Politics, Language, and Time
J. G. A. POCOCK

Politics, Language, and Time

Essays on Political Thought and History

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To Quentin Skinner and John Wallace;
and to the University of Canterbury in New Zealand,
where half of these papers were written
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I welcome the reissue of these essays by the University of Chicago Press. First published in 1971, they were for the most part written during the middle and later 1960s, and should be read in contexts drawn from that time gone by. From one point of view—academic and necessarily autobiographical—they may be seen as having cleared the ground for two larger enterprises in which I was already engaged: those leading to the publication of *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton University Press, 1975), and *The Political Works of James Harrington* (Cambridge University Press, 1977). These are studies of the role of classical republicanism and civic virtue in European and American political discourse during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. A further volume of essays somewhat resembling the present one—*Virtue, Commerce and History: Essays in Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge University Press, 1985)—is intended as preparation for a future work in which I shall show just how complex the dialectic between ancient civic virtue and modern commercial civility became in the discourse of Edward Gibbon and other humanists of the Enlightenment. Historians need to understand that the history of discourse is not a simple linear sequence in which
new patterns overcome and replace the old, but a complex dialogue in which these patterns persist in transforming one another.

The essays in Politics, Language, and Time also explore other themes in which I have been interested, including those of prescriptive antiquity and apocalyptic renovation. "Ritual, Language, Power," while now twenty-five years old, proposes an enterprise that I still wish scholars better equipped than I would take up: the writing of histories of East Asian political thought comparable with those which we have for the classical and postclassical West. I like to believe that the exploration of Renaissance and Enlightenment discourse which I have described may have contributed something to a brilliant work in this kind recently published by Chicago, Tetsuo Najita's Visions of Virtue in Tokugawa Japan: The Kaitokudo Merchant Academy of Osaka. To have history written with an Eastern and a Western face will be very important and necessary in the times to come.

The opening and closing essays in this volume may also be read as contributions to a literature of method among historians of political discourse which has grown considerably over the last two decades. I would like to refer the reader to further essays of mine in Virtue, Commerce and History, in Anthony Pagden's The Languages of Political Theory in Early Modern Europe (Cambridge, 1987), and in Kevin Sharpe and Steven Zwicker's Politics of Discourse: The Literature and History of Seventeenth-century England (University of California Press, 1987). These will show that while I have been deeply indebted to the work of Thomas S. Kuhn, I have always insisted that a political community is not simply a community of enquiry, and that therefore the status and function of paradigms in its discourse is different from that of The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. Whether it is of more than heuristic value to speak of "paradigms" or of "revolutions" in the history of such a discourse is a debate in which I remain happy to take part.

There is a further context drawn from the 1960s in which
these essays should be read and to which some of them were addressed. They were written during the years of the Vietnam War, the Prague Spring, and W. H. Auden’s poem August 1968 with its heroic reminder: “the Ogre cannot master Speech.” In that poem the Ogre is triumphant ly repressing revolutions, but he can also be thought of as capturing and perverting them. There were Red Guards abroad in those days, real as well as theoretical; and if it was one’s business to conduct the academic polity and its civility, Weatherman might not be worse than the Ohio National Guard but was more often on one’s doorstep, pressing demands which more obviously arose from within one’s own values and perverted them. “Liberalism” was then a term of abuse employed on the left rather than on the right, and it was against elements of the left that humane learning and the liberal arts had sometimes to be defended. The concluding essay in this volume therefore explores—but self-critically—the concept of speech as a counterrevolutionary strategy: the construction of a context too rich and complex to be unmade all at once by any great cultural revolution, or made to yield to any one set of revolution ary demands. One need not adopt a conservative ideology to recognize that this is a conservative theory of freedom. It claims that politics and language need time and history in which to make and to know what they have made, while and before they set about changing it.

But that was then; this is now, and the Ogre may wear a different face. I write in August 1988, during a series of visits to countries of my own culture—New Zealand, Australia, the United Kingdom—in which powers of the state acquired in the move towards socialism are being reversed and used to destroy mixed economy and impose universal privatisation. One scheme of values thus imposed is that of cost- effectiveness. Its imposition on centres of humane learning seems to indicate an intention to demolish universities and replace them with some species of tertiary education which will prepare young men and women for futures of under-
employment and diminished productivity and creativity, with no paths open to them except the service industries for the many and the service of highly fluid investment capital for the few. Liberal learning, attacked twenty years ago because it did not lend itself to the instant politicization of the culture, is now under attack because its products cannot quickly enough be repackaged and sold at a profit. The diversity of the economy and culture of the United States softens the immediacy of this danger, but it is present all the same.

The apparently conservative strategy sketched out in Politics, Language, and Time may therefore be redirected against the right as well as the left, and in some cases against a left which has suddenly become the right. It is a strategy in which discourse and culture claim autonomy in shaping their own history, giving notice that their time is their own and that they cannot without destroying themselves give up their time to demands for immediate transformation, whether these arise from revolutionary or from profitmaking speculation. If speech is in any degree autonomous, it may fight the Ogre to win leisure for thought; language may reconquer time for politics.

J. G. A. Pocock
Baltimore, 1988
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Languages and Their Implications: The Transformation of the Study of Political Thought

The term "revolution" may soon cease to be current, emptied of all meaning by constant overuse; so that, for both revolutionary and conservative reasons, it should be employed sparingly. Let it rather be said, then, that during the last ten years scholars interested in the study of systems of political thought have had the experience of living through radical changes, which may amount to a transformation, in their discipline. These changes have had historians and philosophers at their center, and have consisted essentially in a revaluation of the ways in which history and philosophy meet in this particular study; but other disciplines—political science, literature and possibly sociology—have been involved and have contributed. The present author, who seems to himself to have been concerned in this transformation from an early stage, here brings forward a number of essays designed to illustrate its character. The first and last excepted, they have been published previously, and all were written while he variously bore the official denominations of historian and political scientist; and the first
part of their dedication, to a Cambridge student of history and philosophy and a Chicago student of English literature, emphasizes the interdisciplinary nature of what is going on.

To trace the history of a revolution is, almost of necessity, to start with a straw man. The rhetoric of the exercise compels the construction of an account of the way things stood before change began which neglects the extent to which change had begun already and the activities of men under the old regime resembled the activities which were to receive emphasis as a result of the process of transformation. In describing certain intellectual confusions which it has been necessary to attack and seek to dispel, I do not wish to ascribe them to my seniors and predecessors indiscriminately; but neither do I wish to minimize the extent to which they live on, and are inflicted upon novices to the present day. It seems to follow, then, that I am not tracing the history of a revolution but rather of that very different thing known, in current jargon, as a confrontation. (Like most academic debates, it is scarcely a dialogue.) The “transformation” of my title is a change of emphasis, a heightening of awareness, which has made this “confrontation” possible. If it is now clear that what I am describing is a matter of degree rather than kind, it should be easier to recognize that my straw man is a methodological or narrative device (if at the same time a cap that will fit many if they will wear it), and that I do not intend to ascribe all intellectual confusions to some group of rivals, or all intellectual clarity to the group to which I myself belong.

In illo tempore, then, the study of political thought was confused to the point where one did not know whether “political thought,” “theory,” or “philosophy” was the appropriate designation for the field one had chosen. A canon of major works had been isolated by academic tradition, running from Plato to Aristotle to Augustine to Aquinas to Marsilius to Machiavelli to Hobbes to Locke to Hume to Rousseau to Burke to Hegel to
Marx. Here, if no earlier, confusion set in; there was vague talk of a “collapse of the classical tradition,” and in the Cambridge Historical Tripos, for example, a paper on “The History of Political Thought” (Plato to Rousseau, or is it Marx?) gives place, even at this day, to one on “Theories of the Modern State”—a title which seems unmistakably to reveal its authors’ uncertainty as to whether what they are studying is any longer history at all, and if not, what. The political thought of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has remained uncanonized by the organizers of this tradition and—where its study has not been actually discouraged—is all the better for it. But the figures in the classical canon held their places there because most of them could with fair plausibility be described as philosophers. It was true that many of them had at the same time practiced disciplines as diverse as theology, jurisprudence, history, economics or aesthetics, and that here and there the startled face of a Florentine diplomat or a Cromwellian soldier peered out of the galerie, as if wondering why others as remote from formal philosophy as himself had not obtained admission; but such divergencies of thought were dealt with by treating them as if they had been political philosophy, and consequently as commentaries upon or moments within its uninterrupted course. Alone among the major branches of historical study in the middle twentieth century, the history of political thought was treated as the study of a traditional canon, and the conversion of tradition into history was in this case conducted by the methods of philosophic commentary on the intellectual contents of the tradition, arbitrarily defined as philosophy.

Neither the philosophers nor the historians—nor, when they became involved from their own angle of approach, the political theorists—were more to blame than the others; each group was as anxious to escape from the confusion as its neighbors; but the root of the trouble lay in a maladjusted relationship between history and philosophy. As has been amply documented
and accurately criticized by a number of writers in recent years, the coherence of a work or body of political writing, as political philosophy or as political theory, was mistakenly identified with its character as a historical phenomenon. The historical interpretation, explication or explanation of the text was consequently identified with the discovery of its coherence in one or other of the above forms, and this identification persisted alongside the otherwise historically correct principle that the interpreter’s aim should be to present the text as it bore meaning in the mind of the author or his contemporary reader. Acceptance of this principle did not always save the scholar from focusing his efforts on the rediscovery of coherence, or even on the suggestion of means whereby the text might be endowed with a coherence which the author had failed to give it. This latter objective, even when pursued by means which were those of historical insight and reconstruction, was plainly unhistorical, since it is as possible in principle that a thinker fails to achieve coherence as that he succeeds in achieving it; and when this becomes a historical question, it is obviously no part of the historian’s business to furnish his author with a degree of coherence he did not in fact achieve. The most the historian may attempt is to show that, once we realize as historians that a man’s ideas are to be interpreted in a certain way, we may understand in the light of that knowledge what his problem in achieving coherence was, and why he believed that he had solved it by proceeding as he did. Even this hypothesis presupposes that the author aimed at achieving a certain degree of formal coherence, which further historical research may show that he did not.

But if even the interpretation of a man’s thought by histori-

cal means may be deployed in ways that are historically illegiti-
mate, it follows even more clearly that interpretation by the
philosopher, the political theorist, or—when he too enters the
arena—the critic of literature should not be identified, or rather
confounded, with interpretation by the historian. The state-
ments made by any one of these practitioners are not historical
statements; they are designed to produce, or elicit, formal rela-
tionships or empirically testable propositions, not with what
*eigentlich* happened or—the special form which this takes in
the history of thought—what *eigentlich* was meant. The non-
historical practitioner is not concerned with what the author of
a statement made in a remote past meant by it so much as with
what he in his present can make it mean: what he can do with
it for purposes of his own, which may or may not—and there-
fore do not have to—coincide with those of the author. Either
the formal nature of the enterprise in which author and inter-
preter share, or considerations of historical continuity, may
bring it about that to some degree they do so coincide, and that
to this degree effective communication between the dead and
the living is possible; it may well be that unless there is some
degree of communication of this kind, the interpreter will be
unable to use the author’s words even to his own purpose. But
only the historian, or more precisely the man engaged for the
moment in historical inquiry, is interested in the question of
*how far* the author’s use of his words coincided with his modern
interpreter’s use of them. From his standpoint, he must observe
that communication between author and interpreter is of the
kind which Petrarch imagined between himself and Cicero or
Livy—“from you, in your age of the world, to me in mine”—
and necessarily entails an element of translation, and conse-
quently of *traduttore traditore*. But since he is prepared to al-
low autonomy to disciplines other than his own, he will also
observe that if this kind of treason prosper, it is no longer
treason. “Hobbes did not mean that by those words,” he will
murmur to the philosopher or political theorist, “at least not
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exactly; but you may if you find it useful. Do not, however, preface your thought by the words ‘Hobbes said,’ still less by the dishonest pseudo-present ‘Hobbes says.’ Something like ‘if we repeat these words of Hobbes under given conditions, there ensue the following results’ is more your meaning.’

The philosopher, theorist or critic in illo tempore might with reason resent his apparent obligation to study what he knew to be history, and still more his apparent obligation to write it. There is a legitimate activity—it would be proper to term it a humanist one—of restating the thought of ancients and predecessors in the language of one’s own day, in order to see what they have to say, when so stated, as to its concerns; the humanist in this sense is one who would rather learn about politics from Aristotle than from behavioral science. But twentieth-century men are averse from regarding themselves as dwarfs on the shoulders of giants, and many of them would rather not take their conceptual apparatus from tradition, preferring to construct their own. The division of labor between humanists and operationalists is a wholly legitimate one. The trouble arose in illo tempore less because students were drafted into humanism against their will than because, when philosophers became involved in humanist activities, they found themselves expected to do work of historical interpretation for which they were not equipped; and whether they resented the task or eagerly embraced it, the results were often equally unfortunate. A classic instance of the substitution of philosophical for historical explanation that sometimes ensued is to be found in the work of R. I. Aaron. Becoming interested in Locke’s apparent indifference to any historical explanation of politics, he accounted for it by saying that the age Locke lived in was rationalist and was uninterested in any other kind of explanation. ² Historical inquiry, however, revealed that Locke was unique among the theorists of his age, including his closest associates, in his indif-

ference to historical explanation and that it is very difficult to account for this characteristic; from which it further appears that Aaron's allegedly historical explanation was drawn from his philosophical analysis of Locke's text, that it is wholly circular and that it masqueraded in his own mind as a piece of history. Faulty division of labor—the chief cause of methodological debate—was clearly to blame for this sad confusion.

But the historian was no less to blame, and no less confused, when he allowed the philosopher's modes of thought to be foisted upon his own. Since the philosopher's business is to formalize the relations between ideas, he very properly drew out the bodies of political thought presented to him into systems of philosophy at least as formalized as their authors had sought to make them, and at times more so. When the authors had themselves aimed at a philosophical degree of formalization, this was not an illegitimate activity and had much to teach the historian; but this was not always the case. Even when it was, however, the philosophical explanation of how the ideas in a system are related to one another is generically different from, and only contingently coincident with, the historical explanation of what the author meant to say, let alone of why he wanted to say it or chose to say it in that way; the two are arrived at by different procedures and answer different questions. The result for the historian in illo tempore was that he found himself confronted by a chronologically ordered sequence of major intellectual systems, allegedly (and sometimes verifiably) constituting historical phenomena. The intellectual similarities between these systems were supposed to constitute the continuities, the dissimilarities between them the processes of change, of a historical order; but the order had not been built up by the methods of the historian.

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He was therefore required to deal with a para-history or meta-history, consisting of philosophical systems and existing alongside the other historical sequences or orders with which he dealt, and to which he was expected in some way to relate it. The task was plainly impossible if, as this analysis has suggested, the “history of political thought” presented to him did not belong to his universe of discourse at all; but he did not escape from his difficulties merely by denying that it so belonged. He might, that is to say, respond as Marxists did, by stigmatizing the whole erection as “idealism,” and indeed it is such contemporary idealists as W. H. Greenleaf who profess themselves happiest with a “history of political philosophy” so constructed (though some would wish to ask why the idealist universe of discourse in which Greenleaf operates is to be called “history” at all). But the counterpart of idealism is materialism; and the historian often reacted to his predicament by seeking to reduce the order of ideas to identity with some other order which he was better equipped to handle. If a Marxist (at least of the Old Left), he declared that “ideas” were a mere reflection of social reality; if a Namierite, that they were rationalizations of political interests independently perceived and arrived at. But this did not do either. Reductionism failed to rescue the historian from the circumstance that the intellectual constructs he was trying to control were not historical phenomena at all, to the extent to which they had been built up by non-historical modes of inquiry; to the extent that at best they were historical phenomena only by the luck of some intelligent non-historian’s discovery. The reductionist technique was simply an attempt to explain how the apple got into the dumpling, the ghost into the machine.

The above strictures should not be read as meaning that

much excellent history of political thought was not written by scholars operating under these limitations; the mind overcomes limitations of this kind before it sets about dismantling them. But good work done in a context of methodological confusion is in a sense done by chance, or by some coincidence of virtù and fortuna; it is done despite the available methods, and lacks the critical autonomy which comes only when the method is operating positively to produce the work. The transformation we can claim to be living through is nothing more or less than the emergence of a truly autonomous method, one which offers a means of treating the phenomena of political thought strictly as historical phenomena and—since history is about things happening—even as historical events: as things happening in a context which defines the kind of events they were. Ghosts still stalk the battlefield; it can still be seriously asked whether the history of political thought consists of the study of classical texts or of perennial problems, whether the choice lies between an idealist or a materialist scheme of interpretation. But we are beginning to see historical daylight; and since it has been emphasized that much of the previous confusion originated in a confounding of the functions of the historian and the philosopher, it is gratifying to record that philosophic analysis was the agency which began to liberate the historian for the pursuit of his own method.

The positivist and linguistic philosophies ascendant some fifteen years ago⁵—difficult as it is to recall that time in the present moment of romantic agony—raised the question whether such a thing as political philosophy could exist at all; whether the business of the philosopher were not simply to explore and clarify the statements which other men made about

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⁵ I have in mind the appearance in 1956 of the first series of Philosophy, Politics and Society, edited by Peter Laslett, and its editor’s claim that “for the present, anyhow, political philosophy is dead.” For the revanant’s subsequent adventures see, e.g., the second series issued under the same title, edited by Laslett and W. G. Runciman (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962).
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subjects that might include the political. If to clarify might be considered a normative activity, to explore might be either analytical or historical. The distinction between first-order and second-order statements, between statements and statements about statements, evoked the image of a world in which some men employed language—or languages, or language structures, or language-“games” possessing “rules” by which they might be “played”—to make statements, including political statements and statements about politics, while other men employed language (the concept could be similarly refined at this level) to explore the statements which had been made and the vocabularies, structures or rules by which they had been made. It needed only the step—which a historian should take instinctively—of viewing “language” as a product of history and as possessing history of its own, to reach the point where it could be seen, first, that the exploration of language might yield historical results, might produce second-order statements about languages used which would be historical statements; second, that this activity could be considered a historical agent, helping to produce changes in linguistic consciousness and so in the history of language-use itself. What seemed to many, about 1956, the subversion of political philosophy by linguistic analysis helped to liberate the history of political thought by converting it from a history of systematization (“philosophy” in an old sense) into one of linguistic use and sophistication (“philosophy” in a new).

But to analyze the logical structure of a statement—as we already know, and as has been the recurrent theme of this critique—is not to bring out its concrete character as a historical phenomenon. Neither can this be done—though it can be approached a great deal more nearly—by the techniques which critics and students of literary expression employ to uncover the full wealth of association, implication and resonance, the many levels of meaning, which a living language contains when used by those who are masters of its powers of expression. The
rigor with which some schools of "new criticism" insist that theirs is and must be an altogether a-historical discipline demonstrates, even if one does not accept this doctrine, that the critic is not self-defined as a historian dedicated to the recovery of an actual past. Still less will this be the aim of the sort of analysis conducted by pure linguistics, especially if one accepts that the mental structures constituting language lie at a level of the personality too deep to be readily associated with history in any of its usual senses. At this stage in the reconstruction which we are conducting, the methodological autonomy of the history of political language remains to be established.

Perhaps the most valuable single contribution to its establishment has been made indirectly, by a historian of science. Thomas S. Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* has accustomed readers to think of the history of science as essentially a history of discourse and of language. In what he calls periods of "normal science," paradigms—controlling concepts and theories—so satisfactorily discharge the intellectual functions expected of them that they authoritatively indicate not merely the solutions to problems, but the kinds of problems which are to be conceptualized as requiring solution; and so, dictating the direction, the pattern, the distribution and organization of intellectual endeavor, indicate further the ascription and definition of authority among the individuals and groups composing the "scientific community." Scientific revolutions occur when the paradigms cease to function satisfactorily, and it is discovered not merely that problems are remaining unsolved, but that the problems which the paradigms indicate are incapable of solution because they are now seen as misconceived; that something has happened which necessitates a redefinition of the problems to be solved, a reordering and redefinition of the discipline itself, a new paradigmatic structure, a new language and a new distribution of authority within the scientific community. A "take-off" or "permanent revolution" might be envisaged in the case of a community so flexibly or-
ganised that the process of paradigmatic reconstruction, or "scientific revolution," was constant and continuous; but on the assumption that a successful paradigmatic change is one which discovers (or constitutes) a whole new class of problems awaiting definition and solution, it is likely to generate a period of "normal science" in which it will become a conservative force, or Hegelian thesis, necessitating antithesis, revolution and synthesis at a later moment.

The exciting thing about Kuhn's methodology, from the point of view of one concerned with the problems of this essay, is that it treats a branch of the history of thought as a process both linguistic and political. To treat a highly formalized activity of thinking as an activity of communicating and distributing authority by linguistic means may very well be unwelcome to many readers at present, if they view Kuhn's treatment (wrongly but inevitably) as normative or recommendative; but its value to the historian is that, by defining the "paradigm" both in terms of the intellectual (heuristic) function it performs and in terms of the authority, both intellectual and political, which it distributes as between human actors in a social system, we acquire two sets of criteria by which to define the language in general and the paradigm in particular, in which we are interested, in their social context and their historical con-

6 In thus defining the "paradigm" in strictly linguistic terms, I have already begun to diverge somewhat from Kuhn's employment of a term so much his own. He has recently (Comparative Studies in Society and History, vol. XI, no. 4, p. 412) emphasized that "paradigms are not to be entirely equated with theories. Most fundamentally, they are accepted concrete examples of scientific achievement, actual problem-solutions which scientists study with care and upon which they model their own work." In what follows, I have consistently treated them as verba rather than exempla; but I believe this can be justified on the grounds that politics (as distinct from political science) is not a problem-solving activity and involves an even more intricate structure of communication; and the verbal paradigm as I seek to present it—a historical event or phenomenon to which there can be many responses—retains much of the character of Kuhn's concrete exemplum. It will, I fear, be Professor Kuhn's fate to see his concepts taken from him and used for purposes not his own; but this is proof of the essential value of his theory.
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creteness. Men think by communicating language systems; these systems help constitute both their conceptual worlds and the authority-structures, or social worlds, related to these; the conceptual and social worlds may each be seen as a context to the other, so that the picture gains in concreteness. The individual's thinking may now be viewed as a social event, an act of communication and of response within a paradigm-system, and as a historical event, a moment in a process of transformation of that system and of the interacting worlds which both system and act help to constitute and are constituted by. We have gained what we lacked before: the complexity of context which the historian needs.

It is hard to exaggerate the attractiveness, to the historian of political thought, of the suggestion that Kuhn has provided an anatomy applicable to his or to any field of intellectual history. Not only does this scheme offer him a means of furnishing the history of political thought with methodological autonomy; the implication that any formalized language is a political phenomenon in the sense that it serves to constitute an authority structure is agreeable to his sense that, in studying the history of political thought, he must at the same time be studying the history of political society. What has hitherto been rather vaguely termed "political thought" is now redefined as the exploration and sophistication of political language, and the connections between language system and political system begin to seem possible to draw. However, if we proceed to say that political language consists of the paradigms of the political community in a way analogous to that in which scientific language consists of the paradigms of the scientific community, complications arise which have to be recognized. The political community is not like the scientific community, and its language differs accordingly. The reason is that the scientific community may without distortion be thought of as organized for a single purpose, that of intellectual inquiry of a certain kind. It is true that the extent to which this is so may be questioned.
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We have defined intellectual inquiry as itself displaying a political aspect, in so far as it consists of the construction and reconstruction of authority-structures; and we may bow the knee to the Double Helix by admitting both that considerations other than purely intellectual enter into the motivation and behavior of scientists, and that the decisions by which scientific paradigms are modified or abandoned are processes of consensus in which the exact moment of decision cannot be isolated and intellectualized, and into which the politics of group behavior may conspicuously enter.\(^7\) Nevertheless, there is a difference. The scientific community is formally constituted by the paradigms of intellectual inquiry of a specific sort, and by the concept of that inquiry itself acting as a paradigm. A man is a member of the scientific community only because he has assumed the \textit{persona} of one engaged in that form of inquiry and acknowledging the authority of its paradigms; and this will not cease to be true should his community pass through the restructuring process of a scientific revolution. Consequently, the extent to which the language and thought of the scientific community will be disciplined by the paradigms of a single mode of intellectual inquiry, as that is from time to time redefined, may be predicted as high. The same may be said of other communities of intellectual specialists, though with varying degrees of specificity; the paradigms of the community of historians, for example, will prove maddeningly elusive. But the history of political thought is not the history of the thought, language or paradigms of the community of political scientists; only very recently has that community developed to the point where its language and its history may attain to the dignity of a subsystem. The political thinker is assumed to be thinking as a member, and in the context, of the political community itself, and therefore to be speaking a specialized variation of its public language. Where a subcommunity of political scientists

has developed to the point of professional or methodological autonomy, we shall ask whether its language is continuous or discontinuous with that of the political community at large. The more the two languages are continuous, or the less the specialized subcommunity is seen to be autonomous, the more will the "political thinker" be supposed to be making second-order statements, to be exploring, modifying and using at a higher level of abstraction, some area of the language of politics itself. He will be communicating with his fellow citizens—as Socrates was judged by them—in terms of what he has done with their publicly approved paradigms of value and authority.

The language of politics is obviously not the language of a single disciplined mode of intellectual inquiry. It is rhetoric, the language in which men speak for all the purposes and in all the ways in which men may be found articulating and communicating as part of the activity and the culture of politics. Political speech can easily be shown to include statements, propositions and incantations of virtually every kind distinguished by logicians, grammarians, rhetoricians and other students of language, utterance and meaning; even disciplined modes of inquiry will be found there, but coexisting with utterances of very different kinds. It is of the nature of rhetoric and above all of political rhetoric—which is designed to reconcile men pursuing different activities and a diversity of goals and values—that the same utterance will simultaneously perform a diversity of linguistic functions. What is a statement of fact to some will symbolically evoke certain values to others; what evokes a certain cluster of factual assertions, and value judgments concerning them, to one set of hearers will simultaneously evoke another cluster and recommend another resolution of conduct in the ears of another set. Because factual and evaluative statements are inextricably combined in political speech, and because it is intended to reconcile and coordinate different groups pursuing different values, its inherent ambiguity and its cryptic content are invariably high.

The consequence is that if we are to define political speech
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as controlled by paradigms—and these, in the forms of highly authoritative linguistic formulations, are very evidently present—we must revise our theoretical definition of a paradigm and its function. A Kuhnian paradigm prescribed the isolation of certain problems and their solution in certain ways, and in so doing prescribed certain definitions of authority within the scientific community. Since speech is a political operant, it visibly performs the latter kind of function within the political community; but since it is not confined to the activity of problem-solving, it arrives at these functions by a different route. It invokes values, it summarizes information, it suppresses the inconvenient; it makes many kinds of statement and does so by means of formulations which can often convey several kinds of statement at once, while simultaneously diverting attention from others. Its paradigms, therefore, even those institutionalized to the point where to utter them is itself an invocation of authority, must be thought of as operating in several simultaneous contexts, performing several simultaneous functions, and as doing so in ways which deliberately fail to distinguish these contexts and functions from one another. When we define the paradigm as prescribing an authority-structure in the act of performing an intellectual (or linguistic) function, it must follow that a multivalent paradigm, simultaneously performing diverse functions in diverse contexts, must simultaneously designate and prescribe diverse definitions and distributions of authority; nor is this surprising once we remember that a political society contains a great variety of authority-structures, variously indicated and prescribed, and that the purpose of political activity—including political speech—is to appeal to numbers of these simultaneously, by means which can neither politically nor linguistically be identical.

It follows for the post-Kuhnian student of political speech that the paradigms whose careers he is tracing must be thought of as existing in many contexts and on many levels simultaneously. He may analyze the rhetorical (which are also political)
structures in which they were employed to say many things to many men at once; but as he traces their history, in terms of men's responses to their use and their subsequent re-employment, he must recognize the theoretical probability that each of them may have had as many histories as there were levels on which its use was recognized and provoked response, and that given the semantic diversity of these levels, these histories may have diverged widely from one another. Even if they did not, the levels remain as semantically distinguishable as ever, so that rhetorically complex speech has a semantically complex history; and all this is part of the linguistic and therefore political texture of the human societies and lives whose history the student is ultimately tracing. It does not follow that a paradigmatic revolution—the equivalent in political speech of one of Kuhn's "scientific revolutions"—will entail the occurrence of a political revolution; a power-structure may survive by successfully transforming its idiom; but these are phenomena between which relations can be found.

At this stage we are considering the possibility of a politics of language: a series of devices for envisaging the varieties of the political functions which language can perform and of the types of political utterance that can be made, and the ways in which these utterances may transform one another as they interact under the stress of political conversation and dialectic. Some theoretical, as well as historical, exercises in such a politics may be found in the seventh essay in this book, where political statements concerning the past of society are envisaged in transit from symbolic legitimation via pragmatic criticism to historical reconstruction. It will be observed that while the earlier conventions of utterance are not superseded, but survive alongside the later modes superimposed upon them, the process of debate itself does operate to clarify the distinctions between the different types of statement being confusedly intimated, as men respond to the different aspects of the communication which stimulate and provoke them. Confusion and clarification
exist together. The prototype of the second-order statement thus appears quite spontaneously, without the necessity of intervention by specialized intellectuals, as men argue over, as well as for and against, the exact meanings of the message intimated to them; but it is along the same line of development that the specialized intellectual makes his appearance, either as one whose function it is to make second-order statements concerning the level of meaning on which the intimated statement is to be interpreted, or as one practicing the special skill of interpreting and refining the statement and others like it on some one of these levels, where a distinct and autonomous intellectual activity is now being carried on. It is very important, above all when we are engaged in revising the relation between political philosophy and the history of political thought, to recollect that philosophy, whether in its classical or in its modern sense, is only one of the specialized intellectual activities which can be generated by discussion and exploration of the language in which the articulation of politics is carried on. Historiography is another; and others again may be identified, to varying degrees emerged from the merely ancillary (as historiography, it may be argued, has emerged altogether).

Whether the intellectual has specialized in the clarification of speech itself, or in one or other of the abstract crafts to which clarification gives rise, his increasingly rarefied diction continues to perform political functions; since the paradigms of his discourse, even if they are not merely the paradigms of ordinary political language raised to a higher level of abstraction, still inescapably recommend (even if only by emphasizing) this or that deployment of speech, and so this or that definition and ascription of authority. He does not emerge from the multiple structures of political language and the political community. But at this point we are rendered conscious once again of the diversity of "languages" in which "political thought" may be carried on, the diversity of contexts in which its paradigms may function linguistically and exert political effects. A theo-
retical politics of language has carried us so far, by demonstrat-
ing that political speech consists of a dense texture of un-
differentiated intimations, that these may be differentiated into
a variety of specialized linguistic (and political) activities, but
that nothing can prevent these from continuing to affect and
redound upon one another. It is part of the plural character
of political society that its communication networks can never
be entirely closed, that language appropriate to one level of ab-
straction can always be heard and responded to upon another,
that paradigms migrate from contexts in which they have been
specialized to discharge certain functions to others in which
they are expected to perform differently. If the philosopher is
concerned to keep statements of different orders distinct from
one another, the historian is concerned with whether or not
they were kept distinct, and with what happened as a result of
either.

To render the texture denser still, a politics of language,
though it may succeed in predicting the functions of political
paradigms and even the theoretical processes of change in those
functions, cannot be expected to predict the specific contents
and referents of political speech; this has to be left to empirical
investigation. Political speech does not refer alone to the struc-
ture of political activities, institutions and values conceptual-
ized as the subject matter of political theory, and conceivable
as theoretically constant in a wide range of political societies.
It refers also to all those activities, together with their institu-
tions and values, which it is the business of politics to order and
coordinate and which may, in the specific society whose lan-
guage and thought we choose to study, have been seen for so
long as relevant to politics that their vocabularies and values
have entered the political language and become part of it. Gov-
ernors must learn and speak the language of the governed; in-
dividuals enter the governing elite by way of specialized sub-
elites whose characteristic vocabularies they bring with them;
for these and other reasons, political speech becomes impreg-