

Political Science and Its Challenge to the Association

Remigio E. Agpalo

It is a rare privilege and a great honor to address you this morning on political science and its challenge to our association. I must admit, however, my diffidence and sense of insignificance in tackling this subject, for it involves a discipline whose history is more than 2,000 years old and whose scope is very broad, sweeping, and awe inspiring.

Our discipline was called by Aristotle, the father of Political Science, as "the most sovereign of the arts and the sciences." To this great philosopher, political science is the master art and science because it is the instrument by which man may attain justice or the highest good. This is how Aristotle puts it in Book III of his *Politics*: "In all arts and sciences the end in view is some good. In the most sovereign of all the arts and sciences — and this is the art and science of politics — the end in view is the greatest good and the good which is most pursued. The good in the sphere of politics is justice; and justice consists in what tends to promote the common interest."¹

The importance of political science is partly shown in the number and quality of the men who reflected on it during the past 2,000 years. There are the normative system-builders, like Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, Hobbes, Spinoza, Locke, Rousseau, Hegel, and Marx; there are the historians, like Thucydides and Polybius; there are the practitioners of politics, both democratic and totalitarian, such as James Madison, Thomas Jefferson, Sun Yat Sen, Woodrow Wilson, Apolinario Mabini, Jose P.

Dr. Agpalo is the holder of the Manuel Roxas Professorial Chair in political science at the University of the Philippines. He is at present acting president of the Philippine Political Science Association and also serves as a lecturer at the National Defense College. This inaugural address as first President of the Philippine Political Science Association was delivered at the Home Economics Tea Room, University of the Philippines, on March 16, 1963.

¹Aristotle, *Politics*, tr. by Ernest Barker (New York; Oxford University Press, 1958), Fourth Printing, 1961, p. 129.

Laurel, Jawaharlal Nehru, Lenin, Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini, and Mao Tse-tung. There are the systematic empirical students, such as Nicolo Machiavelli, Arthur Bentley, Gaetano Mosca, Charles Merriam, Harold Lasswell, and Maurice Duverger. There are the model builders, like Max Weber, David Easton, Richard Snyder, Fred Riggs, and Gabriel Almond. And also, there are those who take stock and appraise the discipline, such as George Catlin, Charles Hynemann, and Bernard Crick.

In our 20th century, political science has come of age. This is evidenced partly by the establishment of political science associations in various parts of the world. The United States, in 1906, was the first country to establish a political science organization named the *American Political Science Association*. In France, Germany, and other European countries, political science became vigorous after World War II. The International Political Science Association, sponsored by the UNESCO, was established in 1949 and has been influential in the encouragement and the development of political science in various parts of the world. Professor W. A. Robson, however, noted in a study in 1954 the following remarks: "Political science enjoys an autonomous status in *very few countries*."²

The Philippines is not included in these *very few countries* where political science enjoys an autonomous status. For, in the Philippines, political science is still in swaddling clothes. It is my impression that in the private universities of the country, most of the teachers of political science are lawyers or have had very little training in political science. I must state, however, that there are a few who are really capable political scientists in these universities. In the State University, it is also sad to point out that the Department of Political Science is not as strong as it should be. The Department of Political Science has the biggest number of students in the whole Division of Social Sciences, but in terms of graduate and teaching assistants assigned to help it, the Department does not seem to get a proportionate share of the blessings that come from the Administration. The Department had been fragmented and weakened with the establishment of the Institute of Public Administration, and I suppose the physical separation of public administration from political science has also impoverished public administration. For, like Antaeus, public administration must be invigorated by going

²W. A. Robson, *The University Teaching of Social Sciences: Political Science* (Paris: UNESCO, 1954), p. 69.

back to its life source and mother, and in this case the life source is political science. Fortunately for both public administration and political science faculty members of the State University, the separation between the two is not complete. We in the Department still study and teach political dynamics, theory, and other political science courses. But, I think it must honestly be admitted that the separation — physical and curricular — has impoverished both.

It is interesting to look back to the history of the University of the Philippines in order to see the vision of the founding fathers of the University and what happened to this vision with reference to political science. In 1908 when the Charter of the University of the Philippines was approved, it provided that the Board of Regents shall have the power and *duty*, among others, to provide for a College of Social and Political Science. In 1912 President Murray Bartlett in his Report to the Board of Regents stated that the University was still incomplete, for certain colleges provided for in the Charter were not yet established. The President mentioned the "College of Social and Political Science" as one of the colleges not yet established.

In fact, the Department of Political Science did not come into being until July, 1915, but it was not autonomous. At that time it was under the Dean of the College of Law. Before its transfer to the College of Law, courses on political science were taught by the Department of History. Now, although the Department of Political Science is no longer under the Dean of the College of Law, after fifty-five years since the foundation of the University, the College of Social and Political Science has not been established, in spite of the explicit and mandatory provision of the Charter that the Board of Regents shall have the power and *duty*, among others, to provide for a College of Social and Political Science. Up to the present, this mandate remains in the University Charter. It is a shining evidence of the vision of the founding fathers of the University and of their recognition of the importance of political science, but unfortunately it is a vision that failed because it was not implemented by the Board of Regents.

I have dealt with some aspects of the history of the Department of Political Science in the University of the Philippines for an important reason: it illustrates the difficulty of establishing a secure foothold for the discipline even under express provision of the Charter, passed by the lawmaking body and approved by the executive of the land. If political science had a difficult birth and growth process in the State University, then it is understandable why

this process in the private universities of the country is more difficult. For, in the private universities, there are no state funds to use to support it, and there is no law that enjoins them to encourage and promote the growth of political science.

The Philippine Political Science Association was legally incorporated last December 5, 1962 partly in response to this anomalous situation and paradox: while political science is a significant discipline, it is not given a recognition commensurate with its intrinsic worth. I believe that now that we are organized and legally incorporated, we can carry out certain tasks which will pave the way to securing a place in the sun for our discipline. I think that these tasks are the challenges to our association.

What are the tasks which we have to perform if our discipline is to have a secure place in the sun? As I look at it, there are at least five which we have to carry out: (1) publication of a learned journal; (2) holding symposia or conferences on significant political topics; (3) making a stand or taking a position on important public issues; (4) promotion, encouragement and support of research on politics and government; and (5) establishing and maintaining contact with similar professional or scholarly organizations in the interest of mutual enlightenment.

Tasks Nos. 1, 4, and 5 are included in Article II of the By-Laws of our Association. Tasks Nos. 2 and 3 are corollary to Task No. 4, which is the promotion, encouragement, and support of research on politics and government. I consider the promotion of research as the basic task and challenge to the Association. For, without research, our Journal cannot be published, since the Journal will be supplied with articles or materials which are products of systematic research. The symposia and conferences, likewise, would be fruitless if there is no systematic research; and the Association will not be able to take a valid position on significant public issues unless it is buttressed by systematic research. Besides, as President Carlos P. Romulo's *ad hoc* Committee on Research Promotion, to which I was a humble member, had stated: "A strong research program is the fountainhead from which vital information for solving the country's social, economic, and political problems may be drawn."³

Our research findings, however, will not become politically and socially useful if they are not published. It is, therefore, necessary to publish a journal which will serve as our medium for communicating

³Ad Hoc Committee on Research and Promotion, in *University Perspectives* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines, 1962-1963), p. 295.

our ideas to our colleagues in the academic world, to our fellow citizens who can profit from our findings, and to our government officials who can use them as basis for the formulation and or the implementation of public policies.

The publication of a journal, however, is an expensive affair. Obviously we cannot rely on mere membership dues to finance the publication of our Journal, for a professional or scholarly association cannot have mass membership. With no mass membership, therefore, we shall not be able to collect a sizable amount of money from members' dues. Hence, we will have to study ways and means of tapping funds from private foundations, such as the Asia Foundation and the Ford Foundation, or possibly from our government. It will be legitimate to secure financial aid from Congress, for after all the Constitution of the Philippines provides that "the State shall promote scientific research."⁴ Providing our Association with funds for publication of a journal is one way by which the State can "promote scientific research."

Our Association must also hold symposia or conferences on significant political topics. By doing this, we shall be helping in the crystallization of sound opinion on matters vital to the interest of the nation or of Man. If to these symposia or conferences are invited public officials, the symposia or the conferences will provide very good media for mutual enlightenment between the public officials and ourselves. In these symposia or conferences we shall also have a good opportunity to present, discuss, criticize, and refine our favorite political ideas, theories, and hypotheses. The symposia and conferences can serve, therefore, as a testing ground and place of development for our political brainchildren.

With regard to taking a position on important public issues, our Association must not grab every opportunity to take a stand every time an occasion occurs. We should avoid committing ourselves to a definite position on public issues of a transient nature. We must remember that there is always the risk that politicians might intervene in or emasculate our organization. For this reason, we must adopt a cautious approach, taking a position only on very significant public issues after a thorough, objective, and careful analysis of the points concerned.

And finally, we should also establish and maintain contact with similar professional or scholarly organizations. By doing this we shall

⁴Philippines, *Constitution*, Art. XIII, Sec. 4.

keep ourselves abreast of new developments in political science in different countries or universities, and we shall receive intellectual stimulation for further research or studies. The establishment and maintenance of contact with other similar organizations may also result in inter-associational or international conferences on subjects involving political science.

I would like to return to the promotion of research which I said was the most important challenge to our Association. The question arises: What are we to research on or study?

The answer necessarily raises the problem of the subject matter of political science. There are those in our discipline who believe that political scientists must study the state or its government,⁵ including all the institutions, processes, and forces which either constitute it or impinge on it. There are those, however, like Catlin and Lasswell, who think that we must study the structure and dynamics of power (whether of the state or nonstate entities). The debate between these two groups has not subsided, and it appears unlikely that it will be settled in our generation.⁶ Professor Charles E. Hynemann thinks that, insofar as American political science is concerned, its central point of attention has been the government of the state.⁷

It is my personal belief that we students of political science should study power relations. However, I do not propose the sweeping approach of Catlin and Lasswell, for, studying as they do all power relations in society, they necessarily invade the domain of sociology, anthropology, and economics. I would rather adopt V. O. Key's power relations approach limited to those relations which affect the government. The power approach is convenient because it narrows our field to one particular focus. Thus, we have a concept which integrates all the various branches of the discipline, and, at the same time, we can make its field more manageable for intensive and systematic study. It is also realistic because no matter how we try to ignore or minimize the existence of power relations in politics, they do exist nevertheless.

⁵Traditional political scientists had adopted this position. It was enshrined, too, in traditional textbooks on politics. See, for example, James W. Garner, *Introduction to Political Science* (New York: American Book Company, 1910) and Jose M. Aruego, *Principles of Political Science* (Manila: University Publishing Company, 1932), Rev. ed., 1947.

⁶See George E. G. Catlin, *The Science and Method of Politics* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927) and Harold D. Lasswell, *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1936).

⁷Charles S. Hynemann, *The Study of Politics: The Present State of American Political Science* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1959), p. 25.

Professor V. O. Key has argued persuasively in favor of a power focus in politics. He contends:

Power is the thread running through all the areas into which political scientists divide their subject for study. International politics concerns itself fundamentally with power relations between states. Constitutions may be considered as more or less rigid crystallizations of the balance of power among different classes and interests within a society as well as definitions of the manner by which formal power is to be achieved and exercised. Lawmaking is patently a process in which groups, sections, parties, and individuals contend for power. Administration partakes at times of the nature of legislation; at other times it carries into execution the verdict of power struggle within the legislature. Political parties and pressure groups are active elements within society seeking governmental power and influence.⁸

In undertaking research on politics and government, we must begin by making a distinction between empirical research and philosophical study. The former involves description, about the *is*; the latter, prescription, about the *ought to be*. Our studies will be more fruitful, more meaningful, and more systematic if the two kinds are distinguished.

We should encourage, promote, or undertake empirical studies, such as Professor Jose Abueva's *Focus on the Barrio*⁹ and Professor Mary Hollnsteiner's *The Dynamics of Power in a Philippine Municipality*,¹⁰ for the findings in such research, if confirmed in numerous other cases, will form a part of the body of political science which we have been building. Conclusions in such studies also can suggest hypotheses for further inquiry. They can also be used for the reformulation and refinement of existing theory and hypothesis. And finally, the data and information in such studies can provide citizens and public officials with the necessary data for sound and rational decision-making.

Many influential students of political science such as Gaetano Mosca, Arthur Bentley, Harold Lasswell, and Heinz Eulau have proposed the adoption of the empirical or the positivist approach to the study of politics and the exclusion of the approach of political

⁸V. O. Key, *Politics, Parties, and Pressure Groups* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1956), p. 4.

⁹Jose V. Abueva, *Focus on the Barrio* (Manila: Institute of Public Administration, 1959).

¹⁰Mary R. Hollnsteiner, *The Dynamics of Power in a Philippine Municipality* (Quezon City: Community Development Research Council, University of the Philippines, 1963).

philosophy or ideology.¹¹ Political philosophy or ideology, which involves normative values, they contend, cannot be proved to be true or false. For normative values can only be asserted or emoted; they are not subject to proof or disproof. Since science is a body of systematic and confirmed statements — descriptive, explanatory, and predictive — political philosophy should, therefore, not be a concern of the political scientist.

The proponents of the empirical or the positivist approach are right in saying that political philosophy or ideology is not subject to confirmation or disconfirmation, but I believe they err when they advise us to exclude political philosophy or ideology from the orbit of our discipline. I agree with the empiricists or positivists that we should study *conditions* or *what is*, but it does not follow that we should not make *value judgments* or preferences or *what ought to be*. A political science which cannot make or refuses to make value judgments is barren and irresponsible. It is also devoid of significance and relevance to political men. If political science were a mere body of invariant relationships about political phenomena, as neutral as a spade or water, there will be no distinction in terms of value between cabbages and man. As Professor Leo Strauss has put it: "The logic on which the new political science (which adopts the empirical or positivist approach) is based may provide criteria of exactness; it does not provide objective criteria of relevance."¹² Thus, not providing criteria of significance, the political science which excludes political philosophy leaves political men in the dark, without faith and without a sense of direction. When political science does this, it shirks its responsibility and "passes the buck" — to use the colloquial phrase — to the politician, the journalist, and the proverbial man-in-the-street, who usually lack the scholarly discipline, thoroughness, and broadmindedness of the political scientist to prescribe what ought to be done on various political problems, institutions, or practices. The results can be disastrous, particularly if they involve war and peace, liberty and the police power of the state, and justice and injustice, where expert or technical knowledge or broad background is required.

Political science, therefore, should not exclude political philo-

¹¹See Gaetano Mosca, *The Ruling Class*, tr. by Hannah D. Kahn (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1939); Arthur F. Bentley, *The Process of Government* (Evanston, Illinois: The Principia Press of Illinois, Inc., Reissue.)

¹²Leo Strauss, "An Epilogue," in *Essays on the Scientific Study of Politics*, ed. by Herbert J. Storing (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1962), p. 317.

sophy or values from its domain. As Professor John Hallowell says: "Implicit in positivism is nihilism closely akin to, if not identical with, the gospel of cynicism and despair that produced the mentality of fascism."¹³ He continues: "The refusal to pass ethical judgment is a kind of ethical judgment none the less."¹⁴ Professor Strauss is more critical, bristling with unmistakable sarcasm: "Only a great fool would call the new political science diabolic: it has no attributes peculiar to fallen angels. It is not even Machiavellian, for Machiavelli's teaching was graceful, subtle, and colorful. Nor is it Neronian. Nevertheless, one may say of it that it fiddles while Rome burns. It is excused by two facts: it does not know that it fiddles, and it does not know that Rome burns."¹⁵

In undertaking research on politics and government, our Association, I believe, should stress research on Philippine politics and government. This does not mean that we shall not care about non-Philippine political institutions and processes. Political science is a cosmopolitan subject and product of international effort. It is also a body of generalizations derived from a study of comparative political institutions, processes, and values. We cannot, therefore, afford to be "crabbed, cabined, and confined" in Philippine government and politics without suffocating in our narrow shell. However, since the study of Philippine politics and government is still very inadequate — there is not even an available good textbook on Philippine government — we may be excused if we put emphasis on research on the politics of our country.

To summarize, political science is a venerable discipline with a history of some 2,000 years. It is the most sovereign of the arts and the sciences. It deserves an important place in any country. In the Philippines, political science has not been recognized and honored as it should be. There are economic and legal experts in Malacañang, in Congress, and in the various departments of our government, but political scientists are conspicuously absent there. We students of politics can also offer our government and the people in general useful and valuable knowledge on such issues as the Borneo Claim, amendments to the Constitution, nationalization measures, economic development, political modernization, revolution, and other public questions which require careful thought and rational and thorough

¹³John H. Hallowell, "Politics and Ethics," *American Political Science Review*, XXXVIII (August, 1944), p. 653.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 65.

¹⁵Strauss, *loc. cit.*, p. 327.

analysis. We can also contribute to the international effort to build a body of knowledge about politics and to promote international understanding. Political science, the most sovereign of the arts and the sciences, therefore, calls upon us to gird up ourselves and respond adequately and vigorously to this challenging and paradoxical situation. It bids us to publish a learned journal, hold symposia and conferences on significant public matters, take positions on significant public issues, establish and maintain contact with similar professional or scholarly organizations for mutual enlightenment, and promote research on politics and government. In undertaking this research, we should focus our interest on power relations that involve the government, study both empirical and normative politics, and stress Philippine government and politics.