termed instrumental rationality. In Obeyesekere's interpretation, which in his own manner attempted to capture the "natives' point of view," the Hawaiians acted largely on pragmatic criteria. They perceived Cook as a mortal visitor to whom they at first gave an honorific status but who, in various ways, eventually wore out his welcome as he typically had at other places in the South Pacific. Although, according to Obeyesekere, Cook was in part a victim of circumstances and caught up in commonplace disagreements, he was ultimately dealt with according to the manner in which he had acted. The Hawaiians' defleshing of Cook and the return of some of the remains to his crew was an act of honor accorded to important persons as well as a symbol of contrition in the face of fear of retribution (Obeyesekere 1992).

In a detailed but often ad hominem rejoinder, Sahlins argued that Obeyesekere not only severely distorted the ethnological and historical record in pursuit of an ideological agenda but also advanced a thesis that,

if accepted, would undermine the very possibility of anthropology as an enterprise devoted to understanding other cultures on their own terms. Sahlins claimed that rationality is largely culturally relative and that what is ethnocentric is to interpret other cultures in terms of some putatively universal, but usually Western, criteria of rational action (Sahlins 1995). Obeyesekere, however, was moved to engage this issue because of his belief that indigenous cultures were still not recognized by social scientists as equal, and referencing his own ethnic experience, he claimed that to attribute to non-Western cultures anything less than what Westerners take to be rational is an a priori depreciation, if not denigration, of their faculties.

For some, this dispute represented a debate about the relativity of rationality, and for others it was an example of the late twentieth-century culture wars, the conflict over the politics of identity, and the divergence between deconstructive/postmodernist influences and more rigorously empirical approaches to social scientific inquiry. It is probably fair to say that Obeyesekere was less interested, and experienced, in interpreting the Hawaiians than in advancing his critical thesis about European mythmaking, but Sahlins was rigidly attached to orthodox ethnological methodology and its supporting assumptions including a long-standing anthropological tradition of a commitment to cultural relativity. Subsequent to this debate, Sahlins and Obeyesekere became engaged in a heated controversy that resurrected a disagreement in anthropology about the extent to which cannibalism was an actual practice in primitive societies or a projection of Western fears about the "other" (e.g., Obeyesekere 2005). But rather than attempting to adjudicate the complicated conflicting claims of Obeyesekere and Sahlins (see Borofsky 1997), it is more important to explore the manner in which the controversy exemplifies some fundamental dimensions of social scientific inquiry in general and its relationship to the discipline of philosophy.

There are three levels or forms of discourse and the relationships among them involved in this particular case: (1) the actions of the Hawaiians and their conceptions of themselves and the world around them as represented in the historical evidence (and hearsay) regarding these actions and conceptions, (2) the interpretations advanced by the anthropologists, and (3) the internal and external epistemological defenses of those social scientific accounts. There are also three modes of institutionalized practice represented: (1) social practices, such as those constituting Hawaiian culture and its context; (2) the practices of social science; and (3) the philosophy of social science that parallels, and is reflected in, the anthropological justifications of cognitive claims. The most prominent issue is that, centered in the philosophy of social science and so prominently manifest in the

case of Winch, revolving around the concept of rationality and how it is related to social scientific interpretation. The terms of this philosophical dispute have, however, also often become part of the discourse of social science, part of its rhetoric of inquiry in defense of alternative research strategies and substantive social scientific claims.

What substantially added to the prominence of the debate about the death of Cook was Obeyesekere's innovative reversal of the typical image of ethnocentrism. The so-called relativist position regarding rationality had been characteristically enlisted, in a long line of anthropological literature reaching back at least to Franz Boas, as a defense of cultural parity. In Obeyesekere's formulation, however, the defense of universal rationality became the basis of a different kind of claim to equality. Both Sahlins and Obeyesekere perceived themselves, in many respects, as excusing and validating the Hawaiians, but this normative vector was probably more a function of the contemporary disposition of the discipline of anthropology and its rejection of its missionary heritage than of the cognitive approaches. Most of Sahlins's evidence related to British accounts and to Hawaiian stories after the arrival of the missionaries, which were the very sources that Obeyesekere called into question by stressing the need to scrutinize the context and motives of the texts, which themselves required interpretation. Obeyesekere, however, seemed more intent on demonstrating that the aboriginal Hawaiians were basically like "us" than with illuminating their particular view of the world. His Sri Lankan experience, which was a mixture of indigenous and colonial influences, was not necessarily the best perspective for approaching an interpretation of eighteenth-century Hawaiian culture, which was largely free of European infiltration.

As much as Sahlins was concerned with the distinctiveness and autonomy of particular cultures, and with how cultural structures change through experiences such as that of the Hawaiian contact with Cook, the underlying premise of his explanation of the death of Cook was that the Hawaiians made a very big, but reasonable, mistake in identifying Cook with Lono. Although most contemporaries would tend to share his background theoretical assumptions about the "world," the implication was something like suggesting that, given what we know today about the laws of physical motion and how they do not accord with common sense, we can understand how Aristotle happened to get it so terribly wrong. Yet Obeyesekere, intent on demonstrating that basic human thinking does not vary much through time and space, also, in his own way, assumed that the reality question was largely unproblematic. Sahlins and Obeyesekere both claimed that they had a firm grasp on what is real, but this led them to very different interpretive conclusions. One of the problems involved

in the controversy was that both Sahlins and Obeyesekere were caught up in exclusive categories. One might ask if treating Cook as a god was really incompatible with attributing to him human characteristics. Christian theology, for example, has found a way of doing this for centuries, and one might ask if the attributes ascribed to Lono equated with the manner in which either god or mortal tend to be construed in Western culture, where the typical orders of being (god, nature, society, and individual), unlike many ancient and contemporary non-Western cultures, are quite strictly differentiated.

What may be most interesting about this case, however, is how various commentators have reacted to it. Professionalism usually seemed to triumph over ideology and philosophy, but the intersection of philosophy and social science was evident. Those addressing the case tended to side, on scholarly grounds, with Sahlins, because he adduced what might seem to be an overwhelming amount of documentary and ethnological evidence. The philosopher Ian Hacking, who may be more of a rationalist and realist than Obeyesekere, and who has professed "fairly strong 'Enlightenment' universalist prejudices" (1999), maintained that "so long as there are some shared interests, two mutually alien peoples, anywhere, can get to understand each other remarkably quickly on a vast range of matters that are, for both of them, practical and pragmatic." Yet, although this position would seem to imply favoring Obeyesekere, Hacking decided that Sahlins had won on the basis of evidence and that Sahlins's response to Obeyesekere's "angry and powerful attack" was "a splendid work of refutation and revenge, judicious but remorseless, urbane yet gritty" (1995, 6, 9). Geertz saw the debate as an "almost Manichean contrast" on the issue of the depth of cultural difference but one that posed for social science some "fundamental theoretical questions" and "critical methodological issues." Although he noted that each party acted as a "tribune for his subjects, their Public Defender in a world that has pushed them aside," he less surprisingly, given the interpretive approach in anthropology that he had promulgated, also ultimately sided with Sahlins. Despite his suggestion that Sahlins's tightly constructed scenario "risks the charge of ethnological jiggery and excessive cleverness," he found it "markedly the more persuasive." He took Obeyesekere's critique to be "more a product of unfocused resentment—ideological 'ire'—than of evidence, reflection, and 'common sense'" and, consequently, ready to "beat-the-snake-with-whatever-stick-is-handy" (Geertz 1995, 4–6).

One of the most detailed analyses of the case, however, was by Steven Lukes, a political theorist, who entered the discussion in the context of the same symposium on the work of Winch in which Lassman had

participated. Lukes had long been a strong supporter of the "rationalist" position in the wake of the controversy about Winch's arguments and the problem of "relativism." One dimension of Lukes's "realist" stance had been manifest in his work on power and his Durkheimian emphasis on how social science could reveal the interests behind systemic structural and ideological features of society, which causally impact thought and action (Lukes 1995). But Lukes had also consistently attempted to bolster his structural realism with some form of philosophical realism. Lukes's original position on "understanding a primitive society" had been largely the same as that of MacIntyre. He claimed that although certain criteria of rationality may be context-dependent, some are universally valid and relevant for assessing all beliefs. He argued that in addition to the need for assuming a certain common logical form of rationality regarding such matters as identity and contradiction, the success of science as well as our very capacity for distinguishing between truth and falsehood indicates the existence of an unrepresented ground of our representations. Furthermore, he insisted, without this transcendental assumption, our capacity to understand, let alone judge, the values and beliefs of another culture would be impossible (Lukes 1970). Lukes's concerns were not, however, primarily anthropological. His interest was in defending the idea of a social science that could sustain explanations of lapses in rationality and provide a foundation for mounting metapractical explanatory and moral judgments.

More than a decade after first weighing in on the controversy instigated by Winch, Lukes, still intent on what he referred to as putting "relativism in its place," was forced to confront additional arguments such as those of the "strong programme" in the sociology of knowledge that advanced the "symmetry thesis," that is, the thesis that both true and false claims to knowledge must be treated as products of culture and explained historically and contextually rather than the former being exempted from genealogical scrutiny on the basis of their intrinsic truth. At this point (1982), Lukes claimed that he had found new philosophical support for his position in the work of Davidson as well as in the arguments of various philosophers who had maintained that the success of Western science as an instrument of prediction and control vouchsafed the realist position. However, Davidson was in fact not a realist in any traditional sense but, on the contrary, as I have already stressed, a leading figure in the rejection of representational philosophy. His brand of antirepresentationalism, viewed superficially, was appealing to individuals such as Lukes. First of all, it gave support to the possibility of construing reasons as causes both as a proximate explanation and as a constituent element of a universe governed by physical laws. Second, and more important in this context,

Davidson, in his version of connecting language and the "world" and eliminating the concerns of both realism and idealism, moved, as opposed to Wittgenstein, in the direction of the "world." He argued that beliefs about reality and criteria of truth did not inhere in grammar but rather that language was meaningful, and statements were ultimately true and false, by virtue of their immediate and unmediated contact with the basic facts that populate the world. Davidson, like his teacher, Quine, collapsed the concepts of understanding and interpretation, but he claimed to have gone beyond Quine by dissolving the last dogma of empiricism and rejecting the "the very idea of a conceptual scheme" as an epistemological portal to the world. What some individuals such as Lukes extrapolated from Davidson's complex account was the conclusion that translation between languages as well as interpreting alien cultures was possible because of the existence of a "bridgehead" of common beliefs. This "bridgehead," it was argued, consisted of what, in common perceptual instances, a rational human being could not fail to believe. Lukes again claimed that social scientists must presuppose shared standards of truth and reference if they were to interpret, let alone critically examine, the beliefs of other cultures. But what he now added to his argument was, first of all, Davidson's recommendation that in seeking to interpret others, we should embrace the principle of "charity," which would, from the outset, entail the assumption that there were many basic universally shared beliefs. In addition, Lukes attempted to support his claim by adopting Richard Grandy's argument that we should deploy the principle of "humanity" or the assumption that the beliefs and modes of reasoning among diverse cultures are as close to ours as possible (Grandy 1973).

Lukes's reliance on Davidson was a paradigm case of a social theorist seeking to draw support from an element of philosophy without examining it carefully or understanding it well. Davidson's work actually involved a rejection of the very kind of realism that Lukes embraced, and Grandy's principle was in part advanced as a challenge, rather than a complement, to Davidson's account of charity. As an example of the alleged possibility of a neutral observation of reality, Lukes suggested Jastrow's duck-rabbit, which he argued could (much as MacIntyre had suggested with respect to walking), as both an a priori and empirical matter, be directly perceived as a set of lines without the imposition of an interpretation. To sustain this dubious claim would certainly include confronting how far it was removed from Wittgenstein's famous analysis of this case of "aspect-seeing." The controversy about Cook, however, created a fundamental dilemma for Lukes. He clearly disagreed with, what he took to be, Sahlins's Winchian perspective, but although Obeyesekere's argument

may, on the surface, seem to have accorded with Lukes's position, it had some subversive implications. Although there is no evidence that Obeyesekere relied on the arguments of Davidson anymore than Sahlins relied on Winch, Lukes construed Obeyesekere's approach as "Davidsonian." And although Lukes rejected Sahlins's interpretive strategy, based on the assumption that different cultures embody different rationalities, he could not in the end go along with Obeyesekere's claim that instrumental rationality was universal or even typical. Such a concept of rationality was, first of all, far from what Lukes had in mind, but more important, he was forced to confront a tension between the assumption that there are *universal standards* of rationality and the assumption that *rationality is universal*. If, for example, all cultures were assumed to be basically rational, in the sense that Obeyesekere implied, there would be little place for Lukes's conception of critical theory, anymore than if there were no transcultural standards of judgment.

Lukes concluded, in the end, that Obeyesekere's argument simply went too far in applying the notions of charity and humanity and that he could not accept Obeyesekere's claim that "we should make other, apparently irrational cultures 'intelligible in terms of mechanisms that are common to us as human beings.'" But this conclusion was a retreat from the position he had so long advocated. Lukes noted that in effect "Professor Obeyesekere has convinced me that I was wrong" in "endorsing Davidson's and Grandy's (implicit) methodological prescriptions for success in anthropology." Lukes doubted that there were, today, many "islands of history" untouched by Western cosmology, which would lend themselves to a "totalizing strategy of interpretation" such as that pursued by Sahlins and that, like Marcel Mauss, assumed a fundamental difference between modern and primitive societies. But although Lukes believed that in the modern world rationality might be becoming more universal, he did not want to relinquish his basic claim that "assessing the rationality of the beliefs and practices of other cultures is always both possible and necessary." He remained convinced that, after all, he had been on the "right track" a generation earlier and that the Hawaiian cosmology could not be "understood as going (as Richard Rorty likes to say) 'all the way down'" before it ran into reality with a big "R." The case of Cook led Lukes to be more dubious about assuming that "philosopher's precepts should guide anthropological practice, or indeed that fruitful results would follow if they did," but this left Lukes with a less than robust claim about metapractical standards for assessing rationality. He maintained, nevertheless, that "there is a practice central to all cultures," which is manifest in the way that "members, individually and collectively, engage in the cognitive

enterprise of reasoning and face the common human predicament of try-
ing to get the world right: of understanding, predicting and controlling
their environment, natural and social." Consequently, he claimed, we can
always ask whether they have performed effectively and well, and we can
do so on the basis of "criteria that must be independent of any particular
culture" (Lukes 2000, 12, 16–17). Positing such an analytically and func-
tionally defined practice, however, which amounted to little more than a
truism, did not do much to sustain Lukes's basic position, and in the end
he did not succeed in specifying the criteria that were independent of any
culture. Lukes's search for a realist foundation for a critical social science
has, however, more recently resurfaced in a symposium he edited on the
relevance for anthropology of Searle's philosophy (2006).

As I noted earlier, Searle is an interesting case of a philosopher caught
between commitments to both conventionality and transconventionality.
Despite all the attention that he has devoted to analyzing the nature of
speech-acts and to what he refers to as the "constitutive role" of language
in creating the "collective intentionality" characteristic of all "social" or
"institutional" facts, he has remained an unrepentant defender of rep-
resentational philosophy and a correspondence theory of truth. Social
facts, Searle argued, are less than theoretically autonomous, because they
spring primordially from the mind and human consciousness and because
they can, at the same time, be judged by truth-values grounded in the
existence of an objective external world. Much like G. E. Moore, whose
attempt to prove the existence of the external world was the pivot of Witt-
genstein's remarks in *On Certainty*, Searle sought to demonstrate "external
realism" by pointing to mountains, falling off cliffs, and various other,
in his words, "brute facts" that, he claimed, are not only the underly-
ing material causes of social facts but also the basis for judging which
of those subjective constructions actually corresponds to reality (Searle
1995). These kinds of "death and furniture" arguments as demonstrations
of external reality (Edwards, Ashmore, and Potter 1995) are, however,
as Wittgenstein claimed, little more than the repetition of our particu-
lar ontological commitments. In response to the anthropologists, who
while sympathetic to his account of social phenomena were wary of his
realist claims, Searle simply insisted that we must act on the basis of the
"background presupposition," which is "the condition of intelligible dis-
course," that "one massive restraint on truth cuts across all forms of life."
This is the fact that "there exists a way that things are that is independent
of our representation of how things are." This "observer independent
world," Searle argued, "does not give a damn about us," but it is manifest
in the "objects" that ground our representations and provide the basis of

"epistemically objective truth about the way the world is." What Searle did, in effect, like those anthropologists that Winch criticized, was to take the present state of Western science and our stock of commonsense ideas, and conclusions such as "there are no witches and there never have been," and raise it to a universal ontological distinction between "nature" and "convention." This is exactly the kind of mistake that Wittgenstein argued was at the core of philosophy's tendency to lose its way, but Searle maintained that "we live in one world and that we hold in all our different cultures, a series of views about this world, some of which are just plain false" (Searle 2006a, 12–17; 2006b, 85; 2006c, 112–19). Lukes (2006) endorsed Searle's basic position, and his only reservation was the codicil that it is necessary to consider the extent to which certain institutional facts are the manifestation of "brute interests" and exercise "brute power," and, in effect, take on the function of "brute realities."

Social theorists such as Lukes have a great deal of difficulty facing up to the reality of conventionality, that is, to the fact that they cannot see beyond the language of various practices to a deeper perception of phenomena that would support their judgments and prescriptions as well as explain their object of inquiry. This yearning for the transcendent or natural may be endemic to human activity, and particularly to the urge to philosophize. The problem of coming up against the limits of language is especially acute for metapractices such as philosophy and the social sciences. There is a continual search for a transconventional grasp of reality that would ground claims to knowledge that are designed to exceed claims to truth manifest in the practices that constitute their subject matter. The search for such a foundation is, however, inherently paradoxical, because any such claim is itself conventional—we cannot, Wittgenstein noted, escape "the *deep* need for the convention" because "if you talk about *essence*, you are only noting a convention" and "when we strike rock-bottom . . . we have come down to conventions" (1978, 74; 1958, p. 24). "Reality" is not exempt from discursive articulation. What Alfred Tarski's formal theory of truth ("snow is white" is true if and only if snow is white) that so many turn to in support of realism actually demonstrates is that on both sides of the equation of words and the world there are only words. What is on the right-hand side is not the "world" but only a first-order discourse or, as Wittgenstein put it, "the limit of language is shown by its being impossible to describe the fact which corresponds to it (is the translation of a sentence) without simply repeating the sentence" (1984, p. 10).

What is involved, if reference to the "real" is anything more than an empty invocation or evocation, is simply a demand for the precedence of

some particular form of discourse. The attribution of arbitrariness and transience to truth claims that do not enjoy the solace of a transcendental ground is misplaced. Nothing is harder to break down than conventions of truth embedded in our practices, and when they do break down, they are replaced by others. Within any domain of human practice, such claims are usually hard-fought and, once established, often difficult to dislodge. The natural/conventional distinction is itself conventional, that is, there is no obvious line between these realms, and what occupies each side of the divide is what is in contention. The question is what realm of discourse we choose to invest with the designation of natural. So again, what is really at issue is the question of whether or not there is some language that is authoritative. Does metaphysics, natural science, cognitive science, common sense, or some other realm justly have claim to a status that takes priority over others? This might be conceived as a lateral competition among first-order activities such as natural science and religion or it might be construed in terms of a conflict between first-order and metapractical claims. But to make a judgment about priority that goes beyond the self-serving claims of a particular discourse requires repairing to another level of discourse that must then advance the argument that it trumps, for example, both social science and its subject matter, by its capacity for making a judgment about the relationship between these respective claims to knowledge and truth. What is obvious is that there is a potential for infinite regress in such discussions.

If Wittgenstein and Winch are correct, the pursuit of justice in social science is primarily the pursuit of clarity in interpretation. This does not prohibit or inhibit therapeutic consequences, but for social science to challenge the ontological and moral claims of its subject matter involves more than the apodictic repetition of its own theoretical commitments. If, as I have argued, social science is, in fact, necessarily an interpretive enterprise and therefore, as Wittgenstein said about philosophy, a form of conceptual investigation, it is necessary to clarify what kinds of things concepts are and what an interpretation of concepts entails. What continues to plague the literature of social science is a lack of clarity about the concept of a concept and its relationship to words, which, in turn, makes it difficult to talk about matters such as interpretation. But here we can turn more directly to Wittgenstein for aid and for a deeper grasp of conventional objects and their interpretation than the intimations in the work of Weber, Oakeshott, and Winch.

INTERPRETATION AND THE AUTONOMY OF CONCEPTS

When an idea is wanting, a word can always be found to take its place.

—Goethe

The word "concept" is too vague by far.

—Wittgenstein

Every word has a different character in different contexts.

—Wittgenstein

If a lion could talk, we could not understand him.

—Wittgenstein

Interpretations by themselves do not determine meaning.

—Wittgenstein

IN THE LITERATURE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE IN GENERAL, AND even in political theory where there is greater focus on concepts, there is considerable persistent confusion about the concept of a concept and particularly about the relationship between words and concepts. Even in a work as analytically astute and sensitive to language as Hanna Pitkin's valuable and influential *The Concept of Representation* (1967), the slippage between words and concepts prompts one to ask what constitutes the connection. Pitkin deployed a central organizing metaphor in her discussion of representation:

> We may think of the concept as a rather complicated, convoluted, three dimensional structure in the middle of a dark enclosure. Political theorists give us, as it were, flash-bulb photographs of the structure taken at different angles. But each proceeds to treat this partial view as the complete

structure. It is no wonder, then, that various photographs do not coincide, that the theorists' extrapolations from these pictures are in conflict. Yet there is something, there, in the middle of the dark, which all of them are photographing; and the different photographs together can be used to reconstruct it in complete detail. (10–11)

In the later edition of the book (1971), Pitkin stated in a footnote that "I now believe, on the basis of reading Wittgenstein, that the metaphor is in some respects profoundly misleading about concepts and language. But on the concept of representation it happens to work fairly well. Since it is central to the structure of this book I have let it stand" (255). It is necessary to understand why Pitkin's metaphor was, as she acknowledged but did not explain, "profoundly misleading" and why Wittgenstein was relevant for rethinking the issue. And, despite her claim to the contrary, I suggest that in some respects the metaphor did not actually work "fairly well," even if it did provide an organizational heuristic.

Pitkin's metaphor was similar to the parable of the blind men seeking to define an elephant in terms of the particular property with which they came in tactile contact. The point of the parable is usually to suggest how things may appear differently when viewed from diverse perspectives, and Pitkin suggested that even though the concept of representation might seem different if pictured from different angles, these perspectives, together, revealed an underlying coherence. In the case of the blind men, however, no combination of definitions based on perceived properties could yield the concept of an elephant, and the story only makes sense because the listener or reader already possesses the concept of the object that the men are attempting to describe. Pitkin put considerable emphasis on the etymology of the word "representation," but although this provides insight into how the word has been used, just as a dictionary does, examining a word does not produce a concept.

If Pitkin had focused on an instance of a particular practice of what is conventionally designated as political representation, such as some aspect of American politics, it might have been possible to look at it from diverse perspectives and gain a more textured account than one "photograph" might produce. Or if she had chosen one concept to which the word "representation" had been typically ascribed, such as the image of the representative as trustee, the analysis might have worked. Her approach, however, was predicated on, or at least encouraged, the assumption that such instances were manifestations of something more universal and fundamental, that is, as her book title indicated, *the* concept of representation. There is, however, no such concept. It is a mistake to take an abstract or generic term such as "representation" and treat it as if it referred to

a particular concept. One response to this criticism might be to claim that there are many concepts of representation and that what Pitkin was actually doing was comparing those concepts and attempting to elicit something common from them. But this rendition is also likely to be misleading. Just as there is no one concept to which the word "representation" refers, there are not, strictly speaking, many concepts *of* representation but rather many concepts to which the word "representation" has been applied. We might, confronting a particular political practice, interpret it as an instance of a concept, which we label as "representation," but there are a variety of concepts of which that practice might be construed as an instance. These concepts are logically incommensurable, but they are not contradictory because they are specifications of different kinds of things that are not necessarily in conflict with one another, even though they may come into conflict, if there are contending claims about a fact of the matter or what should be the fact of the matter. In the case of Pitkin's analysis, no amount of photographs could bring *the* concept out of the shadows and, as she claimed, make it possible to "reconstruct it in complete detail." There was, so to speak, no "elephant" in the room. What Pitkin was actually exploring were the ways in which the word "representation" had been employed, that is, the different concepts to which the word had been attached and what might be viewed as both different and common among these concepts. This is what she actually accomplished and what made the book so valuable.

Some of the confusion about this matter has emanated from the often referenced argument of W. B. Gallie about "essentially contested concepts" (1955–56) and from similar assumptions by individuals such as Reinhart Koselleck (1985, 1988). Gallie claimed to be isolating certain concepts, such as democracy, which had a number of common attributes such as the character of being appraisive, internally complex, and capable of different descriptions, which together tended to give rise to disputes about their genuine meaning. Gallie constantly used "term," "word," and "concept" interchangeably, but on the whole, he was really talking about words and the manner in which they were used. There is no such thing as an essentially contested concept, but even if Gallie was actually referring to words, he was wrong in claiming that some words are essentially contested. What are involved in most disputes about the subject of democracy are conflicting claims about to what concept the word "democracy" should refer. Debates about democracy do not, for the most part, emanate from the nature of either a word or a concept even though there are instances in which a failure to distinguish between the word and concept may give rise to controversy. People might argue about the appropriate

use of a word—such as, for example, in the case of a debate about whether the American polity is a democracy or a republic, when the parties to the debate do not disagree about the nature of the United States government and are consequently talking about the same concept. But they might, in another instance, agree about the concept of democracy and disagree about whether the United States is an instance. It would be reasonable to say that the use of certain words is *characteristically* contested, but this is often because, as in the case of "democracy," they have historically accrued a great deal of either approbation or disapprobation on which an argument may draw.

Despite all the recent scholarship on conceptual history, there is still considerable incoherence in discussions about words and concepts. This is in part because the interpretation of concepts and the study of conceptual development are often, although not always clearly, tied to ideological agendas. While this does not necessarily nullify their scholarly credibility, it does sometimes create problems. Koselleck's work, for example, like a number of similar projects in the field of political theory, was motivated by a critique of modernity and a defense of "the political" or the public realm against society, technology, and Enlightenment values. The failure of the social sciences to be clear about the concept of a concept is, however, in part because there has been little in the way of a satisfactory systematic philosophical treatment on which to draw.

The problem of clarity regarding concepts was evident in Melvin Richter's extensive examination of various forms of *Begriffsgeschichte* (1995) in both Europe and North America. In this discussion, the identity of concepts remained strangely elusive. Despite his concern about transcending past research in the history of ideas in the English-speaking world, as well as trends in the European schools of *Geistgeschichte* and *Ideengeschichte*, what he viewed as the differences between the old and the new historiography often did not seem decisive. Neither Richter nor the individuals and persuasions that he discussed seemed to advance any very distinct, or distinctive, claim about concepts. Richter noted that "the meaning of 'concept' can be determined only within the context of a theory," but while he claimed to describe the "theoretical statements" of a variety of historians, such as Quentin Skinner, what he offered was largely a description of programs and projects in which such statements often seemed conspicuously absent or elliptical. Richter quoted sympathetically someone who suggested that the term "concept" is "useful precisely because of its ambiguity" (21). Such ambiguity, however, has created problems in both Anglo-American and Continental ventures into the history of concepts.

The suggestion that we should approach the issue by reflecting on what we are talking about, when we speak of "acquiring," "having," or "using" a concept, often amounts to a somewhat regressive move that leaves us as puzzled as before about the kind of thing to which the word "concept" refers. MacIntyre, for example, claimed that possessing a concept amounts to behaving, or being able to behave, in a certain way and that conceptual change entails changes in behavior (1966, 2–3). We might very well conclude from this sort of definition that a concept is not so much a kind of thing at all but rather, as Ryle at times claimed, a dispositional or functional category (1949). If this were literally the case, however, it would make little sense to speak of things such as conceptual development or of histories of concepts. What is sometimes reflected in such an image of concepts is the assumption that they are tools or instruments. This image, sometimes derived from remarks of J. L. Austin about "how to do things with words" (1962) and from remarks by Wittgenstein (e.g., 2001, 569), may have much to recommend it, but the equation of concepts with instruments is not sufficient. There are various kinds of instruments and various kinds of usage. What is often assumed in these claims is something that is actually not compatible with Wittgenstein's philosophy, that is, that concepts are instruments for expressing, and indications of, prior mental states. Although behaving in a certain manner might provide criteria for attributing concepts to a person and although, like words, they may be in some sense instruments, we must be able to discriminate concepts as a class of conventional objects and grasp their place in linguistic usage before we can intelligently speak about possessing and using them—and studying them.

It is not a definition of "concept" that is most fundamentally at issue. Definitions are quite infinitely variable depending on the purpose of the definition and what properties or attributes are selected as definitive. Definitions, even of a stipulative kind, assume a prior specification of the thing that is defined. We can only define and describe what we can already identify and specify as a thing of a certain sort, even though a definition may aid someone else in recognizing it. The first question, then, is whether a concept is any kind of distinct or autonomous thing at all. Everyone seems to agree that we possess them and that our thoughts and actions are in some way informed and even governed by them, but they often appear to remain, as Hobbes or Marx might have said, in the world of spiritual entities, which may in part explain the propensity to reduce them to words, which seem more concrete and objective. Although it is often recognized and emphasized that concepts are not, in the final

analysis, the same as words, both social scientists and philosophers seem to have limited success in untangling, and relating, the two.

Richter noted that historians of concepts usually "distinguish concepts from words. A concept may be designated by more than one word or term . . . Yet an individual or group may possess a concept without having a word by which to express it" (9). Quentin Skinner took strong exception to Raymond Williams's analysis of "keywords" (1976), and one of Skinner's concerns was to distinguish concepts from words. He noted that concepts usually have a corresponding word and vocabulary but that even though an individual may use a word characteristically associated with a concept, it does not necessarily indicate possession of the concept. These claims, on their face, are correct, but they are still ambiguous. Skinner's principal example of the difference between words and concepts was his suggestion that when John Milton claimed that, in his poetry, he wished to do things yet "unattempted," he must have possessed the concept of originality even though the word was not available to him (1989, 7). What Skinner assumed in his example of Milton seemed to be a functional view of concepts. From this perspective, it would be reasonable to say, for example, as some have, that the people who built Stonehenge possessed the concept of a computer, even though we may assume that they did not use the word. The same word can, of course, express different concepts, but it is important to recognize that different words can be spelled or sound the same, that is, a homonym or homophone. The same concept can be expressed by two different words such as the case of "Venus" and the "evening star," both of which refer to an empirically distinguishable planet, but this might not be the case, for example, with "justice" and "equity." We might say that these latter words indicate similar concepts, but they are not necessarily the same concept.

We are often told that concepts are connected to beliefs, which in turn explain action and practices, but again, this approach brings us back to what the "linguistic turn" in social inquiry and intellectual history had sought in some respects to overcome, that is, the focus on a nebulous realm of mental entities or ideas. It is sometimes claimed, for example, that concepts are "constitutive" of and "inform" beliefs and are a "medium of shared understanding," and Skinner consistently identified concepts with "attitudes" and other psychological entities. Despite his emphasis on the public character of language as explicated by individuals such as Austin and Wittgenstein, Skinner still viewed intellectual history as the study of "the history of past thought" and the "history of ideas"(1985, 50). What is lurking behind many claims about concepts is, again, some version of the assumption that concepts express mental predicates. This

may be a philosophically defensible position, but it is one to which Wittgenstein was strenuously opposed, and in the literature on concepts and conceptual change, it is seldom actually elaborated or defended. All of this leaves the issue of the exact relationships among words, concepts, mental states, and actions as mysterious as ever, but it is here that we may turn to Wittgenstein for guidance.

Like Austin, Wittgenstein emphasized that words have a "family of meanings," which depend on the concepts to which they refer and the variety of sentences, linguistic performances, language-games, and forms of life in which they are featured (e.g., 2001, 23). What this presupposes is that concepts are conventional objects, but Wittgenstein quite consistently made a strong distinction between words and concepts. His core point was well-summarized when he said that "*when language-games change, then there is a change in concepts, and with the concepts the meaning of words change*" (1969, 65, emphasis added). When scholars write what they claim to be histories of concepts such as liberalism or when someone such as Skinner writes about the history of the state (e.g., 1978), what is actually being recounted is the history of words and the various, and changing, concepts to which those words have been applied. We do not have much trouble grasping what kind of things words are, but describing the nature of a concept seems much more elusive. Words are signs—but, one may ask, signs of what? Although Wittgenstein stressed that philosophical investigations were "conceptual investigations" and that "concepts lead us to make investigations" (1967, 458; 2001, 570), he also noted that "the word 'concept' is by far too vague" (1978, 49). He did not explicitly provide a full-blown answer to the problem, and he may have added to the ambiguity when he suggested that certain concepts could have "blurred edges" and might be "akin" to one another (2001, 71, 76). But when he said that if people did not understand a "concept," he could teach them to use the "words" (2001, 208), he was indicating that words and concepts are not the same thing, even though they were related.

Concepts are not expressions of ideas or representations in the mind, and they are not the linguistic reflections of natural kinds. They are grammatical, but this is not to say that they are unrelated to the "world." Wittgenstein noted that "if things were quite different from what they actually are . . . this would make our language-games lose their point" (2001, 142), but he asked, "if the formation of concepts can be explained by facts of nature, should we not be interested, not in grammar, but rather in that nature which is the basis grammar?" He concluded, however, that "our interest certainly includes the correspondence between concepts and very general facts of nature. (Such facts as mostly do not strike us because

of their generality.) . . . Our interest does not fall back upon these possible causes of the formation of concepts; we are not doing natural science" (2001, p. 195). This was because "the limit of the empirical is—*concept-formation*" (1978, 29). Language and the world are both autonomous, but the world only appears in the concepts embedded in our language or, as Wittgenstein put it, "*essence* is expressed in grammar," which "tells us what kind of object anything is" (2001, 371, 373). "Like everything metaphysical the harmony between thought and reality is to be found in the grammar of the language" (1967, 55). Wittgenstein emphasized that it is in the application of language within human practices that language makes contact with the "world" and that this was also where the "world" finds expression. The best short answer to the question of what constitutes concepts is to say that they are kinds of things designated and discriminated by various forms of linguistic usage. A concept is what Austin referred to as the "sense" of a word.

It is instructive that the word "concept" (*conceptus*) means, literally, the thing conceived, and in pursuing this point, Kuhn's arguments are helpful. The extent of Kuhn's acquaintance with Wittgenstein's work is, despite some compelling similarities (Sharrock and Read 2002), difficult to ascertain, but the parallels, even textual, between, for example, Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* and Wittgenstein's *On Certainty* are striking, and when approaching Wittgenstein, Kuhn, like Winch, is a significant signpost.

Subsequent to *Structure*, Kuhn attempted to make clearer what he meant by the term "incommensurable," which had been at the core of his argument about paradigms, conceptual change, and scientific revolutions and which had instigated much of the controversy about his account of the history of science (1977, 1993, 2000). He began to move closer to a specific embrace of arguments that seemed to relate to Wittgenstein's philosophy, but this later position was in part a direct response to the arguments of philosophical realists, such as Putnam and Kripke, about the existence, and persistence between theoretical transformations in science, of essential or natural kinds. The heart of Kuhn's argument had involved a competing claim about how changes in scientific concepts constituted changes in the meaning of "world." In the second edition of *Structure*, he had already redefined his somewhat ambiguous use of "paradigm" by equating the term with concrete conceptual "exemplars," which form the basis of a scientific community and "disciplinary matrix." He later focused on what he termed a conventional "lexicon," which was the "module in which members of a speech community, such as a branch of natural science, store the community's kind-terms" (2000, 315). Such

terms were, he claimed, partially defined in contrast with other such terms, but although there might be a certain overlap between lexicons, the evolution of different and succeeding lexicons postulated different universes of fact and evidence, much, he suggested, like the manner in which the biological process of speciation takes place. Consequently, although there were natural kinds, they were relative to the taxonomic systems of scientific lexicons.

Kuhn had been challenged to demonstrate how a historian could write the history of science without assuming a certain basic conceptual continuity of the subject matter. He replied, much in the same vein as Winch, that the historian's interpretive narrative, although employing a language very different from that of the subject matter, must seek to convey the meaning of the kind-terms embraced by scientists at various times but without imposing distorting categories derived from the ontological commitments and language of the interpreter. Interpretation, in the first instance, was not so much a matter of translation as learning and understanding a new language, which might not be fully translatable, and then attempting to reconstruct, that is, represent and communicate, the meaning of that language. There was an important suggestion about the nature of interpretation in his argument, which had actually been more fully developed by Wittgenstein, but Kuhn was in effect saying, much like Winch, that the historian of science and the social scientist were faced with the same task and with the problem of the cognitive differences, and dissonance, between the lexicon of the interpreter and that which constituted the discursive universe of the object of interpretation.

Kuhn's primary point in this case, however, was that different "antecedently available" lexicons in the history of science manifested different and incommensurable concepts to which the word "world" was often generically applied. Each member of a community possessed the same lexical structure that was "constitutive of *possible experience* of the world," even though individuals might not have the same particular experiences. Kuhn also likened this to the difference between the gene pool that defined a species and the particular set of genes that defined an individual. What Kuhn was implicitly addressing was a complex problem often confronted by social scientists. This was the problem of what it means to talk about individuals possessing and *sharing* ideas or concepts. For both Kuhn and Wittgenstein such sharing was basically a function of participating in a particular practice and realm of discourse, not some sort of "downloading" of public domain software. The upshot of Kuhn's argument was, as he had already claimed in earlier work, that the subject of truth claims could not be based on a putatively mind-independent or "'external' world,"

because the concepts of science were constitutive of what, for that community, was meant by the "world." What a scientific revolution involved was a shift between taxonomies of kinds that were not fully translatable from one to the other. Kuhn noted that kinds were usually designated by particular words, especially in modern highly linguistic societies, but his basic point was that these "kind-terms" represented the ontological discriminations constituting the "world" and the basis for attributing the property of "sameness." This is as close as we may get to a description of the concept of a concept.

A concept is the signification of a *kind* of thing and is usually conveyed by words and phrases or equivalent symbols. It is the *sort* of thing to which one is referring. Concepts are, in general, our way of dividing up the world, and in turn, our perceptions of such divisions are constitutive of our concepts. They are not, as Ryle once claimed, merely a "gaseous way" of talking about the meaning of the general terms that we employ in our sentences or the family resemblances we abstract from those sentences. Concepts are conventional entities and thus, by definition, possessed only by language-using and convention-creating creatures. Animals do not possess concepts because, as Wittgenstein said, they "do not talk" (2001, 25, p. 148) and therefore "cannot think" in the sense in which in the case of human beings we primarily refer to thinking (1967, 521–22). It does not make sense to say that animals other than human beings possess concepts even though we often, and quite usefully, anthropomorphize their behavior or *metaphorically*, and functionally, attribute concepts to them. The crucial question of how words are related to concepts can be answered in part by saying that certain, but certainly not all, words refer to concepts, and this is basically equivalent to saying that such words refer to classes of things and are used to talk about particular instances of those things. Where people often go astray, however, is in positing this "thing" as either a mental phenomenon or some material reference behind concepts. Words are usually sufficient for expressing concepts, but they are not always either necessary (e.g., loss of speech capacity does not necessarily entail loss of conceptual ability) or sufficient.

It is important, however, to move beyond Kuhn's focus on exemplars and the theoretical terms of science. Just as concepts specify kinds, there are different *kinds* of concepts, which can be distinguished in terms of their use or the types of claims and language-games in which they are featured. Many of the difficulties in discussions about concepts emanate from a failure to distinguish these types. My concern is not to enter into a full taxonomy of concepts, and I will only discuss three, not necessarily logically comparable, families that I refer to as *theoretical*, *modal*, and *analytical*.

Theoretical concepts are those of the type on which Kuhn focused. These appear in science or some other relatively determinate linguistic community of first-order discourse in which there are claims about what kinds of things exist and the manner of their behavior. Theoretical concepts are not the exclusive property of any particular practice. Social scientific claims about the nature of social reality are theoretical claims grounded in theoretical concepts, just as is the self-understanding of social actors and their representation of the world. Such concepts constitute the ontologies that define what Wittgenstein referred to as forms of life and a *Weltbild*. Sometimes these display a generic character such as when they refer to a class of particulars (atom, DNA, and so on), but they are no less evident in substantive specifications of instances of these things, that is, in what is commonly designated as facts. Every instance is an instance of some kind of thing, and thus theory and fact are logically identical and only pragmatically distinguishable.

Analytical concepts are those that, on the basis of various criteria, either internal to a domain of discourse or externally generated by an interpreter of that domain, are used to discriminate and classify things that have often already been theoretically constituted. Here we could list stipulative and functional definitions, ideal-types, retrospectively constituted traditions, certain models, and the like. These are often equivalent to what Wittgenstein referred to as a "perspicuous representation" and notations of "family-resemblances." With respect to natural science, for example, we might say that in physics, atoms and molecules, and the distinctions between them, represent theoretical kinds, while the classification of bees is basically analytical. In natural science, however, there are sometimes pointed disputes about the status of certain concepts. For example, in evolutionary biology, there is a significant and persistent controversy about the concept of species, that is, whether it represents a theoretical kind within the context of evolutionary theory or whether it is a taxonomic category. Analytical concepts may be found at all levels of discourse, but they are particularly prevalent in fields such as social science and history, which are confronted with the problem of representing, reconstructing, or interpreting a preconstituted conceptual universe.

Modal concepts represent form rather than substance and include those involved in making various evaluative and prescriptive judgments. They include concepts such as good, beautiful, right, just, rational, probable, hard, high, loud, and so on. Unlike theoretical and analytical concepts, they do not carry with them any necessary ontological commitments and are not confined to a particular practice. Although they have a universal or invariant force or meaning, their criteria of application are relative

to particular practices and language-games. It is not their basic force or meaning that is disputed but the appropriateness of their application. The presence of a modal term, such as "just," in a sentence does not even necessarily indicate or dictate that the sentence is, for example, evaluative or normative, but the residual force attaching to "just" is a consequence of its past use in such sentences.

Confusions sometimes arise from the fact that both modal and analytical concepts may mimic or be mistaken for theoretical concepts. The fact that politics is often used as a generic analytical concept has contributed to the myth of "the political." Even though distinctions among these classes of concepts in fields such as natural science may not always be entirely evident or uncontentious, they present greater difficulties in the social sciences because in the latter, concepts are part of the subject matter as well as part of claims about that subject matter. The word "politics" presents a paradigm case of this problem. As I have already noted, there is a prismatic ambiguity attaching to the terms "politics" and "political," which reflects some distinctly different conceptual uses of the terms.

In the first instance, both chronologically and logically, "politics," like for example, "science" and "religion," refers to a conventionally distinct, relatively determinant, historically and culturally situated family of practices and instances of those practices. In this sense, it represents a species of conventional activity that arguably had a beginning, evolution, and dispersion and that has been distinguished by an internal self-understanding of its qualitative features as well as its units and boundaries. In talking about this practice, from a historical or social scientific perspective, we could conceivably use a different word or phrase to refer to it, and even if we refer to it by its indigenous name "politics," it appears in a vocabulary of discourse containing various theoretical and metatheoretical terms that belong to the categories of investigation. E. D. Hirsch was a bit over the top in claiming that it is immoral to interpret a text in a manner that violates the author's intention (1976, 90–91), but as both Winch and Kuhn stressed, if we wish to understand past actions and concepts, it is necessary to be sensitive to their intrinsic discursive meaning. The indigenous meaning of the concept of politics is primary, because the usual reason that we apply the word "politics" more generically and analytically, to refer to instances of things such as power and conflict, is because we often have historically associated those characteristics with the activity of politics. There is a wide range of such properties belonging, or ascribed, to politics that are much more universal than politics itself. Thus we find it easy and tempting to define politics, and cognate terms, analytically in any number of ways, depending on the attributes we may assign to the

activity of politics, and for many political theorists "political" functions as a modal term.

Definitions of politics are nearly always at once too broad and too narrow to be sustained as the basis of adequate descriptive and explanatory accounts. The main problem in identifying and understanding politics is not, despite what many political scientists and political theorists have assumed, definitional. The tendency to speak of something as political because it possesses an attribute often associated with politics is no more incorrect than using the language of chess as a metaphor for diplomacy. It is, however, important not to allow slippage between an analytical concept of politics and the use of "politics" to refer to a particular kind of historical practice. There are many well-known examples of conflating the particular and analytical uses of such terms, even in the case of investigators who are committed to "thick descriptions" of social phenomena. There was, for example, the case of anthropologists who believed that magic was, literally, primitive science or political scientists who maintained that locating something such as relationships of power in a society was equivalent to identifying the existence, and an instance, of politics. There are the problems, then, both of reifying an abstract or analytical concept of politics, albeit maybe one originally derived from observing particular cases, and of extrapolating from the particular to the generic.

In addition to these two senses or concepts that bear the name "politics," there is a third type that should be noted. This is the literal attribution of theoretical status to politics, which is often manifest in the transformation of the adjective "political" into the noun "the political" and which carries with it the implication that politics has some element of essentiality that transcends its conventional forms and transformations and that gives it the status of a natural kind. To assign theoretical status to politics could imply either some reductionist argument such as that which would locate politics biologically or some more transcendent property. But there can be no *theory* of politics in the sense of ontology. This is not simply because of the basic difference between natural and social objects but because politics is only one historical form of social phenomena. There can only be a theory of the *kind* of thing of which politics and other specific human practices are instances. There are various complex philosophical and ideological motivations behind the emergence of such an essentialist notion of politics, but it is often simply a misbegotten application of an analytical concept, which itself is the extrapolation of a property typically attributed to a historically situated form of political life.

In addressing issues such as how to recover the meaning of texts and how to account for conceptual change in politics and political thought,

it is necessary to specify what kind of thing we are talking about, that is, whether it is an analytical concept of politics or a particular and distinct aspect of social or intellectual practice. There is also an important difference between *changes in a concept* and the *change from one concept to another*. Social scientists sometimes speak of how a concept has been, or could be, "stretched," when what they actually mean is that a word may come to refer to a different concept. One could, for example, write a history of Darwin's concept of evolution, that is, a history of its creation, elaboration, deployment, and modification, and we could make arguments about its continuities, and discontinuities, with earlier and subsequent concepts, whether or not the same word was employed. The question of at what point a new concept emerges is important, but it is not a question that can be answered abstractly. But often what is involved is not a change in the concept but the application of the same word to a different concept. What is stretched is often the use of a word to apply to a different concept.

Conceptual revolutions in natural science are not points in the history of a concept but changes from one concept to another in which the word or phrase denoting successive concepts may, or may not, also change. Someone might characterize the mid-twentieth-century geological revolution in plate tectonics as having involved a change in the concept of a continent, but it would be more accurate to say that while the word "continent" persisted, there was a change in the concept to which the word referred—from a kind of thing that was fixed on the earth's crust to an entity that drifted from one place to another. To write the history of the concept would be to write about either changes within the prior geosyncline theory or the emendations to the theory of plate tectonics, while to write the history of the word would be to write about the change in usage between those theories and the different concepts to which it referred. Similarly, although the phrase "human being" existed before and after Darwin, we cannot say that the concept of human being changed but rather that there were two different concepts—one of a special creature and one of a kind of animal. When Darwin arrived at his concept of evolution, he did not at first use the word "evolution" but rather "descent by modification," but both terms referred to a concept that replaced that of special creation.

When Skinner claimed that "there can be no histories of concepts as such" (1988, 283), he might seem to have agreed with my point that in the study of the history of political thought we are usually talking about changes from one concept to another. But he was actually claiming that concepts cannot be isolated from the arguments and linguistic contexts

in which they occur. His discussion of the state seemed, however, to have assumed that there was something that persisted between texts and argument contexts. Rejecting such a view is not to say that there are no historical connections or similarities between one concept and another but only that they are logically incommensurable. Skinner's claim, however, was that different concepts are not incommensurable, and he assumed that there could not be disagreement and debate unless there was overlap. This, however, was the very point that Kuhn wished to contest. As pointed out earlier, there is a difference between contradiction and theoretical conflict. While there may be conflicts that are the result of contradictions, which entail agreement regarding what kind of thing one is talking about, the kind of conflict manifest in theoretical disputes is quite different. Skinner argued that liberals and Marxists were not debating different concepts of politics but different criteria regarding the range of reference of the term. It would appear that this is really an empirical issue, but it seems more likely that what had been involved were in fact different concepts to which the word "politics" was assigned. Skinner also disagreed with Williams's assumption that the concept of myth underwent a fundamental change from something designated as untrue to something that represented a particular vision of the world. Skinner suggested that what changed was instead a "social or intellectual attitude" about myths (1989, 19). Again, this may be an empirical issue, but probably what changed was the concept, that is, the kind of thing to which "myth" referred, and that the change in attitude followed that conceptual change.

What has been said thus far, however, has focused mostly on the nature and role of concepts within those practices such as science, politics, common sense, and so on, that is, those first-order practices that are conceptually world constitutive. When we confront the case of metapractical inquiry, in fields such as philosophy, the history of political thought, and the social sciences, a different set of issues arises. Here we are confronting the problem of conceptualizing concepts and giving an account of preconstituted practices. This forces us to deal with the problem of interpretation, and the problem of interpreting the concept of interpretation, which in turn raises the further issue of the relationship between what might be distinguished as interpretation and understanding. Although the words "interpretation" and "understanding" are often used to refer to the same concept, there is an important distinction that is sometimes elided. One might be suspicious about Strauss's actual commitment to the precept of "understanding authors as they understood themselves," but it might have been more precise for him to have claimed that we should try to *interpret* them as they *understood* themselves. And when, for

example, Winch spoke of "Understanding a Primitive Society," he might also have more felicitously employed the word "interpretation." Although, as already mentioned, some philosophers—such as Davidson, Quine, and from a quite different philosophical perspective, Derrida—explicitly tend to equate understanding and interpreting, there are reasons, such as those Wittgenstein adduced, for challenging such an equation. What are important, however, are not the words but the distinction involved and the relationship between the concepts that are distinguished.

Already in *The Big Typescript*, where much of his final work was adumbrated, Wittgenstein had noted that "an interpretation is a supplementation of the interpreted sign with another sign" and, for example, "in receiving an order we do not normally interpret it—we hear or grasp it" (2005, 16) or understand it. In the *Philosophical Investigations*, he began to sort out more fully the difference between the grammars of "understanding" (*Verstehen*) and "interpretation" (*Deutung*), a difference that may be less obvious in the English language. One thing that he emphasized was that understanding, as well as misunderstanding, like many other mental terms, such as "thinking," "knowing," and "intention," do not refer to some mysterious inner process and cannot be reduced to a physical or psychological event (2001, 196, 209–10, 151, 153–54, 321: p. 155). He noted, for example, that "it is wrong to call understanding a process that accompanies hearing" (163). Equally important, however, was his distinction between understanding as what goes on *within* a practice or language-game as opposed to what is involved in philosophy, or any metapractical activity, *giving an account* of what goes on. "Understanding," he claimed, involves the capacity to act in a language and the "mastery of a technique" and requires neither noting something corresponding to it nor a "sketch" (2001, 6, 150, 199, 396). It is not an "act" that one performs or some process that takes place between an order and its execution (431, 433). Understanding a sentence, he suggested, is not unlike understanding a picture or a musical theme, and normally understanding does not require choosing between interpretations (213, 526–27). When giving someone an order, it is usually sufficient to "give him signs," but if there is misunderstanding, it may be necessary to invoke an "interpretation" (503–6). Although Wittgenstein acknowledged that the word "understanding" was sometimes used in the sense of substituting one sentence for another, the latter was closer to what he referred to as interpretation (531–32).

Again, the issue was not what word should be used but distinguishing between two different concepts, which were typically conveyed in the uses of these words. One might argue that Wittgenstein conceived of understanding and interpretation as two aspects of one concept, but on

the whole, he treated them as different concepts and distinguished interpretation as a distinctly supervenient action. It would be natural to ask if understanding is a prerequisite for interpreting, and for individuals such as Winch and Kuhn, this would be the case. One might say that the task of the historian or social scientist, as evoked by someone such as Winch or Kuhn, is one of, first, understanding another discursive realm and then, second, interpreting or representing it, but understanding and interpreting are not the same. This was expressed in Wittgenstein's discussion of what it means to follow a rule and how it might seem that whatever one does "is, on some interpretation, in accordance with the rule" and renders its meaning. This view, however, would be closer to something such as Quine's argument about the indeterminacy of translation, but Quine also treated interaction between individuals within a practice as interpretive. Wittgenstein's point was that interpretation is metapractical. He stressed in the *Investigations* that "any interpretation still hangs in the air along with what it interprets, and cannot give it any support," because interpretations are not, in the first instance, the source of meaning (2001, 198). He went on to discuss how it seemed that "*any* action can be made out to accord with the rule" or conflict with it, but what this really demonstrated was that there "is a way of grasping (*Auffassung*) a rule which is *not* an *interpretation*." It is instead a matter of acting within a practice and understanding and, consequently, either obeying or disobeying, the rule. So even though there might be an inclination to say that "any action according to the rule is an interpretation . . . we ought to restrict the term 'interpretation' to the substitution of one expression of the rule for another" (201). As Wittgenstein noted, "an *interpretation* is something that is given in signs," and "when I interpret, I step from one level of thought to another" (1967, 229, 234). What an interpretation aims to produce is a "perspicuous representation," a presentation or synopsis (2001, 122), that was the very aim of philosophy—and, it follows, of metapractices as a whole. One of Wittgenstein's most cryptic remarks was that "if a lion could talk, we could not understand him" (2001, 190), maybe because his form of life would be so different, but Wittgenstein might have added that we could *attempt* to interpret him.

This distinction between interpretation and understanding was also closely linked to Wittgenstein's critique of the theory of language that assumed that meaning was a function of naming and ostensive reference. Meaning was, at least in the first instance, a matter of use and understanding within a language-game, because "an ostensive definition can be variously interpreted in every case" (2001, 28). He stressed that "to interpret is to think, to do something; seeing is a state," and understanding

is similarly a state. He noted that "it is easy to recognize cases in which we are *interpreting*. When we interpret we form hypotheses" that can be applied to the object of inquiry (181). You "look on the language-game as the *primary* thing. And . . . you look on a way of regarding the language-game, as interpretation" (656). He conceived of philosophy as a distinctly interpretive practice but one that sometimes went awry "like savages, primitive people, who hear the expressions of civilized men, put a false interpretation on them, and then draw the queerest conclusions from it" (194). This, however, as he suggested in his discussion of Frazer's *Golden Bough*, cuts both ways, because anthropologists studying "savages" were liable to the same mistakes. Sometimes when one hears, for example, an explanation, one may not understand, and this might trigger an interpretation or a variety of interpretations (210, 215). But, for example, temporarily losing one's train of thought, while speaking from notes and then remembering would not normally involve interpreting or reinterpreting the notes or choosing between interpretations of the situation (634, 637).

In some of his latest work, Wittgenstein continued to pursue a clarification of the concept of interpretation, particularly in his *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology* in which he repeated some of the same points that appeared in the *Investigations*. Returning to his famous example of an ambiguous figure such as the duck/rabbit that had featured so importantly in part II of the *Investigations*, he asked, do I "see" something different or "only interpret what I see in a different way?" He was "inclined" to conclude that in most cases it was an instance of the former, because "interpreting is an action" that would include, for example, descriptions of one's visual experience. "When we interpret, we make a conjecture," while we would not typically speak of seeing as true or false. An interpretation, on the other hand, "becomes an expression of the experience" of seeing. He even allowed for "involuntary interpretation" that "forces itself on us" in certain circumstances, but this seemed very close to the case of "seeing as" or the dawning of "an aspect" where, optically, what is seen remains the same but where there is a change in "conception" whereby one might "clothe" what one sees with an "interpretation" (1980, 1, 8, 9, 20, 22, 31, 33). One can see, hear, and understand a meaning yet "not interpret it *at* all," but in answering a question about it, one "might interpret," which would involve "a thought" and an act of "will." A change of aspect, that is, "seeing as," such as in the case of shifting from specifying a figure as a duck or a rabbit, is very akin to an interpretation, because even though an aspect may "dawn" on one, changing an aspect often involves "more thinking than seeing." It is "to do something." What in this case is

seen, however, is not, as some philosophers have contended, some neutral set of lines but the head of an animal. It is this "seeing" an animal, not simply marks on paper, which constitutes the "it" supporting the different aspects or interpretations (1980, 378, 482). In the case of something such as providing an explanation of a movement, however, there is "not a change of aspect, but change of interpretation" (1967, 216). One way to think about the difference between understanding and interpretation is in terms of another analogy that Wittgenstein employed. This was the difference between an eye and the visual field. The eye, like an interpreter, does not participate in the visual field. Although seeing/understanding are not interpretations, the two are not unrelated. It was in his discussion of "two uses of the word 'see'" that Wittgenstein first introduced the concept of "'noticing an aspect.'" Here he demonstrated how an ambiguous figure illustrated in a book may be seen differently depending on how "the text supplies the interpretation of the illustration." Because "we can also *see* the illustration now as one thing now as another," we are apt to "interpret it, and *see* it as we *interpret* it," but "seeing an object according to an *interpretation*" does not mean that it is "forced into a form it did not really fit." What is seen and the representation of what is seen are not "alike," but "they are intimately connected" (2001, pp. 165, 169).

In discussing interpretation, it is difficult to avoid confronting the concept of a context. Whether positively or negatively assessed, Wittgenstein's focus on meaning as use, the manner in which words gain meaning by their role in sentences and speech acts and the place that these acts have in language-games and forms of life have all contributed to making him a candidate for the title of "arch contextualist"—and relativist. But the details and implications of his contextualism require considerable unpacking. Wittgenstein noted that "a multitude of familiar paths lead off" from hearing or seeing any set of words, and consequently it becomes necessary to "invent a context for it" or "guess" at one if we do not immediately understand it. The latter, however, is an interpretive act (2001, 525, 652). He argued that words do not intrinsically carry with them a certain explanatory "atmosphere" (*Geist*), and "thus the atmosphere [*Atmosphäre*] that is inseparable from its object—is not like an 'aura'" but rather the "special circumstances" in which it exists (pp. 155–56). He noted that "the description of an atmosphere is a special application of language, for special purposes" and that "one can construct an atmosphere to attach to anything," but it may not necessarily have much to do with the actual situation of the object (607, 609). Wittgenstein emphasized that linguistic meaning is largely a function of the "wider context" (*Zusammenhang*) of an utterance (e.g., 686) and that actions, facial expressions,

observations, and intentions all gain significance in terms of their sur-roundings (*Umbegung*) and circumstances (*Umständen*) (539, 583). Even the solution of mathematical problems depended on the context of their formulation (334). Neither tone of voice nor state of mind is an answer to the meaning of an expression (pp. 160–61). For example, the "dawning of an aspect is not a property of the object, but an internal relation between it and other objects" that is manifest in "seeing the sign in this context," because words must "belong to a language and to a context, in order really to be the expression of the thought" (pp. 180, 185).

Wittgenstein noted that there were "*countless* kinds" of sentences, and "this multiplicity is not something fixed," because they come and go in infinite variety as changes take place in the "activities" and in the "language-games" and "forms of life" with which practices and discursive regimes are associated (2001, 23–24). All that can be said of linguistic performances in this respect can be said of actions and events as a whole that have material or behavioral conditions and a comparable grammatical, syntactical, and performative context. He once noted that "the common behavior [goings-on] of mankind is the system of reference by means of which we interpret an unknown language" (206). Although this statement has been given a number of different interpretations, including the suggestion that he was referring to some set of biological universals, it seems credible to extrapolate from the "context" of his statement that he was referring to his claim that in the case of human action, "intention is embedded in its situation, in customs and institutions" (337). As he said later, "How could human behavior be described? Surely only by sketching the actions of a variety of humans as they are all mixed up together. What determines our judgment, our concepts and reactions, is not what *one* man is doing *now*, an individual action, but the whole hurly-burly of human actions, the background against which we see any action" (1967, 567). Wittgenstein cautioned, however, that while an object in part gains its identity in terms of its context, interpreters can become so caught up in their fascination with a context and its explanatory power that they lose sight of the object of inquiry. "People who are constantly asking 'why' are like tourists who stand in front of a building reading Baedeker and are so busy reading the history of its construction, etc., that they are prevented from *seeing* the building" (1984, p. 40). This problem has certainly been present in the work of certain intellectual historians.

If we wish to think about metapractices and the nature of interpretation, it is meaningful to explore, at least briefly, Wittgenstein's account of philosophy. When Winch, in his essay on "Understanding a Primitive Society," attempted to exemplify what his idea of a social science would

entail in the practice of inquiry, he did not mention that Wittgenstein had said at one point that "savages have games . . . for which there are no written rules. Now let's imagine the activity of an explorer traveling throughout the countries of these peoples and setting up lists of rules for their games. This is completely analogous to what the philosopher does" (2005, 313). This should leave little doubt about the epistemological parallel between philosophy and social science. Wittgenstein pointedly denied that "philosophy is ethnology," but he claimed that it was essential to "look at things from an ethnological point of view," which "means that we are taking up a position outside, an interpretive position, so as to be able to see things *more objectively*" (2005, 37). Although much of Wittgenstein's work was taken up with a therapeutic analysis of issues in philosophy itself, he did not conceive of philosophy as simply self-reflection, but he noted that in the first instance "work in philosophy—like work in architecture in many respects, is really more a working on oneself. On one's own interpretation. On one's way of seeing things" (1984, p. 16). Philosophy was unique in that there was no philosophy of philosophy that constituted a separate practice or metaphilosophy, or as Wittgenstein put it, no "second-order philosophy" (2001, 121), but this was because it was itself a metapractical activity. Philosophy was forced, in part, to think about itself, because it was necessary to think about its relationship to the discursive universe that was its object of inquiry.

Although in some sense it may be meaningful to speak about how natural scientists think about their activity and its relationship to their subject matter, they do not, literally, have a relationship to their subject matter apart from how that relationship is conceived internally within the practice of science. Nature is never alien to natural science. If we attempt to stand back and talk about the relationship between science and nature, we have no basis, independent of science or some alternative first-order discourse, for specifying the nature of nature. Certainly natural scientists, in addition to what we might think of as requisite self-awareness, might and can step outside of science in order to reflect on the practice of science, but the practice of science does not require such reflection, which might even be detrimental. In the case of natural science, knowing about the practice of science is not, anymore than in the relationship between folk music and ethnomusicology, the key to knowing how to do it. But even if, as Wittgenstein claimed, philosophy involved working on oneself and it was first necessary for the philosopher to "cure many intellectual diseases in himself" (1984, p. 44), philosophizing was directed outward toward another discursive universe. The question was, to whom and in what manner?

Philosophy, as in the case of Wittgenstein's own work, was clearly addressed to the community of philosophers, and here there was no doubt that the goal was therapeutic—"to shew the fly the way out of the fly-bottle," free people from the pictures that held them captive (2001, 119, 309), to "pass from a piece of disguised nonsense to something that is patent nonsense" and even to change a pupil's "taste" and "*way of looking at things*" (1984, p. 17; 2001, 309, 464). This might involve considerable destruction and seem to leave behind only "rubble," but the goal was clarity. Since what was at the root of many philosophical problems were the entanglements of everyday language, and since philosophical ideas seeped into that language, there was no lack of intercourse between philosophy and other practices or an absence of functional similarities, but this did not mean that there was no distinction between philosophy and other practices. He famously noted that the "philosopher is not a citizen of any community of ideas" (1967, 455) and that "philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use of language; it can in the end only describe it. For it cannot give it [such as the practice of mathematics] any foundation either. It leaves everything as it is" (2001, 124).

As I noted earlier, this idea of philosophy leaving "everything as it is" has been one of the mostly contentiously interpreted of Wittgenstein's statements. What this statement implied was that both philosophy and its subject matter were autonomous, but this did not mean unrelated or lacking potential for mutual interaction. Political theorists continue to be uneasy with the notion that politics and political theory are two different things and claim that even if they belong to different discursive realms, there is a "fine line" between the two. But there is also a "fine line" between, for example, parasites and their hosts and between skin and flesh, but we should not confuse the two. It is difficult to find a metaphor that captures the nature of metapractices. Although in one sense they are parasitic in that the very idea of a metapractice makes no sense in the absence of a host, they do not necessarily injure or gain sustenance from the host. They might then be considered epiphytic, but they are really sui generis. Wittgenstein said that a philosophical claim did not, as such, change its object of inquiry but "simply puts everything before us" (2001, 126). His point was that the relationship was contingent. Unlike conceptual or theoretical moves *within* a practice, such as natural science, whereby the conception of the subject matter, and the use of language, could be either transformed or given a foundation, philosophical investigations, that is, "grammatical" or "conceptual investigations" of other linguistic domains, do not necessarily have such effect. Whether they might or should was an

open question about which Wittgenstein, with respect to his own case, was somewhat ambivalent (2001, 90; 1967, 458).

In one respect, his hopes for his work seemed modest. It was not "impossible that it should . . . bring light into one brain or another—but, of course, it is not likely." And he did not want to "spare other people the trouble of thinking" but instead to speak to the philosopher "who can think himself" and to "stimulate someone to thoughts of their own" even if to an outsider the activity might seem "insane" (2001, p. x; 1969, pp. 50, 467). "My ideal is a certain coolness. A temple providing a setting for the passions without meddling with them" and since "you cannot lead people to what is good; you can only lead them to some place or other. The good is outside the space of facts" (1984, pp. 2–3). Late in life he suggested that a philosopher might demand,

> "Look at things like this!"—but in the first place that doesn't ensure that people will look at things like that, and in the second place his admonition may come altogether too late; it's possible, moreover, that such an admonition can achieve nothing in any case and that the impetus for such a change in the way things are perceived has to originate somewhere else entirely . . . Nothing seems to me less likely than that a scientist or mathematician who reads me should be seriously influenced in the way he works . . . I ought never to hope for more than the most indirect influence. (1984, p. 62)

The point is not that one necessarily should adopt what might seem to be Wittgenstein's somewhat ascetic and aesthetic attitude but rather that philosophy and all of what I refer to as metapractices, whatever their cognitive stance, have a practical relationship to their subject matter that can be neither avoided nor settled unilaterally. It is, however, an issue that whatever the attitude adopted must be confronted. Whatever methods and aims of inquiry are embraced, social science is an interpretive and reconstructive practice. What may seem paradoxical in this regard is that Wittgenstein's later philosophy was a rejection of representational philosophy, that is, both those philosophies that claim that language represents, or is an expression of, prior thoughts or ideas and those philosophies that claim that language represents or is grounded on some transcendent ineffable reality. But philosophy was nevertheless in the business of representing in that it was dedicated to giving an account of a conceptually preconstituted realm of conventional objects. The essential business of metapractical investigation is representational in the most literal sense that its object of inquiry is not internally generated but stands apart just as much as the landscape is different from what is represented by the landscape painter. Wittgenstein used the term "explanation" (*Erklärung*)

in a variety of familiar ways—often with respect to explaining the meaning or uses of a word (e.g., 2001, 71, 87, 533), but he stressed that such philosophical or grammatical explanation was a matter of "describing" the use of signs rather than explaining in the sense of positing something deeper or establishing through "experiment" a "causal connection" (126, 169, 496). He consistently rejected the idea that he was doing anything like natural science but rather was conducting something like a "natural history of human beings" in the sense of describing the variety of conventional performances but with the caveat that it diverged from certain other forms of natural history in that his method might involve the need to "invent fictitious natural history for our purposes" (2001, 25, 415: p. 195). What Wittgenstein was driving at when he claimed that he was not "doing natural science," and maintaining that his "considerations could not be scientific ones" or concerned with "empirical problems" and with "*explanation*" in the sense of advancing a "theory," was a certain kind of distinction indicating that what characterizes natural history, as opposed to natural science, is that it is more observational and taxonomic than experimental. To the extent that philosophy is explanatory, it is in the sense that it involves "description" and is interpretive, holistic, nonreductive, and ecological. It does not treat its immediate subject matter as epiphenomenal and seek an ideal that transcends particularity. He often spoke of what he did as "explaining" meaning, and since he seldom used the word "theory," not much should be made of his putative rejection of theorizing. When he did talk about theory, it was, as already noted, usually with respect to theories in natural science or with respect to general philosophical theories such as realism and idealism that were at the very core of his rebellion within the field of philosophy (2001, 81, 89, 109, p. 195, 392). It would, as I have stressed, be odd to suggest that Wittgenstein did not offer a theory, quite in the sense that we might think about a theory in natural science, of the phenomena that constituted the subject matter of philosophy, that is, of language, concepts, conventions, and the like. It was his account of this kind of stuff that demanded an interpretive method. If we want to understand such a method, the best place to start is in terms of Wittgenstein's account of a perspicuous representation or presentation (*übersichtliche Darstellung*).

In talking about the idea of a social science, Winch gave more emphasis to Weber than to any other social theorist, and there is a remarkable similarity between Weber's account of ideal types and Wittgenstein's philosophical "method of representation" (2001, 50). Wittgenstein might be construed as identifying something approximating Weber's image of ideal types when he spoke of the manner in which philosophy might approach

its conventionally constituted subject matter. Wittgenstein suggested that what was required in giving an account of a *Lebensform* and *Weltbild*, that is, what Weber had referred to as cultural objects, was a "perspicuous representation" or "sketches of a landscape" that "produces just that understanding which consists in 'seeing connections.'" He asked if this was a *Weltanschuung*, and although he did not directly answer the question, he seemed to conclude, like Weber, that it was not (at least in the sense that Spengler had used the term) but that it was nevertheless necessarily rooted in a philosophy or world view. The kind of representation that he sought would be accomplished by "inventing *intermediate cases*" that determined "the way we look at things." The subject matter consisted of "language-games" embedded in various social practices and forms of life, but he recommended, and saw the necessity of creating, second-order language-games that would be "set up as *objects of comparison*" and that were "meant to throw light on the facts . . . by way not only of similarities, but also dissimilarities." Here one might generalize in the sense of seeking "family resemblances" but not succumb to the kind of "craving for generality" that characterized so much of philosophy and modern thought in general. Such a model would, again, be, "an object of comparison . . . a measuring rod; not as a preconceived idea to which reality *must* correspond" (2001, 67, 122, 130, 131). What Weber criticized was the projection of an ideal or prototype onto the world of social action, when the purpose should have been to employ the ideal as a pragmatic device for interpreting that world. And this same idea was at the heart of the great transformation in Wittgenstein's philosophical approach when he turned away from the method of the *Tractatus*. Even his new view of language as rule governed was less an empirical claim about how language functioned than an ideal type designed to illuminate how it functioned. He was ambivalent about Spengler because although Spengler saw the necessity for ideal typification, he, like Goethe, believed that the ideal must be behind what it typified. The mistake of Spengler was still that of confusing the prototype with reality.

It would be difficult to imagine a better account of the kind of thing that Weber talked about as an ideal type. Such typifications were central to the activity of interpretation. Interpretation involved seeing something but, in addition, seeing it in a certain way and thus the necessity to first "*see*" something and then "*interpret* it" (Wittgenstein 2001, p. 193). When Weber talked about the need to impose social scientific concepts on phenomena during the course of inquiry, he was not, in the end, suggesting that this was like the manner in which natural facts gained their identity in terms of the concepts that composed a scientific theory. That

was one kind of "seeing," but there is another kind, which is characteristic of interpretation. Both Weber and Wittgenstein were talking about what it was "to see an object according to an *interpretation*," which presupposed a prior identity of the phenomena. In natural science, we just *see* a fact, but in social science, as both Weber and Oakeshott stressed, we interpret and thus characterize a preconstituted fact *as* a "this" or a "that" identified in the language and description of social science.

This is the hallmark, and paradox, of a metapractice, and it is what binds political theory to the rest of social science. Metapractices, however, despite the intrinsic commonalities of their condition, are also shaped within their cultural contexts, and to understand the peculiarities of political theory, it is necessary not only to locate it within the history of American political science but also to view it within the even broader setting of the relationship between politics and the American scholar.

Political Theory and the American Scholar

The Exoticization of Politics

> We have got on to slippery ice where there is no friction and so in a certain sense the conditions are ideal, but also, just because of that, we are unable to walk. We want to walk: so we need *friction*. Back to the rough ground!
> —Wittgenstein

While both many political scientists and political theorists are quite content with the distance between political theory and political science, my argument is unequivocally for reintegration, or at least greater complementarity, as well as for a broader view of political science and social science as metapractices. Calling for a closer relationship between political theory and mainstream political science might seem to ally me with the spirit of the Foundations of Political Theory section of the American Political Science Association (APSA) that, in 2007, sent two letters of complaint to the department of political science at Pennsylvania State University because of that department's decision to eliminate political theory as a course of study in the graduate program. There was, however, no suggestion that political theory had any obligation to alter its character or even to specify exactly what constituted that character and its contribution to a graduate degree in political science. Political theory is a highly pluralistic field and tends to lack even the limited sense of identity that adheres to the other subfields that belong to the professional holding company of political science, and this raises the issue of exactly what was being excluded at Penn State. What constitutes the study of political theory differs widely among various departments, and political theory as a whole does not represent any particular approach or even subject matter. It was somewhat ironic that after years of distancing themselves

from political science, some political theorists who subscribed to this letter were now complaining about the subfield not being adequately recognized and included within the discipline. Another irony in this situation was that although, during the past half-century, many political theorists have sought to vouchsafe the autonomy of this humanistically oriented practice, which, they believe, can be distinguished from the scientific pretensions of much of political science, its various contemporary varieties are the progeny of political science.

As already noted in Chapter 1, recent discussions about the nature of political theory, even when these discussions escape mythologies of identity, have yielded little more than a description of various subvocations cloaked in rhetorical intimations of underlying or overarching solidarity. What is consistently suppressed or repressed is an authentic confrontation with the issue of the relationship between political theory and other elements of the discipline and, particularly, the fundamental issue of the relationship between social science and politics. Part of the problem with discussions about how "political theory" stands with respect to "mainstream political science" is that the latter is as much a discursive construction as the former. Critiques of what is often alleged to be the hegemony of rational choice analysis and the lack of adequate plurality in political science, claims about the need for more qualitative research, and revivals of vague demands for more politically relevant value-oriented approaches, all of which characterized much of the Perestroika controversy, are not sufficient forms of engagement with these issues. The political theorist Ian Shapiro has criticized what he refers to as "the flight from reality in the human sciences" (2005), but that flight is nowhere more evident than in political theory.

The issue of the relationship between social science and politics is fundamental, because the history of political science has been a history marked by the dream of social transformation. If there is anything distinctive about political theory, it is the fact that it is in this literature that the remnants of that dream have remained most visible. From the beginning, however, the concern about bringing academic discourse to bear on public issues gave rise to dialects, and the dialectic, of what, in 1958, during the debates about behavioralism, Norman Jacobson, at Berkeley, referred to as "moralism" and "scientism." His plea at that time for the "unity of political theory" was a call for setting aside the growing conflict between political science and political theory, which was devolving into a contest between what both sides increasingly viewed as ethics and science. The result of this conflict had, he claimed, led to the danger of "atomizing political theory," an alienation from, if not "hostility" toward, its

subject matter, and a polarized, but mutual, search for "certitude." The spell of that debate continued through the 1960s and was not broken by the postbehavioral ecumenical atmosphere but simply manifested itself again in the persistence of scientism in many aspects of political science and moralism in the subfield of political theory as they both acceded to a partition separating their putative respective spheres of empirical and normative theory.

The dialectic of moralism and scientism was not, however, simply a product of the behavioral era. These stances, despite what might seem to be the tensions between them and the different mythologies within which they encased themselves, sprung from the same underlying concerns and history. Although to some extent they arose as ways of forging inter- and intradisciplinary identities, they were also, from the beginning, and as I stressed in Chapter 1, shaped in the process of what was conceived or perceived as the relationship of social science to its external audience. And even though they may have seemed to oppose one another, they have remained the two fundamental, and mutually entwined but unrealistic, strategies for confronting the congenital question of the relationship between the academy and politics. While in the 1960s, for example, Easton claimed that science was the key both to the social authority of political science and to achieving democracy, individuals such as Wolin argued that the answers lay in the articulation of moral principle. These choices, however, were only a manifestation of a syndrome that had been at the heart of the conversation of political science long before the tension between political theory and the parent discipline had taken shape. In the history of American political science, scientism has always been in the service of moralism, and moralism has always tended to search for something comparable to a scientific foundation. It is necessary, however, to understand the extent to which these binaries are not simply peculiar to the history of political science but deeply rooted in the discourse and experience of the American scholar's confrontation with political life. Moralism and scientism represent the persistent American exoticization of politics.

Although there have always been certain American academicians who can be categorized as public intellectuals, as well as a few who have "crossed over," the relationship in the United States between scholarship and politics has, on the whole and from the beginning, been uneasy and ambiguous. Scholars have been drawn toward politics both as a fascinating object of investigation and as a vehicle of practical action, but at the same time, they have often been repelled by their perceptions of the practice of politics. What this has often produced is a tendency to exoticize

politics, depicting it as either a venal realm to be purified or abolished or some idealized transcendental or immanent essence, which, although only faintly or occasionally apparent in everyday life, might be more fully realized. Both conceptions of politics have also led to exotic visions of scholars as moralists and scientists. American scholars have both sought and feared proximity to politics, but in the end made sure that they were insulated by both conceptual and physical distance. Moralism and scientism were means of achieving the former, and residence in the university achieved the latter.

In the United States, there has never been a significant integration of political and academic discourse, but at least in the early years of the American republic, when colleges and universities were primarily institutions devoted to the dissemination of religion and moral philosophy for the purpose of citizenship training, a practical relationship was more viable and credible. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the character of higher education had begun to change significantly, and from the perspective of the university, politics became increasingly viewed as a distant alien object that could only be confronted by a missionary posture. Questions about exactly what kind of object was involved and what the scholar's relationship to it should be were, however, far from settled. The exoticization of both the scholar and politics was, however, already apparent in the work of Ralph Waldo Emerson. The fact that in recent years Emerson has become a hero in the literature of political theory and has even been billed as "the central figure in American political thought" (Sacks 2008) are indications of just how far this literature has distanced itself from the realities of politics and from the ideas that actually animate political life.

Emerson's 1837 essay on the "American Scholar" was first delivered as an address at Harvard University, but he scarcely made reference to the situation and activity of the academic intellectual (1990, 37–52). This may have been in part because he was not sympathetic to the religious stance of those who still dominated the university, but it was also because he did not think of scholarship as a professional and institutionalized practice. To the extent that he entertained any concrete model of the scholar in America, it was someone such as Henry David Thoreau of whom he pointedly said "no college ever offered him a diploma, or a professor's chair" (Emerson 1990, 484). Emerson's image of the scholar was not unlike Karl Marx's distinction between the painter and a person who paints. For Emerson, the scholar was "man thinking" as opposed to the occupation of a "mere thinker," but it was a figure without a distinct context. It was a person defined in terms of such intangible characteristics

as having a relationship with nature and history and with whom "action" may be "subordinate" but is nevertheless "essential." The task of the scholar, as Emerson depicted it, was to be "free and brave" and "guide men by showing them facts" amid the "appearances" embodied in the customs of society, but he provided little indication of precisely who would fit this role or how they would perform this critical function. Close to the end of his essay, Emerson admitted that he had "dwelt perhaps tediously upon this abstraction of the Scholar" and should have something "to say, of nearer reference to the time and to this country" and particularly about what inspired the current "introversion" and "discontent of the literary class." But apart from his claim to join others as they "embrace the common" and to stress "the new importance given to the single person," he offered little that was definite about either the scholar or the conditions of contemporary scholarship.

When, a few years later, Emerson, addressing the graduates of Dartmouth College, turned his attention to *Politics* (248–58), his distaste for the subject was evident. He asked "what satire on government can equal the severity of censure conveyed in the word *politic*?" He noted that "the theory of politics, which has possessed the mind of men," had been expressed in the institutions of government, but he counted the political realm as less than "aboriginal" and as something that "must follow, and not lead the character and progress of the citizen" and "the delicacy of culture and of aspiration." Although Emerson extolled a general idea of self-government and involvement in public life, he was vague about what this entailed, and he concluded that "good men must not obey the laws too well" and that "the less government we have, the better." Although he argued that "the history of the State sketches the coarse outline of the progress of thought," he suggested that "with the appearance of the wise man, the State expires. The appearance of character makes the state unnecessary," because the state is only a "shabby imitation," and "every actual state is corrupt." Although Emerson noted that commentators (presumably such as Alexis de Tocqueville) might worry about "our turbulent freedom" and about "anarchy" emerging from our "license of construing the Constitution, and in the despotism of public opinion," the "antidote," he claimed, was not the activity of parties and "formal government" but the "influence of private character, the growth of the individual."

Emerson's account of both the American scholar and politics was in many respects the evocation of a waning era. Despite Lieber's perpetuation of the American study of politics as a dimension of moral philosophy, he was already, by midcentury, moving in the direction of transforming this field into a disciplined academic enterprise, which, by the last

quarter of the century, would become an element of the modern research university, but the implications of this transformation for the relationship between the scholar and public life were absent from Emerson's basic vision. Another irony attaching to Emerson's essay is that while it is often interpreted as a declaration of intellectual independence from European influences, it was presented at the very point at which American scholarship was being transformed by ideas from abroad. His famous proclamation that "we have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe" and that "our day of independence, our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands, draws to a close" coincided with the emerging social sciences and much of American philosophy falling under a spell of foreign ideas, particularly those from Germany, by which they would remain bound during the course of the century. The disdain for politics was, however, not merely an expression of American nativism. It would in many ways be reinforced by the ideas from Europe, but those ideas also contributed to a new idea of politics that transcended the politics of everyday life and that still resonates in much of contemporary political theory.

Until midcentury, the term "state," apart from references to the American states, was, for the most part, absent from both political discourse and scholarly commentary. Emerson's use of the word "state" was little more than a synonym for "government," but in the year following his address, Lieber published his *Manual of Political Ethics*, which fixed the concept of the State in American academic discourse and marked the beginning of another form of the exoticization of politics in the American academy. For Lieber, and successive generations influenced by German philosophy, the State was *not* the government but rather a sublime invisible entity consisting of the American people as a community, which represented the apex of a world-historical tale of the realization of human freedom and which stood behind both the Constitution and government and validated the idea of popular sovereignty. The idea of the State defied and transcended the diversity and competition of interests that characterized mundane political life and that had been so worrisomely described by James Madison in *Federalist* #10 and that had lingered in Emerson's work. But although foreign concepts such as the state were in many respects, as in the case of Lieber, adapted, and often creatively and insightfully, to the American experience, they seldom escaped the constraints of the European intellectual ambience in which they originated. This conceptual alienation may not be the most important dimension of the explanation for the practical distance between politics and the American academy, but it is certainly one.

What Emerson shared with those who entered the academy during that period of the nineteenth century was an antipathy toward the actual practices of politics. There were now two images of politics—one debased and one idealized. Maybe this dichotomy had been prefigured in the *Federalist*'s distinction between the factious realities of everyday political life and the uniquely heroic politics of the founding endeavors, but this kind of distinction would persist in the discourse of political theory. No matter how fascinated social scientists may have been with the strange culture of politics, they were cautious and circumspect in approaching it and talking about it. Despite the fact that individuals such as Lieber, and later Burgess, celebrated the glory of the American republic, politics and government were things to be constrained, purified, and transcended. Everyday politics was fearsome and dangerous, and what they imaged and imagined, whether in the conservative vision of a naturally evolving society or in the Progressive hope for instrumentalities of social control informed by social scientific knowledge, was the neutralization of political life. Lieber's celebration of the American polity was tempered by his claim that political participation was responsible for the frequency in the United States of what he euphemistically referred to as the "alienation of the mind" (1835), a view that would be later reinforced by the psychologist George Beard in his seminal psychological study of mental illness in *American Nervousness* (1881). The second founder of American political science, Merriam, devoted his life to ideas about how to find a scientific basis for taming "jungle" politics, and Lasswell continued to dramatize the "psychopathology" of politics (1930). For group theorists and pluralists, during the late 1920s, it was, it seemed once again as it had in the case of the *Federalist*, something of a miracle of institutions and circumstances that the random pursuit of self-interest added up to democratic order—a contemporary *Fable of the Bees* in which private vice produced public benefit. The growing ascendancy of "rational choice" theory a half-century later did not dispel the persistent sense that politics is the scene of the collective irrational.

Another characteristic that Emerson shared with the founders of American social science was the vocation of the ministry. Although the most immediate sources of high-minded contemporary academic moralism may be attributed to the influence of such diverse individuals as Strauss and Habermas, the more fundamental, and fundamentalist, tone was already set in the nineteenth century. The evolution of the social sciences in the United States was propelled by the infusion of German historical philosophy and the elitist Mandarin culture that was attached to it, but the genesis of American social science was in moral philosophy

and in social reform movements. The founders of social science were the white male Protestant clergy and their offspring who embraced science as a way of furthering religious values in an age in which traditional religion was losing its authority. It would be difficult to name a major figure in the emerging social scientific professions of the last third of the nineteenth century who was not a product of this culture, and for them scientism was simply the pursuit of moralism by other means. The crucial change that was taking place in the study of politics in the later part of the nineteenth century was represented by the appointment in 1872 of a young Episcopalian curate to the first chair of Political and Social Science at Yale University. William Graham Sumner had graduated from Yale in the midst of the Civil War and then studied in Europe before receiving religious orders in New York. It was assumed that he would be a safe choice for meeting the increasing demand for scientific studies within the university while sustaining the moral and religious perspective. However, because he believed that science was a more secure foundation for cognitive authority than religious precept, he became one of the principal founders of the scientific study of society. Here science was in the service of moralism, and both were devoted to the subjugation of politics. A decade after his appointment, his essay on "What the Social Classes Owe to Each Other" took issue with the romantic German image of politics and the state and reverted back to something approaching Emerson's view of politics. For Sumner, the "State" was just an abstract reference to an organ in the natural body of society and, often, only to the menial functions of government clerks. Contemporary professional political theory, despite the varied backgrounds from which today's novitiates are drawn and the wide range of values to which they subscribe, remains unconsciously shaped by that discursive heritage and the zealous self-righteous sentiments that defined it. And the politics that the public experiences and views in the media remains far removed from the exotic images that are the subject of much of political theory.

A generation after Emerson urged the 1838 graduating class at Dartmouth not to become mere pedants, Whitelaw Reid, in his own Dartmouth commencement address, went far beyond Emerson and commended to his audience "the duty of the American Scholar to be a Politician, and his duty as a Politician" since "with the scholars of the land rests the real control of its democratic representative government" (1873). But the image of politics that dominated the literary world was more typically like Mark Twain's short story on "Cannibalism in the Cars" (1868). Here the narrator told of being accosted by a somewhat deranged former politician who related to him the horrors he experienced while stranded

in a train during a blizzard. The travelers were finally forced to engage in cannibalism to survive, but they followed an extremely tedious legislative protocol in making and executing their decisions about who would be eaten. Twain may have been implying that politics was a civilized form of cannibalism or that cannibalism was simply a form of politics, but he did suggest a connection between the two that reflected the disposition of the age.

I have elsewhere meditated at some length on T. S. Eliot's reference to the dilemma of the anthropologist studying cannibals as a metaphor for the attitudes of social scientists studying partisan politics (Gunnell 2000). Like anthropology, political science sprung from missionary zeal that included a wish to get in touch with the subject matter and transform it, but there was also a fear of becoming too closely involved in politics in the sense of either "going native" and losing objectivity and epistemic privilege or facing the material consequences of interfering in political culture. Today it is seldom that academic intellectuals need actually worry about the kind of retribution that was visited by politics on some of their late nineteenth-century forebears who dared to came to close to its rituals. Those early social scientific missionaries often took quite a beating from the savages, if they were not gobbled up altogether, and as a consequence, they retreated even further into the safety of moralism and scientism. During the last century, however, apart from an uncomfortable period during the Cold War, the only thing to fear has been either fear itself or the micropolitics of the academy, but the old dangers are held in discursive memory and are vicariously experienced and expressed in the projected persona of the heroic theorist venturing into a world of false consciousness and domination where, as Sweeny Todd, the demon barber, opined, "the history of the world, my sweet, is who gets eaten and who gets to eat."

Unlike what some have argued is anthropology's exaggerated attributions of cannibalism to alien societies (e.g., Arens 1979), politics is not merely a construction of second-order discourse. It is all too real, and although politics has often been represented as a dangerous and foreign culture, it has sometimes been romanticized and transfigured, much in the same way that non-Western societies were eventually depicted by anthropologists such as Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict. In the work of political theorists such as Arendt, "the political" was imaged as a pristine isle that we can perceive across some distant temporal horizon or evoke from the remnants of history. In the literature of political science and political theory, politics as well as the relationship between the scholar and politics, is largely a trope generated by the dialectic of desire

and disgust. There is politics before its interpretation, but usually what we are presented with is the second-order deformation and mythologization of politics. It has been figured and disfigured but rarely described. Political theorists abstract it and reify it, while many political scientists cut the body politic up into pieces so tiny that it is hardly recognizable, and then, occasionally, put it back together in a manner that would make Frankenstein's monster feel fortunate. No more than in the case of cannibalism is it necessary to participate in politics in order to understand it—nor is it necessary to appropriate cannibal or political language as a vehicle of description. But the conceptual and physical distance between politics and the American scholar has been so great that there is a danger that the concept of politics, like that of kinship in anthropology, will be merely an object generated within second-order discourse.

At about the same historical point that anthropologists stepped down, as Malinowski put it, from "the verandah of the missionary compound" to engage in actual fieldwork, political scientists began to investigate American politics in a more concrete and detailed manner. In neither case, however, did these new encounters, and the rejection of the grand evolutionary visions of the "armchair" political and anthropological theorists, dispense with second-order mythologies that would make sense of it all—with what Malinowski termed the "ethnographer's magic." There was a continuing problem of establishing political science as capable of accessing authoritative knowledge about politics but also of making it socially acceptable to such constituencies as university trustees and to distinguish it, at least linguistically, from the dangerous attributes of its subject matter. After the experience of others in attempting to establish academic departments that included the words "politics" or "political," it took some courage for Woodrow Wilson to name the department at Princeton "Politics," but at the same time, it expressed the continuing urge to identify with the object of study as well as to gain power over it—a simultaneous search for identity and difference. This, however, was not the typical stance. American scholars, by the last quarter of the nineteenth century, had given up an overt claim to moral authority and largely adopted the strategy that would be exemplified a generation later in the work of Weber as well as in the stance of the APSA. This involved the assumption that the most efficacious way to influence politics was, paradoxically, to be apolitical and amoral and to base intervention on claims about the cognitive authority of science. But the purpose remained moral, and moralism as a strategy for intervention would rise again.

For the émigré scholars who came to the United States in the mid-twentieth century, and who in many ways changed the discourse of

political science, the issue of theory and practice with which they were all obsessed became increasingly abstract once it was divorced from the European context. "Theory and practice" became more a figure of speech than a reference to any practical situation. We may sometimes construe the nexus of theory and practice as internal to an activity such as in the case of a natural science and the manner in which its theories might be said to structure and inform a paradigm of normal science. For the most part, however, what we have in mind when speaking of theory and practice is actually the relationship between two orders of practice. What is presupposed, whatever the relationships might be, are two distinct discursive identities and realms of theory—one constitutive of the first-order practice of politics and the other a body of commentary on it. There is, however, a great deal of accidental and purposive effacing of this difference. One basis of confusion is precisely that which arises when the image of an internal relationship is imposed on the external, that is, when, for example, political theory as an academic practice is construed as the theoretical dimension of political practice. Another form of misunderstanding emerges when there is a failure to distinguish between speaking about a practice such as politics and engaging in it. Even though both might be viewed as instances of political talk or speaking politically, this does not erase the distinction. A third linguistic strategy for eliding difference is to seek identity through positing functional similarities such as in the case of suggesting that ideological struggles in academic discourse are political in that they involve discussions of power or interest. A fourth strategy is to suggest that the parallelism between academic and political discourse indicates that the former is merely a more abstract manifestation of the latter. But if confusion arises from this kind of analytical shuffling of categories, it also emerges from a conflation of historical contexts. The concept of the relationship between theory and practice presents a case of what Wittgenstein referred to when he spoke of the manner in which, in the course of noting similarities between certain things in terms of family resemblances, we tend to elevate one instance as definitive of how we construe other instances. This difficulty is exacerbated when the paradigm case is somewhat mythical.

In construing the activity of the academic intellectual's relationship to politics and public life, we continue to be held captive by pictures derived from images of the history of political theory. It is a mistake to assume that the array of classic texts, from Plato to NATO, was the product of participants in some actual "vocation." It is only at a very high level of abstraction that it is possible to distinguish the authors of the traditional canon as a class that transcends the particularities of their actual endeavors

and historical situations. Few individuals may now avowedly subscribe to the various versions of this image of the "great tradition," which dominated the field of political theory during the twentieth century, but the image continues in subtle, and even sometimes explicit, ways to structure discussions of the relationship between political theory and politics. And when the basic constituents of this image, such as the assumption that the canon is the product of an actual historical rather than analytically constituted tradition, are embellished with the imposition of qualities such as progress or decline and the transcendental nature of the "political," the picture becomes yet more distorted. The only real link between the actual vocation of political theory, that is, the contemporary institutionalized academic activity and its pedigree, on the one hand, and the "great tradition" of political theory, on the other hand, is that the latter is an invention of the former. All this, however, is not to say that there are not some defensible, and edifying, attributions of similarity between, for example, figures such as Plato or Machiavelli and the contemporary academic political theorist or philosopher, but there is a tendency to parse the comparisons at too generic a level.

Second-order practices cannot simply stand on their own two feet and still be authentic, because they are, in their very essence, cognitively and practically linked to their subject matter. Like the missionaries involved in the origins of anthropology, the identity of second-order discourse also often depends on its goal of transforming its subject matter, which, in turn involves both achieving unity with the oppressed and misguided and yet creating and maintaining a separate epistemic authority and appropriate distance. The problem that haunts much of academic political theory is that it is moralism without a context. The peculiarity of moral knowledge is that it has no independent status, that is, it is not about anything unless it is put into practice, but when political moralism becomes a professional academic enterprise, its situation is anomalous. It is in part this distance between academic and political discourse that has led to the exoticization of politics. The goal of social science has been the conquest and colonization of politics, and to make that a credible project, politics has been figured either as the scene of corruption and domination or as a sphere of purity and innocence, located in some distant conceptual space. The goal of political studies, we might say, has been the incorporation of politics, but we are not dealing just with the specifics of activities such as political science and its particular, and sometimes peculiar, taste for politics but with what is to some extent the inherent predatory nature of all second-order discourses that in various symbolic and practical ways seek to consume and become one with their subject matter yet are always

wary of being consumed by it. The question, however, is who is the real cannibal in this scenario and to what extent are the images of politics that dominate the literature the displacement of political theory's own nature as well as its fear, as Sweeny expressed it, "that those above will serve those down below."

Wolin (1960) suggested that liberal political theory is distinguished by the "sublimation of politics," and although it may still be unclear exactly why he used that phrase, it seems that what he wanted to express was the manner in which the realm of politics had been depreciated in value and made a dependent variable. Probably the idea that he was seeking to convey was something on the order of saying that politics had become subliminal or that it was made sublime, not in that it was elevated to a lofty status but that it was transformed from a solid to gaseous state. But there is surely a more literal sense in which much of political theory, particularly the academic variety, has pursued the sublimation of politics, and that is the manner in which the alchemists sought to change things from a material to spiritual state. It is time, however, to cast off the residue of the dialectic or moralism and scientism, and it is equally important to recognize how parochial the very idea of political theory may be. It is still rooted in the history of American social science and the context of American culture. Although, like American political science in general, political theory has spread around the globe and often functions as an academic prototype, its character and local history is often considerably different in different cultural contexts. Many years ago, I was invited to teach political theory at Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu, Nepal, and the only similarity between my language and that of my host was the word "theory." Our understanding of the concepts of both politics and theory were totally different. One of the fundamental differences among national varieties of political theory is the role of academic intellectuals, but conceptions of this role are either too easily universalized or too quickly extrapolated from local experience. What is common, however, as Derek Jarman's film *Wittgenstein* suggests, is that the philosopher seems always to float forever between heaven and earth, seeking a frictionless world but continually drawn back to terra firma. It is tempting to hold on to the illusions of a world without friction, because it is difficult to gain a footing on the topography of the "rough ground." There is no resolution of this paradox. It is simply the condition of the metapractitioner, and maybe the best that can be achieved is clarity and a resistance to mythological construals of the relationship between the spheres.

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