Chapter 4

Methodological Pluralism in European Political Science

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1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter reflects on the diversity of approaches in political science and its associated challenges, comparing them with the risks of conforming to a single *doxa* and *praxis*. Alongside the fashionable and ubiquitous term "diversity," I will use the concept of "pluralism." It refers to the desirability of multiple opinions, even if they are not equally valued. John Stuart Mill powerfully argued that science would be "dead dogma" if it dismissed eccentrics and defenders of unpopular minority opinions (Lloyd, 1997). He insisted on the importance of pluralism and the pursuit of liberty, not just for political debate, but also for scientific progress.

First, I will establish whether there is a dominant paradigm, as defined by Thomas Kuhn, with an aligned ontology and methodology (Hall, 2003), or parallel "research programmes," a term coined by Imre Lakatos to designate concomitant scientific inquiries, each with a hard core of theoretical assumptions and auxiliary hypotheses. This implies distinguishing two levels of analysis: first, the existence of a consensus on the *scientific method*, the boundary work on what constitutes political science and what does not; second, the multiplicity of more specific theories that may be context-bound and fleeting in nature—what the "epistemological anarchist," Paul Karl Feyerabend, referred to as scientific "fads" in *Against Method* (1975). There are plenty in political science: "the cultural turn," the "neo-institutionalist" decade, the return of political psychology, and so forth. In the first instance, we are referring to an exclusionary process of defining the rules of the game and its players and, in the second, the introduction and confrontation of different perspectives, which is a big part of the game itself. It is integral to the

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scientific method to set up "straw men" to claim theoretical innovation or to test alternative explanations. As pointed out by Pierre Bourdieu: "An authentic scientific field is a space where scholars agree on what they can disagree about and on the instruments that will allow them to come to terms with their disagreements and nothing else" (1992, p. 152).[1]

Empirically objectifying the existence of a plurality of research programs, as opposed to establishing a consensus on what "science" means in political science, is a daunting task given the lack of data. We do not have a comprehensive view of all national academic systems in the discipline, let alone of local PhD courses or criteria for recruitment. Regarding pedagogy, it would be interesting to know how students are socialized into the discipline by studying syllabi and textbooks, yet this research has yet to be conducted. Similarly, there are few relevant questions in surveys of the discipline (see Pippa Norris's chapter).

Bibliometric analysis might appear to be a quick-and-easy tool to measure the relative dominance of scientific paradigms since journals are funnels or sieves that instruct us on what is acceptable or legitimate. Its heuristics are limited because of the so-called "straw man" strategy, whereby isolated or minority stances are cited profusely to better criticize them. Some call it the "Mearsheimer effect": John Mearsheimer, arch-Realist, is often taught in international relations courses and also widely quoted, only often to be dismissed as irrelevant. In some national traditions, including France, one never mentions the "enemy," as it would be granting them too much honor, so it is difficult to identify *Methodenstreit*. There are also many self-referential journals. Authors submit articles referencing themselves or others already published in the same outlet, thus signaling their allegiance to a particular chapel and creed. Discussing bibliometrics as a potential source for data analysis reveals the variety of views on the scientific method, for example, testing alternative models to understand an empirical phenomenon versus accumulating knowledge to test only one particular model.

Faced with a dearth of aggregate data and the difficulty of mapping the tenets of the discipline across the European space, I have tried more modestly to assess whether pluralism has increased or decreased, focusing on the period since 1970, when the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) was established. I provide a meta-analysis of texts that discuss the contours of the discipline and its internal divides, including "anniversary" pieces, such as Colin Hay's in 2010, and this one, in a palimpsest-like fashion. I also discuss widely quoted publications that try to define the "scientific method" in key fields of political science, for example, comparative politics. Other sources include inaugural statements of political science schools, and the mission

statements of journals and professional associations, with a particular attention to the editorials of new journals and new sections or networks.[2]

My goal, through an imperfect examination of the historiography of the discipline, is not so much to provide robust answers as relevant hypotheses.

Building on the history and sociology of science, I start from the premise that both endogenous and external factors drive trends toward unity or diversity. To understand how fields of knowledge are structured, we need to observe the internal dynamics as the discipline gained institutional autonomy and the number of scholars expanded and sought recognition as a profession. External dynamics imply that we study interactions with other disciplines, academic institutions, and the outside world, such as funders, and "stakeholders" like governments (the research-policy nexus). This includes paying attention to *instruments* that may have their own logic and effects such as research assessment exercises, Shanghai ratings, and European Union (EU) calls for tender (Kauppi & Erkkilä, 2011). Throughout the chapter, I will also emphasize the broader political context or *Zeitgeist* in which scholars live and work.

Regarding internal dynamics, I have identified two sets of contradictory pressures. There is a tension between national histories of political science that are plural and transnational (or transatlantic), dynamics that go beyond the European context yet homogenize or at least simplify ontological debates. This rather banal statement, which points to methodological nationalism and its limits, needs to be embodied in scholars' trajectories and embedded in particular settings. The pressure to stick to the national *doxa* or conform to a more global "mainstream" may not be felt the same way by scholars, depending on their individual position (micro-level) and that of the discipline within a national space (meso-level), and, finally, the position of his or her country in the European and global landscape (macro-level). This latter level speaks to core–periphery relations, to use terms well known in political science. One particular sequence regards the post-1989 era when countries in Central and Eastern Europe became subjects of attention. The few older scholars that survived changes in the universities and the younger generations took part in the frenzy of transitology studies during the so-called third wave of democracy (Gans-Morse, 2004). They were focused on postcommunist party systems or EU enlargement depending on their linguistic and empirical knowledge of certain countries. Yet, somehow this precluded the opening up of new modes of thinking, alternative research agendas or counternarratives to the "end of history."

Finally, I formulate a hypothesis that bridges internal and external dynamics, namely the alignment between the position of scholars in society and their professional practice. Many political scientists are likely to be "pluralists" for

sociological reasons: their socioeconomic characteristics and, in many European countries, their nominally "collegial" professional milieu make them prone to encourage political pluralism (see the chapter on academic liberties in this volume). This does not mean that they are naïve about the struggles for dominance or the monopoly of authoritative knowledge, the concentration of power and capital in their institutions, and discipline. Pluralism is an aspiration. Whether it is a pious vow or a reality in scholars' experience is another issue. Recent movements in social science to "decolonize," or include gender perspectives, also studied in this volume, have reinforced the pluralist bias in our field. It is thus interesting to examine the arguments of those in favor of nondiversity today and those that self-exclude from a "mainstream" they abhor, both groups are establishing autonomous subfields, new journals, and competing professional associations.

In a dialogue with other chapters in the first part of the volume, including Yves Mény's, I am interested in the specificity of European approaches to political phenomena. The plan of the chapter is chronological: covering the birth of the modern discipline, its expansion and growing autonomy in the second part of the last century, and its current state as an established field. I argue that, in spite of transnational influences, the very diverse intellectual origins and academic locations of political science endure and contribute to methodological pluralism. This is not just an argument about "path dependence" but an embodied story of legacies and transmission. In any case, in each historical period, there are internal struggles and external drivers that influence the unity versus plurality of political studies.

The first section reflects on the diverse origins of European political science, starting in 1870. The second section focuses on the postwar and Cold War period up to the early 1970s. I analyze the debates in comparative politics at that time, and, more precisely, the comparative study of democracies and party systems, a subfield where European scholars—Duverger, Sartori, Rokkan, and Lijphart—set global standards. Compared to the United States, the paradigm wars of the 1970s and 1990s seem less bloody and the triumph of formal modeling and econometrics was localized and not widespread. It thus makes sense to focus on 1970 as a watershed year when scholars had to choose between sociological and economic camps: between behavioralists and functionalists and the proponents of social or rational choice. In the third, and last, section, I assess the current state of the discipline in Europe compared to the 1970s. I track signs of an agreement on how to disagree, seeking a dominant view on what constitutes political science. I can also observe diverging trends: on the one hand, the Balkanization of the discipline as a kind "exit" from "the mainstream," and, on the other, a growing homogenization of research projects and publications driven by external funding requirements and the global competition between universities.

2. *"E PLURIBUS UNUM"*? PLURALISM AS A HISTORICAL LEGACY

In institutional and professional terms, political science has only recently become an independent discipline compared to other social sciences such as law, history, and economics—it was once called "political economy" by Jean-Baptiste Say and others. The American Political Science Association (APSA) was only founded in 1903. One can always invoke an anachronistic manly pantheon—that includes Thucydides and Aristotle, Machiavelli and Tocqueville—to claim that "political scientists" existed prior to the field being established. Notwithstanding, political science has long been a subfield, an afterthought in other disciplines. For instance, this was the case with public and constitutional law, and many political science departments and programs are still located in faculties of law in France, Belgium, and the Netherlands.

Conversely, in certain historical circumstances, the science of politics or political administration is hard to locate. As Yves Mény underlines in this volume, when, after the 1870 French defeat against Prussia, Emile Boutmy created the institution we know now as Sciences Po, it was a school of political sciences, the "s" included geography and history. In fact, Boutmy was the first "historical institutionalist," as he asserted that history was the "natural home of political studies" and any study without a historical dimension "was blind empiricism or vague ideology, in both cases foreign to a scientific approach" (Boutmy, 1889). Sidney and Beatrice Webb, two of the Fabians who founded the London School of Economics (LSE), met Boutmy in Paris. They also observed business schools and chose a multidisciplinary name for their institution: London School of Economics and Political Science. In Germany and parts of Scandinavia, we have an older example with cameralism (Laborier, Audren, Napoli, & Vogel, 2011; Lindenfeld, 1997). The Prussian sciences of the state were also plural and included economy, public finance, and *Polizei* (public policy).

What is interesting is that, early on, political studies expanded the realm of disciplines that are deemed relevant to understanding the world of politics. It was not enough to examine laws and constitutions, the "old institutionalism." To analyze—not only describe—political phenomena, it was argued that they had historical, spatial, and social dimensions. André Siegfried, who published *Tableau politique de la France de l'Ouest sous la Troisième République*, in 1913, is considered to have inspired electoral sociology. To understand the vote, he went back to the geology of the soil (granite or limestone) in Western France, and its effects on the spatial organization of rural areas (isolated farm or dense villages) and ultimately on social interactions and the church and landowners. In brief, to understand a political outcome, Siegfried resorted to geography, history, and sociology—the three disciplines listed on the plaque

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one can read on the building where he lived in Paris. He did so, however, to devise a parsimonious explanation of voting patterns based on a series of observable variables. No matter what, one century later, one may think of his book, the approach deserves attention: taking into account the complexity of the world to come up with a simple explanation.

We must keep in mind that, at the birth of political studies, the aim was to embed politics in wider socioeconomic processes, and, thus, demanded of political scientists' knowledge, if not command of, a range of social sciences. The context in which the French authors, that I have mentioned, worked is important: Boutmy and Siegfried were in a particular state of mind. France had been defeated by the Prussians in 1870, and the Third Republic was at best fragile. There was a yearning for comprehension and thus the will to cast a wide analytical net.

The trajectory of Italian political science is exemplary of the parallel paths of the development and autonomy of the discipline and the advent of the modern nation-state, bureaucracies, and mass politics. As early as the 1850s, Angelo Messedaglia, professor at the university of Pavia, a supporter of the *Risorgimento*, argued that an organic plan of studies in politics and administration within law faculties should be urgently introduced. In 1875, Carlo Alfieri founded the "School of Social Sciences" in Florence, inspired in part by Boutmy, to train the civil servants of the newly unified Italian state. But the project for an independent faculty of political sciences with dedicated degree courses only came into being in 1925, at the University of Rome La Sapienza. The same year started with Mussolini's speech in Parliament that marked the beginning of the fascist regime.

The impact of the wider political context on the development of the discipline was most acute with the rise of totalitarian regimes that had profound effects on the lives of many political scientists, on the profession, and ultimately on the questions that the discipline sought to answer. In the interwar period, a special kind of "school" was founded that merits attention. In 1930, thanks to the generosity of a wealthy Marxist student, Max Horkheimer inaugurated the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt. In his speech, he set the agenda: "investigations stimulated by contemporary philosophical problems in which philosophers, sociologists, economists, historians, and psychologists are brought together." He underlined that "with this approach, no yes-or-no answers arise to the philosophical questions. Instead, these questions themselves become integrated into the empirical research process; their answers lie in the advance of objective knowledge, which itself affects the form of the questions" (1930). This "critical" endeavor is based on the integration of various disciplines and a focus on methods of empirical enquiry. Horkheimer explicitly praises the development of American survey questionnaires, that, in his view, allow scholars to be "connected to real life," "verify insights,"

and "prevent errors." The philosopher also demonstrated the need to connect to the "real world" through a partnership with the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Geneva.

The Frankfurt school is not a school of political science, yet the "philosophical problems" that Horkheimer and his colleagues addressed were eminently political. After the failure of the 1918 November revolution in Germany, the quashing of the Spartacist uprising and the rise of Nazism, they wanted to understand why the laboring classes in several industrial capitalist societies supported reactionary forces and endorsed authoritarian regimes and how "mass politics" replaced the "class struggle." The enlightenment led to darkness. Why? How? Sixty years on, on the other side of the Rhine, the context was radically different from the time and place when the Paris Free School of political science was founded, at the epitome of what Frankfurt scholars referred to as the "liberal phase of capitalism." However, the means and tools were remarkably similar in satisfying academics' yearning for knowledge. In the 1870s and the 1930s, groups of well-off university professors, overwhelmed by the political manifestations of modernity, devised relatively similar intellectual strategies. In both cases, understanding politics required a collective reflection of the old "humanities" and new social science disciplines and the best methods to study empirics.

In the Frankfurt school's first generation, theoretical novelty lay in the development of psychology and Freudian psychoanalysis, and methodological advances involved U.S.-inspired survey research that helped them focus on individual subjectivities. Today's political science students will probably come across Theodor Adorno's work on "authoritarian personality" and Otto Kircheimer's postwar article on the "catch-all party." They are exemplars of the ways in which this generation of scholars sought to explain the political developments of their troubled times. They not only integrated new sciences like psychology but also expanded the objects of study of political science. Notably, Adorno explored the role of cultural industries in "manufacturing consent" and sought to understand how Fascism and Nazism tried to create a political aesthetic using propaganda films and orchestrated marches. Herbert Marcuse, who coined the famous sentence "the medium is the message," studied the media. Political communication is now an established subdiscipline, but it is interesting to recall its link to those who experienced firsthand the power of images and state propaganda. To understand "real-world" politics, scholars expanded both the range and the remit of their expertise.

One way of understanding the plurality of approaches in political science is to see it first as a "problem-driven" discipline, as opposed to theory- or method-driven. History is an example of a method-driven discipline: studying the past through all sorts of archives from carbon dating samples to old manuscripts and oral testimonies. With this method, you can study anything

and everything. Today's neoclassical economics is an example of trying to apply a small set of theoretical assumptions to all aspects of life. For the first generations of political scientists, the logic was different: selecting from all available theories and methods to understand one sphere or aspect of life, the political. Thus, methodological pluralism is not an accident but constitutive of the discipline.

Yet, this implied that politics should not be an afterthought in another discipline, typically law. In the last century, a number of scholars were frustrated to see political science as merely an addendum to teaching programs or politics as a "theme." For those seeking a specific voice, the ongoing quest for identity has involved defending positions on ontology and methodology. We will now focus on the postwar period when the discipline expanded and sought autonomy and when the ECPR was founded in order to reexamine the debates in the discipline by focusing on comparative politics.

3. COMPARATIVE POLITICS: EUROPEAN SCHOLARSHIP BEYOND THE BEHAVIORIST/ RATIONALIST PARADIGM WARS

When discussing debates on ontology and methodology, in the European context, an obvious case study is the comparative study of democracy and party systems, with key work by European men, in Europe or in exile (like Otto Kircheimer), setting the international research agenda, and defining concepts that are still used today. This stands in contrast to other fields, such as legislative or electoral studies, in which studies of the United States, undertaken by Americans, generated analytical templates that were exported globally. Some of them have become so influential as to become adjectives: just like "Keynesian," "Rokkanian" is a semantic shortcut to define an entire approach, derived from Stein Rokkan, a Norwegian political sociologist trained in philosophy. It is interesting to note that, in the case of the Rokkan/ Lipset matrix, there is a continuity with previous generations. They were inspired by the German sociologist Max Weber's concept of *Schicksalgemeinschaft* as a space of contrasted and hierarchized identities and based their argument on a wealth of historical data on "critical junctures." They lay out a scheme of classification rather than a causal narrative.

Many of these scholars put their country on the map by devising a concept or a typology that "traveled" across other cases, a form of "home-grown" theorizing. For instance, Arend Lijphart first published a book on the Dutch political system and then developed the concept of consociationalism in *Democracy in Plural Societies*, demonstrated when he studied thirty-six consensus and majoritarian democracies characterized by ten variables and their

correlations with nineteen indicators of "government performance" (1999). He is perhaps the ultimate functionalist, whereby phenomena are explained by their consequences, but he is only one of many in the postwar era who embarked on taxonomic projects based on a holist ontology whereby causation is defined as constant conjunction (when one finds x, one also finds y). On closer inspection, these European scholars started with a specific national case but sought generalizations that could be tested in many others.

To account for this dynamic, one could argue that this nomological approach was dominant after the war, inspired by the work of sociologists Talcott Parsons and Robert Merton. In addition, there was a propitious ideological context to this search for common ground after the demise of Weimar, Nazism, and Fascism, and with Cold War–era U.S. "soft diplomacy" in full swing sponsoring cross-national research on democracy, modernization, and party systems (e.g., the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) Committee on Comparative Politics and the Ford Foundation investment in the ECPR). The comparative method, as defined in the 1960s and 1970s, was also conducive to forging a common language and hence a dialogue among scholars from different countries, certainly more so than prewar studies that considered each set of political institutions as an idiosyncratic result of national histories. For a nascent social science, this basic agreement on method enabled it to increase the number of scholars in the field via multicountry research cooperation. In other words, during the emergence and expansion of a field, dynamics are more consensual than after their institutionalization, when logics of distinction are more likely.

Nonetheless, the aforementioned scholars were aware of the fragility of a consensus based on a method and they were invested in institutionalizing the discipline, including by founding the ECPR. In 1971, Arend Lijphart published a defense of the comparative method in the *American Political Science Review*, only one year after Giovanni Sartori's famous article on concept misinformation, preempting critiques that were building in and outside the field. For Lijphart, the comparative method is a *technique* that can be substituted with the statistical method, and that can be improved by expanding the number of cases, aggregating variables and performing "critical tests" to avoid the "small n" and "omitted variable bias" problems. He was aware of what he called the "weakness" of the method. In a telling passage, he makes reference to John Stuart Mill's methods of agreement and difference and acknowledges that Mill never believed that they could not be applied in the social sciences, yet argues that his objections "are founded on too exacting a scientific standard" (1971, p. 688). This attitude may seem offhand. Yet it was representative of the progressive mentality of the time: it is important to plow on, harvest, and sift empirical material, albeit with imperfect methods based on shaky logical foundations. The research program is the priority

and research tools will improve over time. And, while scathing criticisms of consociationalism proliferated (including by Brian Barry in 1975), Lijphart's views on the comparative method "exemplify what became the dominant understanding in the field setting the tone for much of the subsequent debate" and the use of statistics (Hall, 2003, pp. 380–81).

Another key text on the logic of scientific inquiry at the time is Giovanni Sartori's seminal article on "Conceptual misinformation in comparative politics" (1970).[3] Sartori's piece is a nice counterpoint to the above discussion. For him the priority was not to devise new techniques of case selection or measurement but to address the increasingly elastic use of concepts and search for functional equivalents in the many cross-national taxonomies of democracies and party systems at the time. The question was not "how to study" democracy or other phenomena but "what it is that we are studying," and not "how to compare" but "what is comparable." The challenge is known in philosophy of science as "incommensurability" and Sartori proposed ways to form concepts that are heuristic across cases moving up and down "the ladder of abstraction" (1970).

In the end, Sartori's mission was not so different from Lijphart's: to legitimate and defend the state-of-the-art. He is also an example of "a rigorous optimist" (Collier & Gerring, 2009), utilizing what Gabriel Almond termed a "progressive-eclectic" approach (1998). It is interesting to note how his American colleagues viewed his thought processes as "European," in particular his attachment to etymology and history. In a volume dedicated to his work, David Collier and John Gerring describe Sartori teaching Columbia students "wearing tailored Italian suits and clutching his worn briefcase under his arm. With old-world charm and a dry sense of humor," expressing "his dismay over their ignorance of Latin and Greek, which limited their capacity to grasp the historical and etymological roots of concepts under discussion" (2009, pp. 8–9). It may seem quaint that the recipe in 1970 to defend a research program was "old world charm" and a love of the classics. Yet, it was a clever consensual move. It is difficult to be against "better" concept formation and this call can be heard in various contexts beyond Europe. Moreover, it dodges the ontological question about the drivers of political phenomena (functionalist or not?).

How did this message somehow survive the trials and tribulations of the following decades? The 1970s was a period when efforts to institutionalize political science bore fruit, involving many protagonists in the subfield of democracy and party politics. Many were fully integrated in international academe but they also cofounded and/or worked in more generalist West European institutions, such as the ECPR (1970) and the European University Institute (EUI) (1976), which were largely sheltered from the paradigm wars that raged in the United States.

The trajectories of some of the protagonists positioned in cross-European academic nodes tell a story of intergenerational transmission, illustrated by interpersonal relationships that spanned decades. Hans Daalder, yet another cofounder of the ECPR and involved in the U.S. Committee on Comparative Politics, also known for his work on consociational democracy, held the first chair in comparative politics at the EUI when Stein Rokkan was the department chair. He was a close friend of Peter Mair, who was a key figure in the study of political parties also thanks to his works on "cartel parties" with Richard Katz and on the evolution of party systems with Stefano Bartolini. Peter Mair was very active in the ECPR summer school on party politics. He later became an editor of *West European Politics*, a journal founded in 1978. One of his doctoral students was none other than Cas Mudde, a former editor of the *European Journal on Political Research*, known for his work on the radical right, who was awarded the Stein Rokkan Prize in Comparative Social Science Research in 2008, a prize awarded in 1990 to both Peter Mair and Stefano Bartolini. This example of lineage in political science is not just about interpersonal relations but also about how they were consolidated by the development of professional associations and conferences, peer-reviewed journals, prizes, and transnational training institutions and schools, allowing for the legitimation and transmission of the canon.

What stands out is continuity in this research program. Generations after generations plow the same furrow. The world around them is changing—with European integration, the fall of the Berlin Wall—universities and funding schemes evolve, and social science is rife with ontological battles, including the intestine wars among the motley crew of post-structuralists, neo-Marxists, postpositivists, postcolonialists, and feminists and the offensives of deductive social scientists keen on game theory, rational choice, and formal modeling. In the "scientific community" that studies democracy and political parties, there has been no revolution and no one has killed their father(s). The research program is on track, adapting to new contexts by incorporating empirical developments into its existing frameworks within the field, notably in postcommunist regimes that emerged in East and Central Europe after 1989 and the so-called new cleavage between the losers and haters of globalization and European integration, as argued by Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks. When models are contested and amended, the implicit rule is not "to throw the baby out with the bathwater." References to the Lipset/Rokkan matrix of functional and territorial cleavage structures still abound.

This section described the "normal" process whereby a scientific community organized itself to self-perpetuate. I highlighted one factor: the definition of the field by a rather inclusive method delinked from a precise ontology or, at least, relatively open in terms of its theoretical micro-foundations, focusing

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on mid-range concepts or models that could be heuristic to infer from empirical phenomena. You do not have to buy into an entire worldview as you would if you practice rational choice or radical constructivism. There are no "–isms" needed to enter this large subfield. The question is whether this case study applies to political science as a whole today.

4. GROWING PAINS SINCE THE 1990S: BETWEEN "EXIT" STRATEGIES AND THE PRESSURE TO CONFORM

In this section, I argue that European political science has no dominant ontology, as in economics, or only a couple of identified theory-driven research programs, as in physics. There is instead a kind of Balkanization of knowledge with a very large number of thematic subfields, each with a different set of theoretical inspirations, sometimes at odds, sometimes leading to a form of syncretism. Yet, there are strong internal and external forces that pressure political scientists to conform to a particular standard of knowledge production.

In the previous section, we saw that, in Europe, central subfields in the discipline were not so much pluralist as inclusive by default. They did not directly engage in the clash of paradigms described by one of its rare European protagonists, Brian Barry. In *Sociologists, Economists and Democracy* (1970), he contrasted the "sociology" of Parsonian functionalists and the "economic" school, best represented by the now-classic works of Anthony Downs and Mancur Olson. For Barry, choosing between sociology and economics was a litmus test for the location of political studies.

Today, in fact, the import of each social science depends on the subfield of the discipline. Think of political mobilization, an important subject of inquiry in political science. Many scholars who study social movements work in sociology departments that have sections in major sociology professional associations such as the American, European, and International Sociological Associations (respectively, ASA, ESA, and ISA). We can think of other subfields not directly rooted in sociology, such as political economy or social policy, where sociologists have been influential in defining the terms of the debate—such as Gøsta Esping-Andersen and his typology of welfare states (see Hemerijck, in this volume). Conversely, in other subfields in European political science, such as legislative studies, scholars have embraced U.S. research that emphasizes rational choice and quantitative methods.

So, the reality is a discipline split into small pieces of a puzzle where you can publish in self-referential specialized or "niche" journals that have a homogeneous approach to politics. This may be a normal development given

the growth of the field and the trend toward specialization that happens in all types of professions. In political science, there are more and more subdisciplines, institutionalized for instance in the sections or research groups of associations (the ECPR standing groups), where scholars do not necessarily talk to one another and only cross paths at a few conference plenaries. Ten years ago, as Colin Hay reflected on the fortieth anniversary of the ECPR, he underlined that "contemporary political challenges … expose some of the limitations of our discipline—in particular, its tendency to disciplinary and sub-disciplinary parochialism" (2010, p. 130). Parochialism moots the possibility of pluralism, which presupposes discussion between groups in one agora, not in a variety of oligarchic sub-arenas. We have even seen a form of internal exit from the intellectual home of political science, with the creation of separate associations, such as EPSA, as mentioned in Thibaud Boncourt's chapter.

Another form of "exit" from political science is worth discussing with respect to scientific pluralism. It regards the institutionalization of "international relations" (IR) as a separate department in many universities and distinct large associations, such as the International Studies Association. No one is a prophet in his own land, and it is tempting to build another intellectual home where political scientists can act as apostles vis-à-vis other disciplines. Typically, in my recollection of ISA meetings, under the broad notion of IR constructivism, political science scholars cohabited with postmodernists from the humanities or neo-Gramscian political economists and thus escaped the dominant (positivist) paradigm in their discipline.

In 1995, the first issue of the *European Journal of International Relations* (*EJIR*) was published. One of the reasons was frustration with *International Organization*, seen as formatted for scholars from the United States, where rationalist approaches had come to dominate certain subfields, such as international political economy. When a new editorial board in Amsterdam took over from their Sussex-based predecessors, they published an editorial that stressed "the European roots" of the journal and the "European tradition in IR" (EJIR, 2018). *EJIR* is also biased (vs. rational choice), but it is interesting to see how the journal is presented on its web page.* This includes "blurbs" from senior scholars such as "'An antidote for parochialism of all kinds—geographic, methodological, theoretical, and ideological.' *David A Baldwin*; '. . . *EJIR* has demonstrated to the rest of the world that the power of ideas is separate from the power of power.' *Takashi Inoguchi*." While this is just illustrative, the arguments to promote the journal read as a more general criticism of political science, as serving the ideology of the "power of power" and

* The journal web page is available at this URL (consulted on October 15, 2019): https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/journal/european-journal-international-relations#description

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not being diverse. The editors invoke both scientific and political pluralism as European values to legitimate the need for the new journal and define their position.*

It seems that while North American debates were imported to Europe with some delay—academic time is slow—they still created tensions. What I would underline here is that the argument does not claim the superiority of a particular approach but presents Europe as superior in moral and (geo) political terms. In fact, the "other camp" rarely resorts to normative or moral arguments to justify their stance. I found a reference to the intrinsic "value of unification and the necessity of universalism in science" in an article by rational choice scholars John Ferejohn and Debra Satz (1995, p. 71), but it seems to be a minority view. Robert Bates, a leading figure in the application of rational choice theory, did not share this "universalist" view and wrote that "anyone working in other cultures knows that people's beliefs and values matter, so too do the distinctive characteristics of their institutions" (1990).

Scientific and political pluralism is used by some scholars, who see or portray themselves as "underdogs," as a tool for self-distinction and legitimization. In its extreme form, they suggest that imported paradigms are "imperialist," what the French simply term "Americanization." The response by European associations, such as the ECPR, has been to include and recognize them (*EJIR* is an ECPR journal). In other words, the ECPR's stance is oecumenical, hosting in its midst various parishes with different interpretations of what political science is. I think here it is important to explain the congruence of interests and a form of "opportunistic pluralism." For the ECPR, the point is to encourage reluctant potential members hailing from different traditions, despite its American roots. For scholars in minority positions, it may be a way of placing their students in the mainstream job market, rather than relying on interpersonal relations with like-minded scholars.

So, we observe the fragmented structure of political studies, and yet there is a strong pressure to conform to a particular way of doing science, regardless of the subdiscipline. The rules of the game are more precise and spread internationally, notably through review processes. As in other sciences, political scientists' careers increasingly depend on publishing in peer-reviewed journals—increasingly in international outlets and in the lingua franca of research, English. At some stage, young scholars may need to emerge from the noncompetitive cocoon of academia to apply for jobs. Later, they may be pressured into applying for European Research Council or national grants where they will be exposed to international and interdisciplinary panels and

* "Theoretical pluralism" is also a criterion to win the prize of the best article in *EJIR*.

need to please economists or the like that will mock their "impressionistic" research design or their "small n."

These review processes, which are part of a professional's practice, resemble a form of the Eliasian "civilizing process," and short of creating a common *habitus* for the European *homo academicus*, they lead to some form of standardization. Through this incremental diffusion of norms, we conform to a particular format, acknowledging previous work in "state-of-the-art" sections, trying to show the theoretical relevance of empirical findings. This is exactly what Gabriel Almond described as the "progressive-eclectic" version of political science, far from maximalist views on epistemology affirmed by public choice or Marxist theorists, and equally far from postmodern or postpositivist contempt for methodologies that emphasize the observation of facts. There is a real risk, however, that national research assessments and new research funders (EU) that affect local and national academic battles for distinction and survival, provide less room for "eccentrics" or minority positions, which Mill—and Popper—considered key to pluralism. More conformism in the format of research and templates of publication equals nondiversity. While major research funders use the "innovation" buzzword, this does not apply to social science where they are happy with the not-so-innovative.

This state of play represents the tip of the iceberg. Underneath the iceberg, political scientists are not concerned with ontology. Scientific principles involved in assessing students rely on the notion of a "track record" as a synonym for "excellence" to fund projects and positions. Business as usual. Depending on the subfield, there are always new elections, social movements, or policy reforms to study. This is the time to either replicate tried analytical frameworks or test new tools, for example, "big data" mining. This is what Kuhn calls "normal science."

This lack of ambition is reinforced by the asymmetrical relationship between scholars and policy stakeholders. Few institutions in Europe have the material means to be fully independent from their political objects of study, in contrast to the "ivory towers" of the ivy league in the United States. This is obvious for those who study public policy. Typically, economists evaluating the efficiency of policies, their costs, and their benefits, are more likely to be heard than political scientists critically assessing the how and why of policy choices and questioning structures and systems. The evaluation of policies, part of the "policy cycle" as taught in management schools, has long been derided by American constructivists. Yet, there is financial pressure to engage in "applied research," even where is there is little room to engage critically. In all subfields, projects now have to be "policy relevant" and "socially impactful," and many of us are required to participate in public debates. Yet, this is not the same thing as adopting a narrow "technocratic" agenda.

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This could lead to corseted social science, which goes to the heart of the notion of pluralism: the capacity to engage independently with the dominant paradigm both scientifically and politically, that is, to "falsify," in a strong Popperian sense, hegemonic views. However, political scientists are not in the same situation as historians feeding nationalist narratives, or biologists catering to the lobbyists of big pharma. Yes, in 1970, the ECPR was funded by U.S. foundations, as part of "soft power" diplomacy during the Cold War, but this seems less dramatic than the position of nuclear physicists in the same context. Still, our capacity to speak truth to power is part of our reflection on ontology and the scientific method. To quote the facetious Michel Foucault, "truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint" (1979, p. 131).

European political studies showed its capacity to adapt to new contexts when European studies evolved from a boutique to a boom field in the 1990s. Transnational politics was a challenge for comparative politics that still thought of states as bunkers in a strong form of methodological nationalism. Interestingly, as Adrian Favell and I have underlined (2011), this challenge was met by revisiting early sociological work by U.S. pioneers on European integration on the social bases of this process and its effects on socioeconomic practices, but this time with European scholars hailing from different Weberian and Durkheimian traditions and the diffusion of country-specific inspirations such as Bourdieusian field theory or Habermassian studies of the public sphere. In parallel, rational choice approaches focused on EU political institutions, as exemplified in journals such as *European Union Politics*. The effervescence of research in addressing the "deepening" of integration, in the 1990s, is an example of the fruitfulness of methodological pluralism.

5. CONCLUSION: SHADOWS OVER SCIENTIFIC PLURALISM

There is an obvious need for more research and data mining on disciplinary practices. Nevertheless, I will sum up what I see as common trends in contemporary political science with respect to the scientific method.

First, in spite of a long-term wish to become an autonomous "science," scholars studying politics continue to borrow ontologies and methodologies from other disciplines. We have seen imports from sociology, economics, and, even beyond social science, from evolutionary biology and mathematics (via game theory). Regarding methodologies of empirical investigation, a whole array of observational techniques are not specific to the discipline: the testing of models based on statistics, thick descriptions grounded in ethnography, the discourse analysis of archives and interviews, and so forth. In this

context, political studies is a "weak field" that is submerged into other fields that are mapped out and constituted more firmly (Topalov, 1994, p. 464). In other words, it is situated at a crossroads, where one can observe the respective import of different imported paradigms. If we use the field as a metaphor, in the United States, the discipline has been a battlefield with belligerents seeking unconditional surrender and many foot soldiers vying for survival. In Europe, it is more like a playing field with many matches involving teams in different leagues.

In the end, when discussing various approaches, the issue is whether they can address important puzzles or only serve to legitimize the method they use. Ultimately, the question is: Do the analytical preoccupations of contemporary political science and their substantive content help us understand "real world developments"? If the answer is negative, the discipline is irrelevant. To be clear, few will notice, since there are other social sciences that speak to current trends that may affect politics: growing inequalities and new social insecurities, linked to changes in work patterns, spatial dynamics, and technology. Political scientists must identify what they bring to the debate, and how they can make sense of the political dynamics that accompany multiple transformations in an interdependent world. There is also the resurgence of known political phenomena—such as populism, nationalism, polarization, democratic backsliding, political unrest—that affect Europe as well as other regions of the world. We have tested tools of analysis. Yet, it begs for an ontology, a vision of politics that is much more global geographically and transversal and reintegrates the so-called area studies and world systems theory. European political science remains West-European-centric. Adapting our lenses to the "real world" also requires a less narrow vision of what falls within the remit of political science and what its legitimate objects of study are. One significant and welcome move forward is all the chapters in this volume that interrogate the boundaries of the political.

NOTES

1. "*un champ scientifique authentique est un espace où les chercheurs s'accordent sur les terrains de désaccord et sur les instruments avec lesquels ils sont en mesure de résoudre ces désaccords, et sur rien d'autre*" (1992, p. 152).
2. The last part of the chapter, which focuses on the discipline as of the 1990s, is perhaps influenced by my own experience. My viewpoint is transatlantic, as I trained in the United States before working in France, and at the EUI I sat on the board of professional associations (CES, EUSA) that originated in the United States, although they boasted a strong number of European attendees. It is also transdisciplinary, as I was happy to "bring politics back" into sociology when I helped found the political sociology network of the European Sociological Association and, conversely, to bring

sociology back into EU studies when it became dominated by political scientists! Yet, most of the research for this chapter focuses on periods that I did not experience (1870–1990) filled with characters that I cannot identify with. So, there is de facto more critical distance than subjectivity or normativity in this account.

3. Both also spent time in the United States (at Columbia) and are ECPR cofounders.

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