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Issue: November 2006
Journal: *American Political Science Review*

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From Opposition to Accommodation: How Rockefeller Foundation Grants Redefined Relations between Political Theory and Social Science in the 1950s

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In this essay, I rely primarily on unpublished documents from the Rockefeller Foundation Archives as well as the annual reports of the Ford Foundation and the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) to show that rather than being in a torpor, political theory in the 1950s was a large and eclectic field, marked by contest and rapid change. I focus on the Rockefeller Foundation's policy making for its program in Legal and Political Philosophy (LAPP), the largest grant program for political theory in the 1950s, both to see how the Foundation justified the creation of the program and how it defined its scope. I argue that when faced with the task of settling on a working definition of "political theory" for the purpose of awarding grants, the Foundation's officers and the academics who assisted them opted, after prolonged debate, for an eclectic definition of political theory. I read the emergence of this eclectic definition of political theory, however, not as evidence of pacific pluralism but as an attempt to contain some of the new challenges to the field by incorporating them into it, albeit in a subordinate position.

It has become a commonplace in recent synopses of the history of political theory in the United States to say that the field was in a deep decline in the 1950s, perhaps even dead. This story, now widely accepted as an uncontroversial account of the history of the discipline, continues to gain power through frequent retellings (Barry 1980; Connolly 2001). There are, however, a number of reasons to revise it. For one, some of those who pronounced political theory in decline in the 1950s did so in a strategic, critical spirit: what they claimed was dying—fine-grained commentary on the history of political thought—was what they wished dead (Easton 1951). And when others asked whether political theory was still alive, they did so not because they feared its imminent demise but to examine what motivated the question and then to affirm the vitality and importance of political theory to those who challenged it (Berlin [1963] 1979, Laslett 1956). In later decades, the fierce contest that marked political theory in the 1950s was rarely noted; instead, stories about the sorry state of political theory in the 1950s were more “a prelude to the celebration of its rebirth” than thorough historical reassessments (Adcock and Bevir 2003, 1). What is more, unpublished records from the 1950s do not support a story of decline; rather, they reveal a deep and sustained commitment to political theory in the United States on the part of many academics and several private funding agencies.

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A grant-in-aid from the Rockefeller Archive Center made my research for this article possible. Special thanks to Rockefeller archivists Mary Ann Quinn and Thomas Rosenbaum—and to the R. A. C. for granting permission to cite from its holdings. Thanks also to Erik Freye, Jack Gunnell, Jerzy Hauptmann, Norman Jacobson, David Kettler, Anne MacLachlan, Gene Poschman, Lee Sigelman and the anonymous reviewers for the *Review* for their help with various aspects of this paper.

THE GROWTH OF EXTERNAL FUNDING FOR ACADEMIC RESEARCH

In the years immediately following World War II, universities in the United States received huge infusions of grant money from the federal government and private foundations.¹ Not only was the amount of money coming in enormous, but also it was unprecedented; never before had the federal government or private foundations spent so much money on academic research. As several recent studies have shown (Becher and Trowler 2001; Lowen 1997; Roelofs 2003; Simpson 1998; Slaughter and Rhoades 2004), universities, along with many of the disciplines they housed, were profoundly transformed by this massive influx of external funding.

Not surprisingly, the academics who received the most of this money belonged to the “hard sciences” and conducted research related to the development of new weapons systems (Lowen 1997, 2, 6–13; Slaughter and Rhoades 2004, 28–29). But social scientists, though they received significantly less money as a group than did their colleagues in physics, did not go begging (Dahl 1961, 765). Some of the most lavishly supported fields in the social sciences were game and decision theory as well as quantitative analysis of political behavior (Amadae 2003; Lowen 1997, 191–223; SSRC Annual Reports 1952–1961). Although they provided the dominant rationale for the funding of academic research during the 1950s, Cold War imperatives did not dictate the shape of every grant program developed during the decade.² A case in point is the Rockefeller Foundation's program in Legal and

¹ It is difficult to specify how much money the federal government poured into universities, given that much of it was not publicly disclosed or was funneled through other entities, like private foundations (Needell 1998, 25).

² But see Reisch (2005), who makes a compelling case that foundation support, informed by Cold War imperatives, depoliticized and thereby fundamentally transformed even the unlikely field of the philosophy of science in the United States in the 1950s.

Political Philosophy (LAPP). Rather than being designed primarily as part of a Cold War, anti-communist mission, LAPP was created in part to counterbalance the much larger sums being granted to behavioral social scientists by other private foundations and by Rockefeller itself. It was therefore meant to intervene in what its directors saw as a period of rapid and fundamental change in the discipline of political science. Particularly after both the federal government and the Ford Foundation dramatically increased their levels of funding for academic research in the early 1950s, scholars and foundation officers alike sensed that a sea change in the social sciences—brought on by the sudden surge of money available for certain kinds of projects—was imminent. This was context in which the Rockefeller Foundation first conceived of creating a program to support political philosophy.³

FOUNDATION FUNDING FOR POLITICAL THEORY AND POLITICAL SCIENCE IN THE 1950s

Over the 10 years of its life (from 1953 to 1962), Rockefeller's program in legal and political philosophy awarded just under \$1.7 million in grants and fellowships; of this money, \$258,750 went to the Social Science Research Council to administer a fellowship program for advanced graduate students and \$380,000 to three departments for their own programs in political theory (The Rockefeller Foundation, Program in Legal and Political Philosophy, n.d., folder 80, box 9, series 910, RG 3, RFA, RAC).⁴ Significant though these sums were, they were a fraction both of what the Rockefeller Foundation itself allotted to behavioral social science and what other foundations, most notably Ford, spent on behavioral social science (Deane to Willits, February 6, 1953, pp. 1–3, 76:8, RAC-1; Ford Foundation Annual Report 1957, 32–33).⁵ Although Ford

and Carnegie each supported some work in political theory, neither developed a program devoted solely to the field, focusing its spending on other areas instead.⁶ The SSRC also had a number of other active fellowship programs during this period, many of which (like the Committee on Political Behavior or the Committee on Mathematical Training for Social Scientists) appear to have been far more active and well-funded than the committee responsible for LAPP fellowships (SSRC Annual Reports, 1952–1961).⁷ Once it began LAPP, the Rockefeller Foundation was therefore the principal funder of political theory in the 1950s and the only Foundation with a program devoted to the field; the SSRC played a secondary part in supporting political theory by administering a portion of the Rockefeller-financed program.

One of the most important questions facing those who crafted LAPP was a straightforward, practical one: how to define the fields the program was being designed to aid? That is, what sorts of projects were to count as examples of legal and political philosophy? LAPP was created in the early 1950s, a time when the identity of “political theory” in the discipline was inchoate and the behavioral revolution was just beginning. Examining how the Rockefeller Foundation went about trying to define the fields LAPP was designed to support, therefore, serves as a window onto what proved to be a period of rapid change within the discipline.

In what follows, I focus on policy making by the Rockefeller Foundation during the early years of the LAPP program, drawing on correspondence among Foundation officers and records of conferences among appointed advisory committees of academics. The officers most directly concerned with the new program focus both on characterizing its scope as well as its place within the constellation of all the other programs sponsored by the foundation's social sciences division. The first policy making conference, held in the fall of 1952, was intended to help officers make the case for the need for the program as well as to sketch the parameters of the kinds of work such a program might support. The second, convened by the Rockefeller Foundation and the SSRC in the fall of 1954, sought to define what

³ Although “political philosophy” was the given name of the field supported by LAPP, most involved with the program regularly substitute “political theory” for “political philosophy.” Herbert Deane, the first consultant hired to develop LAPP, presented a possible way of distinguishing between “political philosophy” and “political theory” to Joseph Willits, Director of the Division of Social Sciences (Deane to Willits, October 22, 1952, folder 74, box 8, series 910, RG 3, RFA, RAC); that distinction, however, was never taken up by others involved with the program. And “political theory” became the most common name for the field with which LAPP was concerned. There were also early discussions of the part legal philosophy ought to play in the new program; many of these, however, concluded that few legal scholars wished to interrupt their careers to take a fellowship. Funding work in legal philosophy was never a significant part of LAPP. See John B. Stewart to Leland C. DeVinney, “The Legal Philosophy Phase of LAPP,” October 27, 1954, folder 78, box 9, series 910, R.G. 3, RFA, RAC.

⁴ In subsequent references, all material from series 910 is cited as RAC-1. References to folder and box numbers are also abbreviated, so that folder 80, box 9 becomes 80:9.

⁵ Over the 6 years of its life (1952–1957), the Ford Foundation's program in Behavioral Sciences awarded around \$24 million in grants to institutions; \$10 million for the endowment of the Center for Advanced Studies in Behavioral Sciences in Menlo Park, California. According to Deane to Willits, February 6, 1953, p. 1, Rockefeller's Division of Social Sciences (DSS) had in 1950 divided up its budget

as follows: “35 per cent of DSS budget to develop a science of social behavior, 35 per cent to foster the application of the social sciences to certain social problems, 20 per cent for assistance to talent through fellowships, etc., and 10 per cent for social philosophy.” Deane argued that LAPP should be financed out of the 10 percent of the division's budget allocated to social philosophy.

⁶ For example, some political theorists (like Leo Strauss, whose project I discuss below) received funding from Ford's Behavioral Sciences program, even though support for political theory was not central to the mission of the program. Also, the Carnegie Corporation supported a conference on “Political Theory and the Study of Politics,” held at Northwestern University in 1955. A summary of the conference, by Harry Eckstein (1956), appears in the *Review*.

⁷ According to the financial statements provided in the SSRC's Annual Reports from 1952 to 1961, the Committee on Political Behavior spent roughly \$157,000 on research activities (including conferences, training institutes and research projects, but excluding fellowships); the Committee on the Mathematical Training for Social Scientists (later renamed Mathematics in Social Science Research), roughly \$215,000. By contrast, the Committee for LAPP spent no money on research.

kinds of projects the newly established SSRC phase of the LAPP program would fund. All the participants in each of these phases of the foundation's policy making for LAPP confronted several basic issues: what the relation between political theory and social science was and ought to become; and which approaches to political theory merited the most support.

FOUNDATION SUPPORT FOR POLITICAL THEORY: MAKING THE CASE

In 1952, Joseph Willits, Director of the Division of Social Sciences at the Rockefeller Foundation, began soliciting comments from academics on the need for a program in legal and political philosophy. A conference was convened to discuss the design of the new program in the fall of 1952. Shortly thereafter, Louis Hartz of Harvard wrote to Willits to underscore the relative lack of outside support for work in political theory: "[T]here is one concrete issue which this Conference has gotten hold of and which I would be reluctant to see forgotten. This is the fact, familiar to almost anyone working in universities in political science, that men working in the theory field are at an enormous disadvantage when it comes to the allocation of research funds" (Hartz to Willits, November 6, 1952, 75:8, RAC-1). Other participants made similar observations; Robert MacIver echoed Hartz's point and noted that Franz Neumann, his colleague at Columbia, had made it as well. He went on to say, "the most promising students [in political theory] find it next to impossible to get the aid in the way of research scholarships and fellowships that would be possible had they presented projects of the type, for example, that are acceptable to the SSRC" (MacIver to Willits, November 7, 1952, 75:8, RAC-1). Another participant, Frederick Watkins of Yale, wrote to urge the Foundation to begin a program in this area, but to regard it as a "speculative investment," the returns of which might not be seen for years, if ever: "Can a responsible foundation afford, in addition to its more readily defensible expenditures, to risk an occasional mad splurges [sic] in American Tel. and Tel.?" (Watkins to Willits, November 12, 1952, 75: 8, RAC-1). By comparing the "investment" Rockefeller was considering making in political theory to buying stock in AT&T, Watkins was suggesting that though it might seem risky now, such a program might prove as shrewd as early investments in AT&T had been.

Bolstered by such comments about the effects of the dearth in funding for work in political theory, those who crafted LAPP emphasized that it was meant to be a counterweight to social science. Notably, Herbert A. Deane, the consultant hired by the Foundation to oversee the creation of LAPP, contended that the neglect of theory had led to a dangerous kind of cultural illiteracy—a development many social scientists recognized and deplored, though they were "unaware that they and their imitators bear any share of the responsibility for the rise of this new barbarism" (Deane to Willits, January 12, 1953, pp. 1, 2, 76:8, RAC-1). Although LAPP ultimately became an eclectic pro-

gram that sponsored a number of projects informed by behavioral social science, its principal architects were young Columbia-trained theorists determined to counteract what they saw as the ever-increasing power of social scientific approaches to the study of politics.⁸

INFILTRATING THE SSRC

Shortly after LAPP was first established in 1953, several people within Rockefeller's Division of Social Sciences (DSS), including Willits, its head, suggested that the program fund fellowships for advanced graduate students and that these fellowships be administered by the SSRC. Although Willits strongly favored such a plan, he acknowledged that others had good reason to be wary of it, especially because "the SSRC has shown a decided lack of sympathy in helping men in these fields of inquiry" (Minutes of Division of Social Sciences Staff Meeting, Legal and Political Philosophy, October 9, 1953, p. 4, 77: 8, RAC-1). Still, Willits argued that it would be worth the Foundation's while to insist upon the SSRC administering the program. Among the many reasons Willits cited to support his view, he noted, "[t]here are also advantages to the theory of infiltration. There might be an advantage in pushing the SSRC and thus through infiltration an interest might be established in this area of study and research at the SSRC" (Minutes, p. 5).

Informed by a similar spirit, the grant action that announced the first appropriation to the SSRC for this fellowship program a few months later represented the relation between political theory and social science as a conflict between parties of unequal strength: "Concern has been expressed by many persons, chiefly laymen, but also academicians, at the consistent spread of the assumption that the scientific study of social phenomena is enough, and at the increasing neglect by our generation of those political values on which our society was founded, attention to which is necessary if wisdom is to be realized" (Social Science Research Council—Fellowships in Legal and Political Philosophy, Grant Action RF 53181, December 1–2, 1953, 2470:255, series 200E, RG 1.2, RFA, RAC).⁹ Not surprisingly, John B. Stewart, the newly hired consultant in charge of LAPP for the Foundation, reported a few months later that many at the SSRC were not happy

⁸ During its early life, Herbert A. Deane and John B. Stewart were principally responsible for creating and shaping LAPP. Deane was a Ph.D. candidate at Columbia University during the time of his service; Stewart received his Ph.D. from Columbia in 1953. Deane (born in 1921) served as a consultant to Social Sciences from 1952 to 1954; Stewart (born in 1924) served for several terms, but the one most crucial to LAPP was from 1953 to 1955. Herbert A. Deane officer's diary, 1952–1953, RG 12.1; RFA, RAC. Although Deane, Stewart, and Willits solicited the advice of a number of eminent theorists from 1952 through 1955, they made most LAPP policy themselves.

⁹ The Grant Actions that renewed appropriations to the SSRC for this program (RF 57102, May 23, 1957 and RF 60133, June 24, 1960, both in folder 2470, box 255, series 200E, RG 1.2, RFA, RAC) no longer highlight the conflict between political philosophy and social science. In subsequent references, material from this series is cited as RAC-2.

about the proposed LAPP fellowship program, most likely because they were aware of the criticisms of social science on which it was based: “some SSRC staff members and some directors were opposed to acceptance of the Foundation grant, on the grounds that philosophy and social science research were quite different things” (JBS [John B. Stewart] interview notes from a meeting with Board of Directors, SSRC, September 13 and 14, 1954, p. 1, 2470: 255, RAC-2.). Stewart attended a meeting of the SSRC’s Board of Directors in September of 1954 expecting defiance and opposition. But ultimately, the SSRC did not balk; instead, its Board appointed an advisory committee to discuss the criteria for how “political theory” ought to be defined for the purpose of making awards.

These records of the early years of LAPP reveal that the Foundation’s officers and consultants crafted the program as a response to what they regarded as large-scale and worrisome changes in the social sciences. For one, they were worried about how other funders were allocating their money and how this was fueling change in the social sciences; the decision to induce the SSRC to administer part of the program in political theory arose out of these concerns.¹⁰ Once the creators of LAPP made their case for political theory by positing it as a counterweight to certain strains of social science, however, they had to confront the practical, definitional question implicit in that case: which approaches to political theory work best as counterweights to social science? That is, to which approaches to political theory should LAPP give most of its support?

“POLITICAL THEORY” AS A CATEGORY IN THE 1950s

These questions were daunting ones, mainly because “political theory” was such a large and porous category in the 1950s. Not only did a wide range of work fit into it, but also it permitted dual citizenship, in the sense that belonging to it did not exclude one from belonging to other fields at the same time. Both of these features made the practical task of defining what ought to count as “political theory” more difficult. Moreover, the disagreements over what ought to count as political theory were not confined to where its outer boundaries lay; people also disagreed over how to characterize prototypical examples of the field. The core of political theory was as deeply contested as its periphery.

To see how large a category political theory was in the 1950s, consider the variety of projects that won support from the Rockefeller Foundation’s LAPP programs. Among those established scholars who received LAPP grants-in-aid for work in political theory were Gordon Tullock (for mathematical models of political choice), Henry Kissinger (for a theory of international affairs), Allan Bloom and Leo Strauss (for studies of

the ancient roots of modern Western values), Herbert Storing (for a reconsideration of theories of public administration), Herbert McClosky (for an empirical study of the psychology of political extremism) and Hannah Arendt (for “a basic study of the theory of politics”).¹¹ The range of projects supported by the SSRC-administered LAPP program for advanced graduate students was similarly broad; while there were more studies in the history of political thought than in any other broadly defined subject area, students also received fellowships for work on contemporary political issues, American or European social science, legal theory, theories of international relations, and the application of mathematical techniques to political issues (Committee on Political Theory and Legal Philosophy Fellowships, Report on the Fellowship Program, 1954–55–1962–1963, n.d., 2472:255, RAC-2). Judging solely by the range of grants made, those who made LAPP grants did not reject all projects with an affinity for social science; instead, they worked with a broad, even eclectic conception of what counted as “political theory.”

In addition to being a broad category, political theory in the 1950s was a porous one. From our perspective today, among the most notable of those members of the discipline who held “dual citizenship” in political theory and another field were William Riker, Herbert McClosky, and John Wahlke.¹² The fields of the discipline being defined as they are today, few would identify any of these scholars (with the possible exception of Riker, sometimes called a “formal theorist”) primarily or even secondarily as political theorists. Yet in the 1950s, each asserted his identity as a political theorist in ways that were accepted by others in the discipline, even as he also forged ties with other fields.

Another sign of how porous the field was can be found in how some scholars who seem associated with political theory exclusively sometimes made strategic forays outside it or had their work described in terms one would expect to have reserved for “dual citizens.” An example of the former would be the Ford Foundation’s Behavioral Sciences Division’s sponsorship of a project supervised by Leo Strauss for an

¹⁰ Dean Rusk, President of the Rockefeller Foundation, advised Willits, head of DSS, to “tip his hat” to the fact that the Ford Foundation is in the field” when making his case for funding LAPP to the foundation’s board of directors (Willits interview notes with Dean Rusk, March 9, 1953, 76: 8, RAC-1).

¹¹ All citations are to LAPP Grant Actions from series 200S, RG 1.2, unless otherwise indicated. Citations are abbreviated as follows: grant action number (recipient name), date approved, folder number: box number. SS 6007 (Gordon Tullock), May 4, 1961, 5083:594; SS 5458 (Henry Kissinger), May 24, 1954, 4092:344, RG 1.1; SS 5740 (Allan Bloom), May 24, 1957, 4885:570; SS 5734 (Leo Strauss), May 15, 1957, 4923:575; SS 5937 (Herbert Storing), March 24, 1959, 4922:575; SS 5831 (Herbert McClosky), March 24, 1958, 5015:586; SS 6019 (Hannah Arendt), February 23, 1960, 4170: 487.

¹² Both Riker and McClosky received funding both from LAPP (Grant Action SS 5519 to Riker, approved April 25, 1955, 4529:529, series 200S, RG 1.2; Grant Action SS 5831 to McClosky in 1958) and from the SSRC’s Committees on National Security Policy Research (SSRC Annual Report 1956, 79—Riker) and Political Behavior (SSRC Annual Report 1957, 65—McClosky) around the same time. Wahlke is mentioned by one participant in the first meeting of the SSRC’s Advisory Committee for LAPP as an example of an “interdisciplinary” scholar, in the sense that he was trained in political theory but learned behavioral methods (JBS notes on Conference on Legal Philosophy and Political Theory, SSRC, November 20, 1954, p. 2, 2470:255, RAC-2).

“analysis of relations between political theory and empirical research” (Ford Foundation Annual Report 1956, 56). An internal document from the Rockefeller Foundation illustrates the latter; its author summarizes Sheldon Wolin’s early work on what was to become *Politics and Vision* (1960) as being about “public opinion in democracy” (Thompson to Rusk, November 28, 1958, p. 1, 80: 9, RAC-1).

The point is not that these characterizations reveal some authentic aspect of these scholars’ work that current disciplinary divisions are likely to make us miss. Rather, the way “political theory” worked as a category in the discipline in the 1950s allowed one to call scholars like Riker and McClosky political theorists even while acknowledging that the former was developing formal, mathematical theories of politics and the latter was closely tied to the emerging behaviorist movement. That is not to say that everyone in the discipline would have accepted calling Riker and McClosky political theorists in the 1950s; some pointedly did not.¹³ Still, it is a vivid indicator of disciplinary change that the claim, “Herbert McClosky is a political theorist,” once contestable but eminently defensible, sounds like a classification error today.

POLITICAL THEORY AND ITS OTHERS

Academics often specify what it is they do by showing how their work is distinct from what gets done in contiguous, but to their minds separate, academic territories (Becher and Trowler 2001; Brown 2002). Indeed, an important part of how one understands one’s intellectual identity may lie in one’s choice of academic “others,” those fields to which one pointedly says one does not belong. What sorts of qualities one attributes to these others may vary a great deal—one may portray them as fundamentally muddled and obtuse or just specifically deaf to what one finds intellectually engaging. But no matter how great the variety of attributes one might assign to them, they all share one: potency. When one appeals to others in order to flesh out one’s own intellectual identity, one emphasizes how strong is the tide against which one must swim or how cramped the space available for one’s contribution betwixt and between those that are well established. One may read the power one attributes to one’s intellectual others as malicious or not - but powerful they must be.

Though a common enough feature of academic discourse, scholars can of course specify their identity without using an intellectual other as a foil. So how ought we to read the presence or absence of intellectual others in how academics identify what they do? As I have suggested above, to present another approach as an other is to recognize it—and to recognize it as powerful. The converse of identity-through-opposition might

be called identity-through-accommodation, where the point is to combine, unify, and even fuse what appear to be differing approaches. In the first meeting of the Advisory Committee for the SSRC’s LAPP fellowship program, one finds examples of both of these presentations of academic identity.

Without naming the proponents, the minutes for this meeting summarize arguments for several differing approaches to political theory—the empirical, the historical, and the eclectic—each with distinct standards for awarding fellowships. Only the defenders of the empirical approach explicated what they did by citing an approach to which theirs was opposed—namely, “morally oriented theory.” By contrast, those who advocated the historical approach pointedly refused to designate an intellectual other and rejected any attempt to oppose their approach to the empirical one. And as its name suggests, the eclectic approach sought to incorporate variety rather than to posit others (the only plausible one of which, again by definition, was specialization; Minutes of the Conference on Legal and Political Philosophy, SSRC, November 20, 1954, pp. 2–6, 2470:255, RAC-2).

Once these various approaches were presented, however, the committee declined to choose one in particular—thereby *de facto* opting for the eclectic approach (Minutes, pp. 11–12). Following suit, the SSRC decided against using the phrase “empirical theory” in its announcement of the new program, apparently on the view that the phrase would be read as an invitation only to those who accepted this particular approach (SSRC brochure, “Announcement of Fellowships, Grants-in-Aid, and other Appointments to be offered in 1955,” pp. 11–12, 2470:255, RAC-2).

Another account of the same meeting, written by John Stewart, consultant to Rockefeller for LAPP, highlights several disagreements among the participants and, unlike the Minutes discussed above, makes clear who said what. First, although several participants (David Easton and Earl Latham) identified “moral theory” and “metaphysics” as the opposites of the kind of political theory they argued the SSRC ought to support, others (most notably Herbert Deane and Norman Jacobson) objected that defining the program this way would amount to requiring all fellows to accept doing theory along behaviorist lines, even if they were disinclined to do so. This dispute over the implications of the particular identity-through-opposition presented by Easton and Latham unfolded within an even more fundamental disagreement about the disciplinary milieu in which political theory should be placed. Again, Easton and Latham argued that because political theory is properly located within the social sciences, the recipients of the SSRC’s LAPP fellowships ought to be encouraged to seek training in the social sciences and in mathematics. But Deane, Jacobson, and Stewart objected that making such training a prerequisite for LAPP fellowships would erase the distinction between this program and other more explicitly scientific programs administered by the SSRC. And Deane also countered that the fields of “[h]istory, philosophy and law are perhaps more important” to enhancing the

¹³ For instance, at the initial meeting of the SSRC’s Advisory Committee for LAPP fellowships, one member (Frederick Watkins) explicitly rejected an inclusive definition of political theory as practically useless: “If behaviorism is political theory, then all political scientists are political theorists” (JBS notes on Conference on Legal Philosophy and Political Theory, November 20, 1954, SSRC, p. 2, RAC-2).

training of LAPP fellows than the social sciences (JBS interview notes, November 20, 1954, pp. 1–4, 67).

In both of these accounts, the advocates of “empirical theory” identified their approach in a strikingly different way than those advocating other approaches. Only the advocates of “empirical theory” consistently identified their approach by citing ways of doing theory to which they were opposed; other participants, though clearly critical of the empirical approach, declined to present what they advocated in opposition to it. Instead, they sought to incorporate empirical theory, arguing that there was room enough in how they conceived of the field to accommodate empirical theorists, albeit not in a central location. Such a response to the challenge posed by early advocates of the empirical approach was, I believe, both an acknowledgment of its growing significance and a move intended to contain it. By declining to posit empirical theorists as their others, advocates of the historical or eclectic approaches to political theory attempted to make what “political theory” meant even broader without ceding any of its vital territory to the empirical theorists. The empirical theorists, on the other hand, consistently defined themselves in opposition to an other, highlighting the power of the kinds of theory that stood in their way.

CONCLUSION

Political theory was anything but dead in the 1950s; even those who were critical of the field were more likely to see it as misguided than moribund. Instead, it was a broad, porous field that was changing rapidly, in large part because political science as a whole was being transformed by the sudden availability of large external grants. When the Rockefeller Foundation began its LAPP program in the early 1950s, its officers explicitly meant the work it funded to act as a counterweight to the growing power of social science in the study of politics. But in the first few years of its life, LAPP became a program that accommodated social scientific approaches to political theory rather than one that consistently opposed them. The eclectic working definition of political theory that came to characterize all phases of LAPP made room for what the creators of the program had initially intended to oppose.¹⁴

What, then, did LAPP mean for the later development of political theory? Some might argue that the accommodationist strategy ultimately adopted by the Foundation toward empirical theory was a mistake, insofar as it sustained this approach without offering a clear alternative to it. Regardless of how one judges the merits of the eclectic approach to political theory that came to dominate LAPP, the program’s \$1.7 million did support a good deal of work in political theory over the

course of its ten year life—some of which would later be cited as part of the revival of political theory in the late 1960s and 1970s. Additionally, being drawn into the work of policy- and grant-making stirred a new kind of consciousness in those academics suddenly called upon to define their field for purposes that clearly mattered to them, their colleagues, and their students. For those who participated in it, LAPP provided immediate and powerful incentives to think about what defined political theory as a field and what its place in political science and the social sciences should be.

The reasons why political theory became a highly isolated sub-field within political science in the latter half of the twentieth century are bigger than anything that began within LAPP (Gunnell 1993). But during its brief life, LAPP offered a forum for the wide variety of scholars who identified themselves as political theorists to articulate their conception of their field and to argue with those who thought differently. The self-consciousness that LAPP fostered proved fractious, and the eclectic conception of political theory the program fashioned, loosely knit; by the mid-1960s, it was already visibly frayed. Still, LAPP kept political theory alive at a time when other fields had access to far greater sums. It also gave political theorists an ongoing opportunity to think about where what they were doing fit in their rapidly changing discipline.

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¹⁴ Beginning in 1957, DSS solicited comments from a wide variety of academics on the LAPP program and then arranged excerpts from them by category. The category, “Comments on the Present Scope of the Program,” contained only one sub-heading: “Its eclectic character.” Not all respondents praised this quality of the program, but no one questioned that the program was eclectic (Critical Comments on LAPP Program, 1958, p. 3, 80:9, RAC-1).

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