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Book Reviews

Nevil Johnson: *The Limits of Political Science*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989, 142 pp.

Adrian Leftwich (ed.): *New Developments in Political Science. An International Review of Achievements and Prospects*. Aldershot: Edward Elgar Publishing, 1990, 214 pp.

The two books reviewed here both deal with the study of politics and government and in that respect they complement one another. However, the books are very different. They differ in style, form and views. One (Johnson) is a theoretical treatment of the science of politics and takes the form of a prolonged argumentation and reconstruction, the other (Leftwich) is a collection of essays, dealing with various subfields of political science and reviewing characteristics and achievements in these fields. One is a coherent and comprehensive discussion of current idioms of the academic study of politics; the other is more disparate in theme and treatment. One suffers from a certain narrowness of outlook, as it reflects the position and nature of political science in British academic life; the other is more international in terms of authors, perspectives and sources of inspiration. One takes a critical view of political science, which 'has today become shapeless and somewhat negligent' and has 'been corrupted by the fascination of the passing show' (p. 136); the other is more content and predicts that 'the discipline of Politics will continue to have a unique and expanding contribution to make' (p. 6).

The book by Leftwich has the usual eclecticism of edited volumes, and the editor should have produced a concluding and summarizing chapter to compensate for this eclecticism. The lack of such a chapter is definitely a shortcoming. The book contains a brief introductory chapter and eleven contributions, dealing with democratic theory, feminism, state theory, comparative politics, development studies, public administration, political philosophy, international relations, marxism, elections and rational choice. The authors were asked to identify central themes and problem areas which have characterized their fields, and they show. Leftwich tells us in his introduction, that politics is central as a means of social action and change and that Politics, the master science, is central as a means of social understanding (p. 6). The tone of the individual chapters is generally optimistic, reflecting the view that the study of politics is in good shape and is advancing: 'comparative politics as a field of study has attracted a growing interest in recent decades' (p. 61); 'development studies is neither dead nor dying' (p. 85); 'political philosophy is apparently flourishing' (p. 126); 'the field of electoral studies is clearly alive and well' (p. 190). Not all developments are unproblematic, and political science faces an abundance of research tasks and intellectual challenges: 'much further reflection and research is unquestionably necessary on the types and forms of possible political organization' (p. 21); 'the basic questions about polity causes and policy determinants are by no means fully answered' (p. 75); 'one of

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The book by Leftwich has the usual eclecticism of edited volumes, and the editor should have produced a concluding and summarizing chapter to compensate for this eclecticism. The lack of such a chapter is definitely a shortcoming. The book contains a brief introductory chapter and eleven contributions, dealing with democratic theory, feminism, state theory, comparative politics, development studies, public administration, political philosophy, international relations, marxism, elections and rational choice. The authors were asked to identify central themes and problem areas which have characterized their fields, and they show. Leftwich tells us in his introduction, that politics is central as a means of social action and change and that Politics, the master science, is central as a means of social understanding (p. 6). The tone of the individual chapters is generally optimistic, reflecting the view that the study of politics is in good shape and is advancing: 'comparative politics as a field of study has attracted a growing interest in recent decades' (p. 61); 'development studies is neither dead nor dying' (p. 85); 'political philosophy is apparently flourishing' (p. 126); 'the field of electoral studies is clearly alive and well' (p. 190). Not all developments are unproblematic, and political science faces an abundance of research tasks and intellectual challenges: 'much further reflection and research is unquestionably necessary on the types and forms of possible political organization' (p. 21); 'the basic questions about polity causes and policy determinants are by no means fully answered' (p. 75); 'one of

the major tasks for political scientists with development concerns will be to generate a more sustained comparative understanding of the role of politics in development' (p. 82). There can, however, be little doubt that political science is increasingly well equipped to perform its tasks and is moving in a right direction: the chapters reflect a shared sense of mission and a strong belief in the future of the discipline.

Pippa Norris, in her chapter on electoral studies, emphasizes the strength of the British humanistic tradition. In Britain, the behavioural and quantitative approach has never been as popular as in the USA. Instead, more philosophical, historical and institutional approaches tend to predominate. The book by Nevil Johnson is a good illustration of this state of affairs. Johnson is a convinced adherent of the humanistic tradition, and he does not join the contributors to the Leftwich volume in their belief in modern political science. According to Johnson political science is going astray. His conclusion is that the idiom of political science is 'fatally flawed', as it reflects 'the parochialism as well as the robustly pragmatic outlook of the society in which it has enjoyed the most extensive support, the United States' (p. 86). Political science is, Johnson argues, badly in need of reconstruction.

The reconstruction that Johnson undertakes implies a division of the study of politics into two sides: 'pure politics' and 'applied politics'. Pure politics represents a philosophical and normative interpretation of a science of politics, whereas applied politics refers to a practical mode of political study. The task of pure politics is to specify and understand political association, i.e. the combination of rule with citizenship. Since political association becomes visible and concrete in institutions, the acknowledgement of institutions presents a central requirement for a science of politics. On the other hand, the task of applied politics is to seek straightforward answers to questions about the conditions of government and to represent an overtly professional and vocational design. This side of the study of politics would be intended for those seeking an education which is useful for a subsequent career, whereas 'pure politics' would be an inquiry pursued for its own sake. Johnson is in agreement with the thought that the two idioms could coexist in some institutions, but he emphasizes that they cater for different requirements, interests and dispositions. It would be more honest, Johnson argues, to accept a division of labour than maintain the pretence that politics represents some kind of unified or coherent discipline.

It is quite difficult to become impressed by this proposal, which frames several dreary perspectives. As the proposal points to the identification of political science as a branch of humanistic social and moral inquiry, it in fact calls the right of political science to exist as an autonomous discipline in question. In consequence, Johnson admits that his model may lead to the disappearance of political science departments as we know them today and also may cause a reduction in the scale on which politics is currently studied. This is, he argues, consistent with democratic conditions which reflect a limited scope of politics: 'A free society with democratic forms of government is one that is not obsessed with politics' (p. 135). The argument is curious to say the least, and the discontinuation of political science as a separate social-science discipline seems a high price to pay for an unwarranted belief that it is impossible to achieve a positivist science of politics. Johnson repeats all the familiar arguments in favour of this belief: the key postulates are highly artificial, the scientific conception of political analysis is unhistorical in nature, the scientistic escape from normative issues restricts empirical research to limited categories of phenomena, the results obtained are often at best truisms, there is little or no hope of generating a wide-ranging body of theory in political science. Those political scientists who, like Johnson, believe that the search for scientific generalization

about politics is fruitless and who seek a haven of refuge in the belles-lettristic departments of the discipline will be strengthened in their belief when reading Johnson's book: the argumentation is forcible, and there is little doubt that the author is totally convinced that he is delivering a well-founded message. Those political scientists who have a more optimistic view of the possibilities of the discipline to develop into a true science will perhaps not get much out of the book.

It is of course true that political science has not advanced very far in terms of comprehensive theories and extension of generalized knowledge. This is for several reasons, one of which is that the efforts of the discipline have not been to a sufficient extent in the nomothetic direction. This negligence manifests itself in at least two ways. On the one hand the composition and the conviction of the political science community leaves a great deal to be desired in this respect: there are too many Nevil Johnsons in the discipline. On the other hand, political scientists tend to use to a surprisingly high extent tools that are blunted and inefficient: political scientists talk and write in the language of their sources and they pay too much attention to diversities and peculiarities, whereas the use of abstract devices and comparative approaches probably would reveal a large quantity of empirical generalizations that now remain hidden and unnoticed. However, the state of modern political science certainly deserves a more balanced treatment than the one provided by Johnson, who resorts to knocking down straw men. For instance, contemporary political science is not negligent of political institutions as Johnson would have us believe: the institutional paradigm has grown much stronger in the 1980s, and the analysis of institutions and the organization of political life is clearly reappearing in the discipline. Furthermore, the attacks that Johnson launches on the current-affairs idiom, in which 'attention is focused chiefly on what certain people do, on their relations with each other, and on their individual successes or failures' (p. 35) and which finds expression in instances 'when the academic author works so near to the preoccupations of the political world conventionally defined that he commits himself to extended commentary on concerns that are swept away by the events' (p. 40), may be well-founded in a British context, but are of minor relevance in, for instance, a Nordic academic setting. (By the way, the feminist branch of modern political science may find it interesting to note that Johnson classifies university courses on 'women in politics' as one fashionable example of the current-affairs idiom.)

In fact, several of the contributions to the Leftwich volume seem to contradict the harsh assessments that Johnson makes. Among the questions that Albert Weale discusses in his treatment of rational choice is the role of rational-choice theory in the examination of normative questions; this is one example of many that normative issues have a place in a well-established field of contemporary political science. Steve Smith, in his chapter on international relations, recognizes the fact that the state has remained the central unit of analysis as one of the main problems in the field. The focus may be problematic in itself, but it surely contests the preoccupation with individuals and individual political behaviour that in Johnson's view characterizes the dominating mode of political inquiry. In his discussion of the contribution of political science to development studies, Adrian Leftwich argues that accumulated evidence points firmly to the primacy of politics in developmental processes; this observation serves to emphasize the role of politics in society and weakens, although by no means disqualifies, Johnson's argument that politics is inherently composite in intellectual terms. On the other hand, many chapters seem to substantiate some of the objections that Johnson raises against the study of politics. In one of the most interesting essays Jan-Erik Lane and Svante Ersson emphasize the need for a typology of regimes that encompasses the large number of non-democratic

political systems; the authors also question the bias in comparative research towards looking at democratic regimes only. This is in good agreement with Johnson's view that contemporary political science is to a considerable extent preoccupied with and tied to liberal societies of the Western type. There is no specific chapter in the Leftwich volume on policy studies, but the scattered pieces of information and evaluation concerning this area of research that can be found in several chapters seem to suggest that Johnson is right in talking about illusions of utility. It should be mentioned, though, that Johnson's treatment of the utility aspect is a little bit one-sided, focusing on the social-engineering doctrine and neglecting the social-enlightenment doctrine.

While competent as expositors, the authors of the individual chapters of the Leftwich volume offer relatively few new and exciting insights. The collection can, however, be recommended as a clear and lucid survey of issues and problems in several areas of the political science discipline. The book by Nevil Johnson can be recommended as a highly provocative and by no means uninteresting contribution to the everlasting debate on the character, quality and future of political science. The books are not indispensable, but they are engaging additions to the literature on the prospects of political science and the obstacles that the discipline will have to overcome.

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Hans Mouritzen: *Finlandization: Towards a General Theory of Adaptive Politics*. Aldershot: Avebury, 1988, 463 pp.

For more than two decades the writings of James N. Rosenau have served as an exceptionally rich source of inspiration for students of foreign policy and international politics. One of his ideas that have been pursued also by Scandinavian scholars is his conceptualization of foreign policy as (different modes of) *adaptation*. At least two attempts by Danish scholars at refining this notion can be listed among the major contributions to the development of this particular approach. One is the reformulation and extension suggested by Nikolaj Petersen in two articles published in the late 1970s (Petersen 1977, 1979). The other and also the most ambitious contribution is Hans Mouritzen's study of 'Finlandization'.

The title might lead some potential readers to expect a book about Finland's precarious relationship to its super-power neighbour. In fact, however, Mouritzen has little to say about the specifics of Finland's predicament. His empirical analysis focuses mainly on the foreign policies and adaptation strategies pursued by Sweden and Denmark before and during the Second World War. His main interest, though, clearly pertains to the *general* phenomenon of 'adaptive acquiescence', defined as a particular 'give-and-preserve' pattern of behaviour, expressing readiness on the part of a regime to accept a 'negative value account' in relation to some other actor or to its external environment more generally (the latter being referred to as concessions to a 'non-actor').

Mouritzen proceeds as follows: The first step (part I) is an effort at developing a conceptually precise and operationally manageable definition of foreign policy