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# A Study of the PRINCIPLES OF POLITICS

BEING AN ESSAY TOWARDS  
POLITICAL RATIONALIZATION

BY

George E. G. Catlin

M.A., PH.D.

*Professor of Politics in Cornell University  
Sometime Exhibitioner of New College, Oxford*

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GRAHAM WALLAS



## PREFACE

THE present volume brings to its conclusion a work first sketched out in the winter of 1918, when the writer was billeted near Mons, and of which part has already been published in an earlier volume, entitled *The Science and Method of Politics*. The work was undertaken in the first case with a view to discovering the forces at work which form the anatomy and determine the physiology of States. It was not long, however, before it became apparent that not States, but Society, must be the object of study if any satisfactory progress were to be made, and especially if the inquiry were to be radical enough to disclose, and indicate the means of controlling, the causes which conduce to such social disorders as war. If the writer has anything to recant, it is perhaps his undue optimism that this lethal poison, from which bodies politic suffer, has worked itself out of our system for at least this generation, and that our task is the purely academic one of analysing the causes leading to the outburst of 1914-18.

The subject might well have been treated from a very different point of view. It is, however, my strong conviction that, valuable although it be of itself, the approach to politics from the angle of political philosophy and of the humanities is less important for the needs of the present day than an approach from the angle of psychology and of statistics. The time may again come when we shall ask of the student of politics, as Campanella demanded of his ruler of the City of the Sun, proficiency in history, metaphysics, and theology—but, at the present moment, other qualifications are required. We need preeminently, in this decade, not a further synthesis, but a further analysis of our ideals, and to reinvigorate our minds from the wells of direct observation. As Professor Graham Wallas has recently said: "We must

learn not to apply antique ideas to new sets of problems. We must recognize the limitations of our own rational processes and that they are confused with many irrational inclinations. . . . Political problems cannot be considered as simple as the 'intellectualists' thought them, but must be treated as complex and subtle." Reconstruction must be attempted, not rashly from received opinions ably fitted together into a coherent system, but, more modestly and in a fashion, as Lord Bacon has warned us, more befitting scientific inquiry, from such few ascertained and reliable facts as we may be able to discover which are of universal significance for our subject and its problems.

The writer is aware that it is possible to interpret with great vividness the political field in the light of man's loyalties—loyalties to King and country, to nation and national character, to international peace and the claims of humanity, to one's class and class-unity, to one's Church and the supreme demands of that spiritual life which is the condition of salvation. At different times and in different places one or another of these loyalties has been stressed. But at a time when these loyalties, once so clear, are themselves bitterly in dispute, little advance is made by an interpretation so subjective and all too human. It may be that much in the following pages will prove offensive to tender consciences. But the method adopted has been based upon the assumption that neither physical nature nor human nature is best studied scientifically by those who have a prejudice in favour of writing a theodicy. The fundamental problem is that of control; the indispensable means is that of investigation without pre-judgment of the results. This is not to deny that the surgeon or the chemist should be possessed even by a fanatical enthusiasm for the relief of human suffering; it is to say that surgeon and chemist need a steady hand and cold judgment when

the one performs an operation or the other sets up an experiment.

This book has no pretension to have been written without prejudice about ends and ideals. But it is to be hoped that the prejudice has not vitiated the treatment of means, methods, and first principles. "To understand what has happened," says Buffon, "and even what will happen, it is only necessary to examine what is happening." Such a study can be made, the conclusions of which may be common ground to those who hold the most opposite of views about what ought to be done. Such a study has here, in a limited and preliminary way, been attempted. Some will be able to draw from it the deduction that the problem of politics is essentially a problem of will and of the organization of humanity into strong social organizations, with a view to supplying the goods of civilization, thanks to the control of public opinion by potent myths, such as the Fascist myth. Others, on the contrary, will draw the conclusion that no less is required than the deposition of the National State, which has acquired in a past epoch (the period from Danton to Bismarck) the preeminence which it still enjoys as almost the sole purveyor of the means of the good life, and its replacement by an organization more adapted to supply the needs of society, living under the conditions of this day and age—needs of peace, security, and welfare. The dispassionateness required in such a study in no way contradicts the truth of Tolstoy's remark that, when one comes to practice, "one may deal with things without love . . . but one cannot deal with men without it".

The philosophic schools of Kant and of Hegel are in perpetual conflict. The task of the present is to reconcile their social philosophies by admitting both opposite truths as true, to reconcile them in terms of a fresh observation of the facts of human nature and of the antinomies in human nature. The task of the present is

to continue and to enlarge the work of Bentham by building up a science of social relations and formations on the basis of which alone can be founded a satisfactory art of social regulation. To this task many are contributing during these present years, which are marked by an interest unparalleled for a century in political and social questions. The following work upon which the writer has ventured, supported by experience not only as a university teacher, but as an erstwhile civil servant and as a political research worker, is offered as a further stone, it is hoped of some value for constructive purposes, in the building of this edifice—if one will, of a new “dismal science”.

Sufficient has perhaps been said in the text in defence of the adoption of an “abstract” method—if, indeed, an abstract method in science, as distinct from philosophy, history, and poetry, still needs justification. There is, however, one point on which it is perhaps desirable to forestall criticism by a remark here. It may not unreasonably be said that this book is little more than a restatement in modern terms of the rationalist theory of the *Éclaircissement*, and as such is guilty of the exploded individualism and belief in enlightened self-interest of that period. It may, therefore, be as well to point out, straight away, that the theory here set forth is entirely consistent with the denial of any narrow egotism as the controlling factor in guiding the will, as well as with a political philosophy which seeks to control society by means of an appeal to the emotions and less purely rational elements in man. Moreover, “will”, which applies, with certain psychological reservations, as well to a group as to a solitary person, has been deliberately used, instead of the word “individual”, in order to avoid this error. The present theory is solely one of control, and it is a matter of indifference whether the purpose of the control be public-spirited or egoistic, or

whether the effective means used be an appeal to the "baser instincts", to "shop-keepers' reasoning", or to the highest idealism inculcated by a well-considered philosophy and education. With these reservations, no apologies seem to be needed for an attempt to revive the political tradition of Machiavelli, Hobbes, d'Holbach, and Bentham in a fashion perhaps consistent with modern psychology and with especial reference to the "instrumental" philosophy of John Dewey.

It may further be objected that this is a treatise on Sociology, misdescribed as Politics. In the mind of the writer, Politics and Sociology (according to the most satisfactory definition of this latter) are inseparable and, indeed, identical subjects. It is, of course, possible to use the word "Sociology" as synonymous with the corpus of the social sciences, or even with the social sciences and their ancillary historical studies; or to follow after the will-o'-the-wisp of a "fundamental science"; or to return to the unhappy philosophical adventures of Comte and Spencer. The writer sees no objection to calling the science of social inter-relations by the good Aristotelean name of Politics, and even confesses to a perhaps unhappy prejudice against such hybrids as Sociology, Sexology, Penology, and the like. It is not, however, incumbent to enter again upon a discussion which ends by becoming a barren strife of words, so long as it is made perfectly clear that there can be no science of politics which is not founded upon a study of the permanencies in social relations.

This book is gratefully dedicated to a great psychologist, the late Professor E. B. Titchener, to whose advice and approval is due the fact that the writer has persisted in the adoption of the hypothetical method, and to Professor Graham Wallas, to whose genial encouragement the writer, in common with so many other students of social affairs in this generation, owes so much. He

is also under a profound debt of gratitude to several friends, especially to Professor A. M. Carr-Saunders, Professor Harold J. Laski, and Professor Frank Thilly for suggestions, and to Mr. Henry H. Price, Fellow of Trinity College, Oxford, for his invaluable assistance in the work of revision. Needless to say, the writer assumes sole responsibility for any error which may occur and for the opinions expressed, many of which he has obstinately persisted in despite due warning.

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*July 1929*

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