PS and its Publics: Utopia and Reality in Disciplinary Identity
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The establishment of modern academic disciplines was an essential moment in a new institutional arrangement – the modern American university -- constituted to promote the commonweal. When cast in these very general terms, the covenant that situates the modern American academy in the American republic does not differ from the ideals informing the practices of the so-called ‘old college way’ of 19th century antebellum higher learning (see Veysey 1965, esp 10, 12-13 125-133). But the reforms that constituted the modern university and the modern academic disciplines complicated that covenant by introducing innovations that fundamentally altered both the internal dynamics of the academy and external forces of change that together transformed the circumstances of American higher education. The upshot has been the multiplication, differentiation, and variation of the mediating forms by which – or perhaps better, the “publics” through which -- disciplinary practitioners are supposed to promote their public responsibilities.

The historiography of disciplinary identity\(^1\) suggests that in some fields of inquiry the challenge of these various and changing demands has been managed by an arrangement of compatible, even complementary, disciplinary practices,\(^2\) while in other cases these demands have proven more difficult to reconcile. In this, the difference between a historiography of disciplinary identity defined by a narrative (more or less) free of internal debate about the legitimacy of a discipline, and one marked (more than less) by crises of disciplinary identity, may prove – and it has in some cases already proven -- especially useful for illuminating the defining characteristics and complexity of the relationship between the academy and the republic. By this standard, academic political science might qualify as a (I am tempted to say but cannot here defend the claim\(^3\) that it is the) case study of how and why modern higher education has not – and perhaps cannot -- made good on its public responsibilities. Examples from the discourse of identity about political science abound, but perhaps the initial warrants for this claim are best recognized in the fact that most academic political scientists, as well as many observers of higher education working at the intersections between the academy and its various publics, are intimately familiar with the ongoing struggle over the identity of political science.

I have framed the issue this way because how political scientists and others have talked about the identity of the discipline is central to the argument I want to make in this essay, the substance of which turns on three related theses: The first is that the historiography of identity in political science suggests that the terms of that discourse have been for the most part fundamentally wrongheaded, and the substance of that discourse has distorted our understanding of why political science, and in various ways modern higher education, has failed to make good on its ostensible public purposes. The second is that the best explanation for why political science (as academic discipline) has failed comes from what the discourse of political science (as mode of substantive inquiry) has taught us about politics in modern republics, and especially in the United States. The third is that the most important implication of understanding both why the discourse of disciplinary identity is wrongheaded, and why political science has failed to make good on its public purposes, is that getting the story right may mean giving up or radically redefining the project – or abandoning the arrangements of modern higher education.

Before I elaborate on the plan for developing the argument, this last point demands additional qualification and clarification as it is both liable to misinterpretation because the
discourse of disciplinary identity is so familiar to political scientists, and because it is a potentially controversial claim that is also supposed to be the primary lesson of this essay. The analytical structure of disciplinary identity-talk has for the most part followed a particular pattern, the intent of which is to establish that there is a “better way” of promoting the public responsibilities of political science that can be realized by changing disciplinary practice. This is the “utopian” moment of my essay title, and when I argue that much of this discourse is wrongheaded, I am simply arguing that the analysis of the evidence demonstrates that there is no “better way” of practicing political science that can promote these public purposes. This does not mean (and I do not argue) that we cannot learn something useful from these arguments, including perhaps something about how to do better political science, but those improvements should not be thought of as means of securing the public responsibilities of political science.

This brings us to the “reality” of my title: from the claim that there is little we can do in changing disciplinary practice -- even in improving our work -- that can promote the realization of our public responsibilities, it does not follow that there is nothing that political scientists can do to promote the kinds of political ideals embodied in the self-understandings of those who have participated in the discourse of disciplinary identity. But if I am right, trying to realize those ideals in the context of modern American politics may actually eviscerate both the arrangements that make the academic disciplines possible, as well as some of the more significant achievements of American higher education. That may or may not be a problem, but those arguments are not about how to realize the public responsibilities of higher education and academic political science – they are about whether the grand experiment of modern American higher education was worth the effort to establish it, and whether it is worth the effort to sustain it.

My plan for getting to and elaborating on this conclusion begins (in “The Academic Utopia”) with a reconstruction of the logic of disciplinary identity-talk, and how that logic comports with the context, structures, and ideals of academic political science and modern higher education at its founding in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The goal of that initial analytical and historical work is to sketch a framework within which to interpret how, and to establish the ways in which, the relationship between the discipline, the university, and the republic was mediated by efforts to address the “publics” of students, experts, and scholars formed by its constitutive purposes.

That context provides a useful benchmark for examining the logic of disciplinary identity talk in academic political science as it unfolded in the history of modern higher education. In the second section (“Bridges to Nowhere”), the substance of that analysis is that identity-talk in academic political science has tended to focus on a limited number of recurrent themes about the defects and deficiencies of disciplinary practice, but that the actual history of that practice shows that the same problems of identity persist even when those defects and deficiencies are not present.

This raises questions about how we explain those persistent problems, and in the third section (“A Public Political Science and its Discontents”) I turn to an examination of the early history of the discipline, the express purpose of which is to track how the problem of finding a workable solution to the problem of disciplinary identity was transformed into a discourse in which fixing the discipline came to be the way in which the problem of fixing politics was
conceptualized in disciplinary identity talk. This should offer empirical and analytical resources for a potentially compelling and perspicuous theoretical account of why the discourse of disciplinary identity is wrongheaded – and ineffective.

In the fourth section (“Politics, not Political Science”) I explicate an alternative account intended to explain why political science has failed in realizing its ostensible public purposes. The gist of that account embodies the paradoxical thesis that the same sorts of findings of political science (as inquiry) that inform(ed) the call for political science (as discipline) to take up the cudgels of greater ‘public engagement’ also explains why those efforts have failed. And the problem – to heap irony on paradox -- is that the ‘utopian’ ideal of an ‘engaged discipline’ prevents us from seeing how what we already know explains the failure of the project.

This brings us back, then, to the question that justified the founding, has troubled the history, and continues to divide the discipline today: how can political science promote the commonweal? The lesson of this essay is that the question can only be parsed in a way that does not involve the indictment of political science. Some will no doubt argue (once again?) that this is proof that higher education, and political science, are complicit in practices antithetical to the promotion of the commonweal. Others will no doubt argue (as they often have?) that the problem is the project of changing politics, not the institutional organization of the discipline or its institutional integument. Others still will continue to argue – following the discourse of identity talk that has afflicted the discipline for the better part of a century now -- that the problem continues to be the way that we do political science. My analysis dismisses the third, but in doing so raises very difficult questions about how we might settle the differences between the first two. And while I doubt that what I say here will have a profound impact on changing the discourse of identity in academic political science – we just can’t seem to let it go -- it will be enough for my purposes if it simply yields some doubts what might happen to the ‘public purposes’ of political science if don’t stop trying to change the discipline to realize them.

1. The Academic Utopia (or, a theory of disciplinary identity crisis)

The founders and supporters of the 19th century movement to establish what we now recognize as the model of modern American higher education justified their efforts in the same way their predecessors justified the institutional arrangements that modern higher education was to replace. Since the founding of the polity, many of America’s political elite shared a general belief “that proper education was necessary to the survival of the republic,” and “that America’s colleges had an obligation to educate for service to the state” (Robson 1985, 227). The assumption that there is a necessary relationship between education and political progress had for many centuries been a staple principle of arguments for popular sovereignty, and it was (and still is) frequently traced back to Aristotle's dictum that "a given constitution demands an education in conformity with it." In the American case this has often meant the "unqualified acceptance" that service to "state and nation" required "a type of higher education in accord with a constitutional democracy" (Foerster 1937, 5 – 6). But if American higher education had to be reformed, that could only be explained as the prescriptive imperative of a perceived disjuncture between the kind of polity the American "constitutional democracy" was and should be, and the paideia it had and needed.
For our purposes, the most important feature of these reforms is that they produced an institutional arrangement that has been in some respects remarkably successful in resolving that disjuncture, while in other respects the results were – and continue to be – notably problematic. Reflecting in the 1930’s on what he called the end of “the first rough cultural settlement” for modern higher education, Norman Foerster noted that some achievements might “wholly justify the state university of today” and warrant attributing “a clean bill of health” to the implemented reforms, while others might be interpreted as “serious blunders” that created an institution “suffering from grave maladies.” These judgments, Foerster intimated, turned on “wide differences of opinion” about how the ideas of ‘service to state and nation’ “should be defined and interpreted,” but while this is obviously (though not trivially) true, recognizing that those differences of opinion also tended to coalesce around different subjects of inquiry – and thus disciplinary discourses – raises the analytical ante: what has to be explained is why some subjects and disciplines succeeded, and others have struggled, in the transformations required by the “epic of cultural conquest and settlement” (Foerster 1937, 6) that modern higher education was supposed to help promote. Put another way, the educational reforms demanded by the analysis of 19th century American society yielded an institutional arrangement that proved to be enormously popular – except (as it turns out) for some disciplinary practitioners who were dissatisfied with the basis of that popularity.

It is not difficult to identify the more and the less successful cases. While the story of modern higher education “will always be a source of inspiration” that “has been eulogized, quite properly if ad nauseum, by no end of educators and politicians” (Foerster 1937, 6-7), the fact of the matter is that much of the extant literature on the development of modern higher education seems to be driven by a fascination with frustrated ambitions and unrequited hopes. Interestingly, the preponderance of those kinds of cases have involved disciplines in which the subjects of inquiry are those more or less directly and self-consciously related to defining what kind of regime the American polity was and ought to be. These were the disciplines – what became the social sciences -- that proved to be the least adept at making the crossing, and – given its apparently congenital struggles with the problem of disciplinary identity -- this appears to be especially true of political science. There is moreover a special irony here that has not been lost (and is still a central rhetorical feature) in the historiography of modern higher education and the social sciences: it was the partisans, founders, and early practitioners of these disciplines -- including, most prominently, academic political science (Ross 1991, 66 – 9) -- who were the most vociferous in calling for a replacement of the paideia culminating in ‘old college way,’ yet they appeared to have the greatest difficulty making (what they thought was) effective use of the institutional integument they were instrumental in creating.

It is tempting to frame this narrative in terms emphasizing how unintended consequences or unanticipated implications produced unexpected failures. Many of the accounts of these particular developments suggest the application of such literary devices, and I confess that this account may have elements that sort as well. But what I want to suggest is a different and hopefully more perspicuous approach to understanding the problem of disciplinary identity crisis in general, and in political science in particular. (I also acknowledge the tenuous character of my thesis—at least in its initial formulations -- by an admittedly heavy use of italicized constructions where particularly difficult or controversial points of conceptualization are at issue. I will abandon the excesses at a point in the narrative where I am more confident that the analytical claims have been secured. In any case:) The extant literature offers significant insights...
into the complexities and challenges of constituting and sustaining the institutional arrangements of higher education in ways that are congruent with the public purposes they were supposed to serve, but where problems of disciplinary identity have proven intractable, that is because those disciplines are **predicated on the promotion of incommensurable conceptions of disciplinary purpose.**

This is intended as a first-cut in explicating the analytical thesis at the core of a ‘theory of disciplinary identity crises,’ but while that account is not the primary goal of this essay, it can sharpen our understanding of how political science (and some other disciplines, but for different reasons) suffer(s) from congenital disciplinary crises. This way of framing the problem of disciplinary identity crisis may suggest an insufficiently distinctive approach involving yet another story of ‘differences of opinion’ about how modern higher education should promote ‘service to state and nation.’ But in fact, the cleavage at work in cases of intractability – and this is key – is actually constituted not by differences in opinion about the commonweal should be promoted, but by **differences in opinion about whether higher education should promote the commonweal** -- but here I am running the substantive argument out ahead of its analytical reconstruction. The analytical point is that when the constitutive use-values of disciplinary practice to which various disciplinary stakeholders – what I call disciplinary ‘publics’ – subscribe prove incommensurable, legitimacy crises can (although need not) arise and can (but may not necessarily) generate intractable identity disputes.

These parenthetical qualifications are critical; they suggest that disciplinary identity crises become intractable only under very specific conditions, and that what distinguishes more and less successful examples of disciplinary legitimacy turns on the extent to which disciplines do not fall prey to those conditions. A particularly useful discussion for illuminating these issues -- as much by what it assumes as by what it actually says -- is Philip Kitcher's (2011) examination of the ‘the problems of public knowledge.’ The normative underpinning of Kitcher’s discussion is a kind of ‘constitutive ideal’ that is readily complementary to the sorts of arguments that were used to justify the establishment of modern higher education and the academic disciplines. As Kitcher sees it, the successful realization of public knowledge is “fundamental to democracy” (121), and it is the effective use of the “division of epistemic labor” – of which the academic disciplines would have to be considered a key institutional expression – that is fundamental to the realization of public knowledge. The problems of public knowledge are in this instance various (what we can for our purposes call) disciplinary practices that corrupt “the ideal of a well-ordered science” (122), as well as “various grades” of "public ignorance" (119), either or both of which may produce conditions in which "the notion of expertise comes to look increasingly dubious" (121).

We can think of these as cases in which questions of disciplinary mission success, and disciplinary legitimacy, are at stake, and they may be more usefully parsed in those terms by setting them against an ideal-typical model of a well ordered discipline. Disciplines with stable identities and high legitimacy are characterized by a congruence of understanding regarding the epistemic, cognitive, and distributive labors that define the relations between and among the various stakeholders -- publics -- constituted by a discipline’s institutional arrangements. Where there is broad agreement **across those publics** on the epistemic status of disciplinary knowledge claims, the methods of producing warranted claims, and the responsibilities of the various parties in producing and transmitting those claims, the identity of a discipline may be said to be in good
order. In epistemic and cognitive matters the practical expression of this condition can run the
gamut from implicit acknowledgment of (typically via simple forbearance in questioning) extant
arrangements, to explicit endorsement of their bases, and in matters of transmission the practical
consequence would be each of the constitutive publics fulfilling its role in a way that sustains the
arrangement as a whole.

The reason this ideal-typical reconstruction is important is because it gives us a map of
the conceptual and practical terrains on which questions of disciplinary legitimacy -- and when it
is at stake, disciplinary identity -- are contested. This qualification is (again) critical, especially
because it might be assumed that legitimacy crises and identity crises are necessarily related, but
untangling the relationship between the two is a knotty problem, and Kitcher shows why by
(unintentionally) demonstrating that crises of identity are crises of legitimacy *sui generis*.

Consider, first, the complementary logics of legitimacy crisis implied by my sketch of the
ideal-typical disciplinary model, and in Kitcher’s ideal of ‘well ordered science.’ Briefly: when
disciplinary publics do not share a congruence of agreement about the *meaning* of the epistemic,
cognitive, distributive practices that define a discipline’s institutional articulation, a legitimacy
crisis is at hand. Kitcher’s discussion is useful because it seems to cover the gamut of
possibilities. There are challenges to epistemic authority (here, in disease research) resulting
from contestations over “framing inquiry” into public health problems (109-113), challenges to
cognitive claims (in evolutionary theory) resulting from contestations over "standards of
certification" for knowledge claims (113-117), and challenges to distributive arrangements (in
discourses about climate change) resulting from "importantly flawed… channels through which
public knowledge is distributed to the public” (117-122). Moreover (as noted earlier), Kitcher
explains these disputes as originating in corruptions of the ideal by ‘experts’ themselves (109-
113, 115), or in forms of “remediable ignorance” on the part of ‘consumers’ of disciplinary
knowledge (117-119), and in extreme cases where the cause is “irremediable ignorance” (113-
117) informed by “tendencies to favor a chimeric epistemology” (120) in which the legitimacy of
some knowledge claims are a matter of the *reasons* adduced in their support, while others are
judged exclusively by their source, irrespective of any consideration of reasons. Yet in every one
of these cases -- even the last, where there are clearly incommensurable conceptions of
disciplinary purposes at work -- legitimacy crisis does not rise to the level of identity crisis, and
that is because the *constitutive purposes of ‘public knowledge’ serve as the regulative standard*
for defining the terms in which these crises must be addressed.

In one sense this is a rather unremarkable observation; it does not require an advanced
degree to recognize that we tend to define the solutions to problems from the perspective of the
ideals we want to promote. But there are some less obvious -- and some provocative -- lessons
implied here that are particularly important for our purposes. One reinforces an earlier
observation about the conceptual structure of identity-talk: fortification of epistemic, cognitive,
and distributive practices is the received strategy for mounting a defense against legitimacy
challenges (and this is what political science has followed). Another is that the logic of
addressing incommensurability challenges requires a shift from the strategy of fortification to
what we might call ‘resolution by elimination’: in the instance discussed by Kitcher, attacks on
disciplinary arrangements driven by those who subscribe to a ‘chimeric epistemology’ can only
be resolved by either converting to (what Kitcher calls [116]) a “Denier” of incoherence (or what
might be more familiarly label a ‘true believer’) – and abandoning the disciplinary project, or
holding fast to the constitutive purposes underpinning disciplinary identity and hoping that “irremediable ignorance” can be (at worst) contained or (at best) eliminated (122). A third lesson – perhaps the most difficult to conceptualize – pulls the preceding two together: the intractability of identity talk indicates a very peculiar circumstance that is at once conceptualized in terms that assumes the efficacy, even while in substance it is resistant to the effectiveness, of the received strategy of epistemic, cognitive, and distributive refinement. Or, to fit this out with the analytical characterization with which I began: disciplines afflicted by identity crises are predicated on the promotion of systematically misinterpreted and ineffectively addressed – because they are incommensurable -- conceptions of disciplinary purposes.

This raises the question of how incommensurable conceptions of disciplinary purposes come to be systematically misinterpreted. The answer is that this happens when incommensurable purposes come to be accommodated within the institutional structures of disciplinary practices. This needs to be explained, and here Kitcher's discussion continues to be potentially illuminating. In the examples of "irremediable ignorance" Kitcher discusses, incommensurability is a function of purposes that are antithetical to or exclusive of disciplinary identity. That is, where irremediable ignorance is the source of disciplinary legitimacy crisis, the existence of that ignorance is incompatible with the existence of the discipline it opposes – except, it has to be noted, where the institutional arrangements of society are sufficiently slack as to allow both to exist simultaneously. Indeed, this might be thought of as another way of describing "the problems of public knowledge" – the entire point of Kitcher's essay is that democracy is subverted by the fact that well ordered science and (antithetical ideas like) irremediable ignorance exist simultaneously. In any case, the obvious(!) analytical point here is that what is true of society generally is also true of the institutional arrangements of academic disciplines and higher education: incommensurable purposes can be compatible in structures sufficiently slack to allow their simultaneous pursuit. (Some of us might say: this is just a redescription of our departments, our universities and colleges, and of course our disciplines!). The less obvious, more directly relevant, and provocatively paradoxical analytical point is that disciplines subject to intractable identity crises are those in which disciplinary publics are simultaneously held together by agreement on the legitimacy of disciplinary institutional formations, where different conceptions of the constitutive purposes of those formations promote are present, and where, for some, doubts about the realization of certain purposes also calls into question the legitimacy of the discipline itself. The reason these conditions are systematically misinterpreted and mistakenly addressed is because the fact of a discipline’s existence is, in effect, (assumed to be) an endorsement of the ideal that is its constitutive purpose, and the failure to realize that purpose, given the institutional reality, must be a defect in the practices of a ‘well ordered science.’ In short, what is a consequence of incommensurable purposes is conceptualized as a defect of disciplinary identity. This is the condition of academic political science.

Before turning, finally, to a discussion of the constitutive ideals that have been the bane of academic political science, and some aspects of the mission of higher education, one last implication of the problem of disciplinary identity crisis ought to be noted. The irony of this condition -- and this is the issue we will have to address in concluding -- is that some disciplines maintain their legitimacy because their constitutive purposes are never questioned, some (like Kitcher’s ‘well ordered sciences’) maintain their legitimacy by fortifying their constitutive purposes, and some try to prop up their legitimacy by subjecting themselves to repeated and
agonizing self-interrogation about what (and who) is to blame for failing to make a discipline work the way that it (ideally) should. This is the condition

The founders of American higher education as well as subsequent generations of practitioners disagreed in their analyses of what the American polity (and politics generally) was and ought to be, how the status of that knowledge was to be understood, and how that knowledge was best realized; and historians of higher education and the academic disciplines disagreed with the founders, generations of practitioners – and each other – about this or that feature of the project. But what is shared in nearly all of these accounts (and, I am tempted to argue, what has to be assumed in order for any of these discourses to exist) is the valorization of political sovereignty and formal education as the nexus of polity and paideia. When Foerster described as "epic" the transformations intended by the establishment of modern higher education, there was more than a kernel of truth in his rhetoric. This was intended to be a sharp and significant departure from the past, and "the state" and "the University" were to be the primary forces of this new ‘cultural conquest and settlement.’

The valorization of political sovereignty and formal education that is at the foundation of modern higher education is an artifact of a critique of 19th century American society that was at once both familiar and innovative. This story has been told in various ways by many scholars, so we need not repeat it in detail here, but focusing on how the relationship and importance of state and university took shape may be helpful for understanding the intractability of identity disputes in both political science and certain dimensions of the higher education mission.

For the founders of the modern university and the academic disciplines, two primary concerns informed their calls for the establishment of these new institutional arrangements. One was a broad dissatisfaction with the character of American politics – a familiar thesis grounded in concerns about the dangers of democracy, and the other was a sharpened awareness of the organizational demands of a modern commercial republic – and this entailed an innovative thesis that underpinned calls for new modes of thought and practice. From the first modern higher education (and political science specifically) derived a civic-educative moment – the education of citizens – that was embedded in the foundations of the new institutional arrangements, and from the second was derived a normative commitment to effective governmental administration informed by well-grounded forms of knowledge.

On the side of conceptions and practices of politics, citizenship and university became valorized elements of polity and paideia out of a critique of an “outmoded fusion of individualist, anti-statist liberalism and democratic republicanism” (Furner 1996, 147) that produced what Francis Lieber, arguably the founding father of academic political science (Farr references), described as forms of “individual liberty… enjoyed in a degree in which it has never been enjoyed before,” carried out in modes of “political action” of “greater intensity than in any other land” (Leiber 1880, 351), and ginned up in what Lieber’s successors would describe as a “political education by billboards, newspaper headlines and stump speeches” (APSA Section on Instruction 1906, 225). Given that the old republican ideal of civic education in popular schooling, a free press, voluntary associations, and the ‘old time colleges’ (Cremin 1980, 104; Rudolph 1990, ch 5) had proven ineffective as a paideia for the “nascent citizens” of the American republic who had been activated in the wake of Jacksonian democracy, there was a shift toward seeking “the calming effect of an earnest and scientific treatment of politics" that
could be the basis of “fundamental truths” that could be taught to “every one that helps to crowd your public schools” (Lieber 1880, 353). Here is a critical dimension of what would become the ongoing crisis of identity in academic political science: the mission of citizenship education concomitantly targeted at participation in the exercise of political sovereignty and guided by the knowledge produced in institutions of higher learning.

On the side of government and effective knowledge, the valorization of polity and paideia in political sovereignty and formal education was rounded out by the development of “new concepts and explanations that crowded out older and rival vocabularies for describing industrial society and its problems” (Furner 1996, 147; see also Skowronek 1982, 4-5). The argument for effective government was driven in part by the crises of the Civil War and growing problems of political corruption resulting from a ‘political’ failure to accommodate governmentality to economic liberalism, the expansion of wealth, and social complexity, but after 1870 these readily merged with more urgent concerns about “disruptive strains” – business bankruptcies, involuntary unemployment, the growth of monopolies, recurrent depressions, sharpening conflict between labor and capital -- that were the effects of what Karl Polanyi called the “liberal creed” in the discourse and practice of political economy (Polanyi 2001, 141-170). One consequence of these concerns was the reinvigoration of demands for “elementary truths of political science and statecraft [that had been] first discredited then forgotten” earlier in the century in the rise of classical political economy and rush to establish market societies (Polanyi 2001, 35). Out of perceptions of division, chaotic spontaneity, the excesses of individualism, and the failures of the so-called self-regulating market, there emerged a movement for “building a qualitatively different kind of state” entailed by a “pivotal turn away from a state organization that presumed the absence of extensive institutional controls at the national level toward a state organized around national administrative capacities” (Skowronek 1982, 4 passim). Partisans of higher education reform, and partisans of political science in particular, were also at the forefront of this movement, and as they were working within a discourse of the state that was sufficiently broad to encompass a conception of political sovereignty that included both ‘the people' and their 'government' (Farr 1995, 144 -159; Gunnell 2004, ch 2), it was a relatively straightforward matter to conceptualize higher education, and the discipline of political science, as the institutional site where specialized knowledge for ‘the sovereign state’—whether understood as the people, or government, or both – could be produced.

Out of this concatenation of criticisms about the defects and deficiencies of extant political practices on the one hand, and the extant structures of the American paideia on the other, “the idea of the state” – as the locus of sovereign power in the people and government – took on a status that “transcended ideology and professional divisions” (Gunnell 2004, 54), and the idea of “an authentic ‘university’” – as the locus of “disinterested scholarship and research”--was the basis of “a broad consensus” among advocates of educational reform (Lucas 2001, 170-171). The partisans of modern higher education, and academic political science, then, made the legitimacy of the institution contingent on its efficacy in shaping the contours of political sovereignty through the publics it constituted when it was created. Whatever ‘differences of opinion’ practitioners might have about how ‘service to the nation and state’ should be ‘defined and interpreted,’ the couplet of higher education and political sovereignty constituted the fundamental premises of disciplinary identity in the relationships of the discipline and its publics.
The constitutive purposes of political science in the valorization of political sovereignty and higher education were more or less settled when the massive expansion of higher education began in the late 19th century. Now the discipline’s publics were constituted. In its articulation as a scholarly public, the discipline would create the knowledge necessary for the effective use of sovereign power. The reproduction of scholarship would be secured in a post-baccalaureate academic public constituted for training scholars to be. In another academic public it would train experts for service to the state through government. Undergraduate education would round out the discipline’s academic publics, but with a different mediating mission: student-citizens who would serve the state as teachers, exemplars, and leaders. And finally, political science would supplement these mediated contributions of service to nation and state by a direct dissemination of its findings to a lay-public-at-large.

In this concatenation of mission-sites, it is readily apparent why “Self consciousness and concern about its relationship to politics," as John Gunnell argues, “has significantly informed political science’s successive crises of identity." Chief among the sources of this self-consciousness were “the problem of reconciling scientific and political criteria of judgment," and the fact that "although the American science of politics emerged from, and has remained tied to, American political culture, it has in various ways sought to distance itself, both conceptually and institutionally” (Gunnell 2004, 5 – 6). None of this however means that academic political science could not satisfy its public purposes, and in fact it was not until the discipline appeared to be on the path of successfully realizing those purposes, and failed, that the problem of identity turned from being a challenge on the way to resolution, into a persistent issue – and a chimera – for American political science. But assertions are not of course arguments, and I am getting ahead of the story.

2. Bridges to Nowhere (or, A Canard in Chimera’s Clothing)

When in 1906 the American Political Science Association (APSA) launched its flagship journal, the *American Political Science Review* (APSR), its founders intended the *Review* to promote the Association’s stated mission of “in general advancing the scientific study of politics in the United States” by addressing a public comprised “not only of those engaged in academic instruction, but of public administrators, lawyers of broader culture, and in general, all those interested in the scientific study of the great and increasingly important questions of practical and theoretical politics” (Willoughby 1904, 11). Nearly a century later, the APSA launched its second scholarly journal, *Perspectives on Politics*, which appeared for all intents and purposes to recapitulate the *Review’s* original mission: *Perspectives* is supposed to reach “across and outside of our discipline” in order to “draw all of its members, and others, into a conversation about politics, policy, power, and the study thereof” (Hochschild 2003, 1), and while not “aimed at a predominantly non academic audience,” *Perspectives* demonstrated the discipline’s commitment to “joining a trend of seeking to make scholarly research more accessible and influential beyond the academy” (Hochschild 2005, 337), and encouraging a perception that had arisen "in American political science in recent years" about "the importance of greater breadth and public relevance in political science" (Isaac 2010, 1). But how exactly would *Perspectives* advance the tasks of the *Review* beyond what the *Review* was already doing?
The question is telling. Hochschild’s and Issac’s claims about recent developments in the academy is less a description of actual practice than an observation of renewed concern about a recurrent worry. Indeed, the founding of Perspectives is itself a testament to that worry. Despite the obvious continuity between the founding principles of the APSR and Perspectives, the new journal was not to supplement the work of the old one. All of the past and current editors of Perspectives have been quite clear about this (Hochschild 2003, Johnson 2006, Issac 2010). Perspectives recapitulated the original mission of the Review because the APSR no longer served that mission in full. It had instead become, like other “more specialized publications,” primarily “a forum for academic research” (Johnson 2006, 1) that was perhaps less accessible to the variety of publics that the discipline’s leaders wanted – and apparently still wanted -- to address, not the least of whom, it seemed, were many political scientists themselves. On the most ungenerous interpretation the Review was the embodiment of why political science had failed to fulfill its disciplinary purposes. A more generous account was that Perspectives made for a more efficient arrangement that would allow the discipline to be the ‘well ordered science’ that it should be, an assumption clearly implied by the claim that Perspectives, like PS: Political Science and Politics (which was founded back in 1968, and also, by the way, included “items formerly published in the Review”), was meant to “complement” the APSR (on PS, Kirkpatrick 1968, 1; on Perspectives, Issac 2010, 1). Still, there was the unsettling fact that the “vague dissatisfaction” with the APSR that led to the “invention of Perspectives” (Hochschild 2005, 330) was, as Robert Salisbury (CITE) put it in a masterful understatement, one of the "perennial features of life among political scientists" that actually reflected concerns running the gamut from “technique and method, the representativeness of the review [sic], and the APSA’s governing structures,” to “ostensible polarities” like “teaching versus research” and “real-world politics versus theoretically driven research” – in short, everything that defined the contested terrains of the discipline’s identity.

Needful publics, untapped resources, a discipline predicated on service: the incontrovertible conclusion that most critics (even sympathetic ones) drew was that the job wasn’t getting done. The problem was that the Review was the focal point for every kind of analysis of what was wrong with the discipline because it was quite literally the voice of the discipline. Whatever hope there may have been that Perspectives might provide some relief for various "dissatisfactions" was then freighted with so much baggage that it should come as no surprise that no one quite knew what to make of the endeavor beyond repeating the sorts of platitudes that launched the Review a century earlier. It should also come as no surprise that Perspectives might – ironically – become yet another forum for the disciplinary introspection, a ‘public space’ for the unhappiness, that drove its invention. And so it was: when James Johnson took over editorship of the new journal, he could not but help note that it had developed a “schizophrenic" character, with so many of the articles being "inward looking… considerations of past or ongoing practice within the discipline," rather than "outward looking" towards the "first order problems" of the world of politics (Johnson 2006, 2). In responding to the call for making political science more accessible to a broader public both within and outside of the academy, political scientists continued to debate what might make political science more accessible to a broader public both within and outside of the academy.

No doubt mindful of the irony (or perhaps wary of allowing Perspectives to become a disciplinary hall-of-mirrors – and not a fun-house kind?), Johnson encouraged contributors to
"identify and contest the edges and fissures of the discipline" by advancing "first-order political analyses of significant issues," and although he did acknowledge that introspective works might be useful if they “try directly to renovate old notions of who we are or advance new ones,” the operative assumption was that the received ways of talking about disciplinary identity were not "the only – or even the best" approach to realizing the discipline’s purposes. But there is more here than this appeal to staying on task reveals, and disentangling the levels of analysis problem may be helpful in getting at those more fundamental issues.

Briefly: the constitutive foundation of academic political science is that the first order discourse of politics is supposed to be served by the second order discourse of disciplinary inquiry, but it is precisely because that has not happened that political scientists have taken up the challenge of explaining and righting that failure via third order discourse on the identity of political science itself. Johnson’s account of the problem of identity talk is that it distracts from the work of analyzing politics, and it most certainly does, but it is the assumption that first order inquiry “is substantively important both to political scientists and, at least potentially, to readers beyond the play or even the academy” that is really at issue. It may well be that the best work done by political scientists teaches us a good deal about how politics works (and indeed as we shall later see, my criticism of identity talk presupposes that claim), and it may well be that the best work about how politics works ought to be of interest both within and outside of the academy, but ought does not imply is, and what drives disciplinary identity-talk is a species of discourse no less (and no less ironically?) driven by the ‘analysis of significant issues.’ In this case the significant issue is explaining why what ought to be of interest ‘both within and outside of the academy’ is, in fact, not. The difficulty with Johnson’s admonition is not (again) that it is wrong about identity talk being an unnecessary distraction from doing good political science; it is that it assumes that doing good political science is sufficient for realizing the discipline’s constitutive purposes. But that is the same assumption that informed the establishment of the Review, it is the same assumption that informed the “vague dissatisfactions” with the Review, and it is – now – the same assumption that informs the content of Perspectives. To argue for what is ‘substantively important’ as the way of making good on the discipline’s responsibilities is not to refuse to play by the rules of identity talk, but to declare some work trump in the game. It isn’t changing the game, it is modifying the definition of what constitutes a winning hand. All of which returns us to the question with which this discussion of the Review and Perspectives began: how exactly would Perspectives advance the tasks of the Review beyond what the Review was already doing?

I have pushed this argument far enough to make the point at hand, and criticizing Jim Johnson’s understanding of what constitutes good political science, or specifying the kinds of conceptual gymnastics required to prop up any meaningful distinction between the Review and Perspectives – including some real howlers of contradiction and absurdity, is not the issue. The issue is that the discourse of identity (which now, it has to be recognized, also includes surreptitious forms of identity talk in supposed arguments for anti-identity) shares a common belief in the idea that fixing political science so that political science can fix politics is a chimera. There are however good reasons for doubting that this is in fact the case, not the least of which is that just about everything that the discipline of political science has done has been indicted as a cause of failure. Epistemic initiatives abound, yet despite the fact that political science has reconceptualized, redefined, retheorized, what ‘politics’ is, and changed, shifted,
contested, abandoned, invented, qualified, insisted on, and denied which ‘significant issues’ the
discipline should study, the idea remains a chimera. Cognitive initiatives abound, yet despite the
fact that political science has analyzed, dissected, disputed, borrowed, critiqued, used, disdained,
created, merged, parsed, and repudiated just about every methodological and metatheoretical
approach that has appeared in the annals of intellectual history, the idea remains a chimera. And
distributive initiatives abound, yet despite the fact that political science has invited, taught,
socialized, indoctrinated, educated, prodded, edified, obscured, insinuated, charged, imposed
upon, pressed, dismissed, indulged, offended, chided, instructed, imbued, and initiated
generations of teachers, scholars, students, leaders, bureaucrats, politicians, citizens, the idea
remains a chimera. It simply beggars the imagination to believe that the committed efforts of tens
of thousands of political scientists, over a century of generations, have been so inept as to
repeatedly miss some key way of conceptualizing the domain of political science, or the right
method or philosophy of inquiry, or the right technique for the right audience, that would enable
the discipline (as one of the founders put it), “to assume and maintain a leadership… that can be
subject to no dispute” (Willoughby 1904, 11), or perhaps less grandiosely, to just create a
journal that could “take its place among the special publications of the country” (Willoughby
1906, 23).

This characterization is arguably overstated, but it is intended for emphatic effect. There
is more than enough material from the history of political science that could be mustered for
narratives of achievement, success, and even triumph, and in my conclusion I will suggest that
some of those narratives might be usefully deployed as alternatives to the story of unmitigated
failure (or perhaps more generously unrequited hope) implied in the logic of disciplinary identity
talk. Yet there is nothing inconsistent in recognizing that political science may have reasons for
celebration, and recognizing that, as John Gunnell (again) (2004, 5-6) succinctly put it, “Self
consciousness and concern about its relationship to politics has significantly informed political
science’s successive crises of identity, and the issue of this relationship has, from the beginning,
been an important theme in the discourse of the field as well as in historical accounts of the
discipline.” But parsing the issue and narrowing its focus does not diminish its sweeping
implications, and it may even make them even more critical. The significant slippage between
the triumphs of political science and the regular anxieties and occasionally disruptive if not
destructive paroxysms of radical identity contestations – as for example over epistemic questions
about “the state,” and pluralism” in the early history of the discipline, over cognitive questions
about “method” and “knowledge” in the behavioral movement and its oppositions, and over
distributive questions (and just about everything else) in the upheavals of the New Caucus and
Perestroika periods, when added to the slippage between the comprehensive reach of identity
agitations and (again) the fact that those agitations have changed the discipline in comprehensive
ways but without success in promoting the fundamental goal of creating a well-ordered political
science that is ‘more accessible and influential beyond the academy,’ suggests that perhaps the
source of the difficulty is that the goal is not a chimera, but a canard. The reason that fixing
political science so that political science can fix politics hasn’t worked is not because it can’t
work; it is because all of the extant evidence suggests that what partisans of an ‘accessible’
political science want is not what the discipline’s publics want. Not to put too fine a point on it,
or to push the metaphor too far, but while political scientists were arguing about how to perfect
the discipline’s three point jump shot, all the other team wanted to learn from political science
was how to connect with the ball enough to get on base, if not hit home runs. A good three point jumper may be a beautiful and useful thing, but not if baseball is the game.

In these circumstances even a well ordered political science cannot work. But however much ‘self consciousness and concern about its relationship to politics’ has been central to the discipline’s crises of identity, the belief that fixing political science to address that relationship is a chimera is not in fact genetic to or a conceptually necessary feature of that self consciousness and concern. Political science only became a “congenitally unsettled discipline” after it became evident that the project had failed despite the establishment of a disciplinary arrangement that was by every reasonable measure – including many that contemporary critics of the discipline would have to acknowledge – a model of what a discipline that is ‘more accessible and influential beyond the academy’ looks like. “Fixing political science” in other words became a chimera only after some very good fixes failed, and political scientists blamed themselves. Then it turned into the canard it remains today. The moment can be readily marked: it was in the context of Norman Foerster’s “first rough cultural settlement” for modern higher education, and the disciplinary crystallization of that moment is a little known but enormously influential and important initiative of the American Political Science Association: the Committee on Policy of 1930.

3. A Public Political Science -- and its Discontents

Imagine a well-constituted political science, complete with arrangements that demonstrate both the means and continuing potential of being ‘more accessible and influential beyond the academy.’ We can perhaps quibble about the details, but if we preserve the primary institutional structures of disciplinary identity – centered in institutions of higher education, organized through an association of those with a common interest (here, in politics), working to teach citizens and civic leaders, to train experts and future scholars, to lend expertise wherever possible, and disseminating through public journals and other publications the very best work being done in the discipline – then make them open and accessible to anyone and everyone interested and willing (and of course able, but in a way that requires only an educational preparation that is in principle ‘democratic’), what we have would be something that even the most hardened critic of disciplinary failure might acknowledge as a hopeful, if not a successful, model a well ordered political science in practice.

Consider this version of that ideal: Start with the governing bodies and general membership of the American Political Science Association. Imagine the APSA Council (or its predecessor forms, like the Executive Council) and a general membership comprised of a majority of non-academics, and the APSA Presidency filled, over the course of a dozen years, with a half-dozen people from non-academic walks of life. Consider, too, a more expansively accessible version of the APSR (or, to make the picture perhaps more realistic, a version of Perspectives on Politics): less than half of the material in the journal (say, about 40%) consists of ‘research’ of the sort with which we are familiar – only the very best gets published, and the rest is made up of a rich and varied collection of commentaries and notes on legislation, domestic, foreign, and international political developments, public administration, local and municipal government, judicial affairs – and of course book reviews of recently published works of potential interest. Moreover, the demographic distribution of authorship complements the demographic distribution of membership; most (say, 2/3?) of these pieces, including the ‘lead
articles,’ are written by an eclectic group of people including bureaucrats, librarians, legislative aides, members of private social clubs, and numerous others, while members of the professoriate round up the authorship of the remaining work.

What is most provocative about this model is not just that it stands in sharp contrast with the current sociology of academic political science, but that it actually embodies the model of disciplinary identity that defined the American Political Science Association at its founding. Of the 15-committee members who produced the report (submitted to the American Historical Association and the American Economic Association) promoting the establishment of the APSA, only 7 were academics (see Willoughby 1904a, 7). In 1905, the year the establishment of the Review was under consideration, about 2/3 of the Association’s 307 members did not hold academic positions. And even after it began publication the contents of the Review itself reflected both the demographics and the potential range of interests of the Association’s diverse membership. In the first five volumes of the APSR, 2/3 of the ‘leading articles’ were penned by non-academics, no more than 40% of the journal’s content was given over to this kind of research work, and indeed over the years as the discipline matured, space allotted to these pieces actually varied at far lower levels (Zink 1950, 261). Recognizing this throws into even sharper relief the important role of non-academics in the discipline’s identity: in fact, when one totes up the authorship of all of the various kinds of works published in the Review, it was non-academics who dominated the pages of the journal.

It should be clearly understood that the diversity of the discipline’s publics was not merely a matter of historical contingency, an example of a discipline that was moving from “amateur” to “professional” status (see for example Furner 1975, Bledstein 1976, Haskell 1977); it was, rather, an intended and constitutive characteristic of American “professional” political science at its founding. This is not to say that there weren’t any operative distinctions between academics and non-academics. The APSR was, and has more or less always remained, under the control of academics: W. W. Willoughby, the long-serving first editor of the journal (1906-1916) was an academic, as were 7 of the 8 original members of the Board of Editors (Front Matter 1906). This may have been a matter of promoting some degree of “quality control”; academics, after all, would have been arguably best-situated (by employment, if not vocation) to follow ongoing intellectual developments in the field, but – and this is one of the more interesting puzzles about the early APSA – this did not mean favoring “academic” endeavors over others. Quite the contrary:

When “W.W.” (as his contemporaries referred to him [Leonard 2002, 430]) asserted that the Review “promises to take its place among the special publications of the country” (Willoughby 1906, 23), he seemed to imply that there was a ready-made audience for whom the Review would have authoritative standing, and that this audience would include people with some significant political influence. Which “special publications” the founders were thinking about isn’t clear, but there are a number of points we can triangulate to narrow the possibilities. It is fully doubtful – especially given their analyses of American political culture—that the founders were considering popular mass publications of the day, such as The Ladies Home Journal, which had a nationally-leading circulation of 850,000 in 1900. These journals would have appealed to a public that was not (or more generously, perhaps, not yet) ready or able to appreciate what political science might offer. It is also unlikely they had in mind elite-oriented, intellectual journals like Harper’s, The Atlantic, or Scribners, the most popular of which typically had a circulation of well under 100,000 (Mintz 2003). Targeting the APSR at the
subscriber demographic of this group would have been arguably right given the intended audience of the Review and membership of the Association—“those who are more immediately responsible for the solution of the many pressing political problems of the day,” as Frank Goodnow, the first President of the Association put it in the Association’s first presidential address, but the particular content of such journals would have been insufficiently “specialized” to serve as peers for the APSR. At the same time, “traditional” academic journals were probably not what they had in mind: these were (to use a later critic’s description) nothing more that publications for “insular societies” (Jacoby 1987, 7). But perhaps the founders weren’t thinking of peers; perhaps they only thought of other journals as defining by contrast what was to be distinctive about the APSR. Perhaps it was meant to be a peerless “special publication,” a possibility intimated by a later APSA committee (now ironically reflecting on the falterings of the founders’ ideals), which suggested that any meaningful measure of the Association’s success had to be “determined to a great extent by the size and quality of its membership,” and the readership of the Review (Committee on Policy [hereafter, COP] 1930, 17; my emphasis).

By the measure of diversity in membership and authorship, the initial years of the Association and the journal seemed to bode well for the future, although as we shall shortly see, the problem of “size and quality” of the membership would soon eclipse the merits of diversity. In any case, those changes were still over the immediate horizon, and at least initially the APSA and the APSR appeared to have established a workable model for an unprecedented kind of disciplinary endeavor that had a distinctly defined constitutive purpose. It was certainly not the case that this ideal was crafted from ignorance. The founders of the APSA were no doubt familiar with “academic” journals and “academic” approaches to social and political inquiry. Many had been educated in European institutions, and they must have known the kind of work that appeared in journals of various European “academies.” They were also no doubt familiar with—and some of the founders had published in—the existing “academic” journals in the United States, including, most proximately, the established American political science journals, Political Science Quarterly (established in 1886), and The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science (established 1889), as well as others like the American Historical Review (established 1885) of the American Historical Association (one of the disciplinary homes, along with the American Economics Association, where many of the APSA’s founders had been members).

It is also reasonable to believe that when the establishment of APSR was under discussion, the participants were well aware, as the editors of PSQ put it in their 10th anniversary (1895) issue, that “In respect to the personnel of the body of contributors, the scope and purpose of [journals like] the Quarterly would justify a presumption that the great majority of those who have written would be found in the ranks of college and university instructors.” This was “especially probable” given the “notable development of the university spirit in America during recent years.” Yet—perhaps surprisingly by our lights—the editors of PSQ also boasted “the presumption proves well founded” only in “The development of theory,” which had been “for the most part in the hands of the scientists pure and simple.” In other areas, however, “especially happy results” had been realized by the fact that of the journal’s “lead articles[,] fully one-half have been contributed by writers outside the ranks of educators” (Editors 1895, 571-572 passim; my insertions). And if the editors of PSQ—which was basically a house-project of the political scientists at Columbia—were happy with the fact that half the leading articles came from non-academics, the founders of the APSA must have been particularly pleased that they were able to attract such a diverse and active membership, also fully on display in the pages of
the APSR, which exceeded both PSQ and The Annals in the percentage of non-academic contributors. Thus, while it may well have been that in these early years “most of the really scholarly articles in political science continued to appear in the Quarterly or the Annals, rather than the Review” (Somit and Tanenhaus 1967, 53), it would be the worst sort of anachronism to assume that this was a problem awaiting resolution. In fact, for decades to come this was arguably less a cause for concern than a matter for celebration – and as it turned out, a model for aspiration even when it could not be realized.

It wasn’t for want of understanding, or commitment, or material, or even numbers of trained scholars, that the profession took on a form that does not easily comport with our understanding of an academic discipline today. All of the evidence suggests that this was a well-informed, critically self-aware, thoughtfully conceptualized project, not a make-shift, make-work, transient arrangement in the form of a temporary holding company awaiting full incorporation and institutionalization. Perhaps the best evidence for this, and perhaps the best description of what a public, political, political science journal was supposed to be, was penned a good quarter century after the Review was founded – and as it turns out (again, ironically) at a critical moment of crisis for that model. As Frederic Ogg, the journal’s third (and longest serving) Editor (1926-1949) put it in 1930, “that the journal’s founders planned wisely is evidenced by the extent to which editorial policy still follows the lines which they mapped out” (Ogg 1930, 189). As Ogg described it, this policy entailed a self-consciously crafted model of the “typical American learned journal,” which was distinctively different than the journals of “the typical European academy.” For example, US disciplinary journals had a “necessary reliance...upon the support of lay members,” as well as “teachers actuated by certain special, and more or less frankly professional, purposes.” What this meant was that “the task of the American journal” involved keeping “its readers abreast of the latest advances in the discipline,” but in a manner not “so technical...as to repel the intelligent but non-specialist reader,” as well as serving “the teacher by giving him informing articles,” “book reviews and biographical lists,” “texts of indispensable documents,” and occasional “discussions of instructional methods and objectives” (Ogg 1930, 188 passim). Servicing the needs and interests of the membership also included providing “News and Notes” about the activities and health of Association members, notifications and summaries of various political and professional events, and after the Association’s report on its annual meeting, Proceedings of the American Political Science Association, was folded into the Review in 1914, there were also minutes, programs, and reports from that gathering, too. (Most of this later sort of material would eventually be spun off [in 1968] to PS – but that was many years away, well after the founder’s model had been long buried and forgotten under the accumulated debris of 30 years of institutional change).

Thus: accessible writing on topical and theoretical issues, informative content on current political and disciplinary developments, material that addressed the interests of a broadly defined, as well as a more narrowly academic, public: This was the model of a journal for men and women who were, as John Gunnell noted, “united by their dissatisfaction with the discipline’s capacity to have an impact on politics” (Gunnell 2005, 5), and it was a model they believed – and their successors apparently continue to believe – could help create “opportunities which ought to be availed of, both by those engaged in the work of instruction in political science and by those who are more immediately responsible for the solution of the many pressing political problems of the day” (Goodnow 1905, 12). But while making the discipline and the journal accessible to a broad cross-section of academics and non-academics may have been useful (and perhaps even necessary) to the success of the founders’ ideals, it did not prove
sufficient for that success. And understanding how that became evident suggests some critical historiographical and analytical lessons for making sense of the relationship between political science and its publics -- and most importantly for our purposes, how the collapse of a disciplinary identity that was ‘more accessible and influential beyond the academy’ was turned into the chimeric belief that the discipline itself was to blame.

The main problem was that by the linked measure of “size and quality” of the membership and readership, the APSA and the APSR were never really ‘successful.’ In the first few years, ‘quality’ concerns might have been mitigated by the achievements of demographic diversity, although numbers were always a problem. But commitment to the endeavor generated enough enthusiasm to support repeatedly securing loans to finance the publication of the Review.

Soon enough, growth in the membership, from a scant 400 at the founding to more than 1300 in 1910, provided some breathing room, and it must have come as a significant relief when in that year “The treasurer reported that for the first time since beginning of the publication of the Review, the receipts of the Association for the year had equaled its expenses” (Willoughby 1910, 37). Still, the growth in membership, and relief from taking loans to continue publication of the Review, were very small victories in the grand scheme of the founder’s plans. In any case it would be another 20 years before the Review was financially stable, and even after 1910 the burden of publishing the Review was a regular topic of business at Association meetings. But there would soon be cause enough to turn these forward-looking dispositions of the founding generation into an emerging sensibility about critical threats to the discipline’s mission. By the mid 1920’s that sensibility began generating an energetic discourse of disciplinary improvement, and in the early 30’s – effectively, a disciplinary-specific expression of Foerster’s “first rough cultural settlement” for modern higher education – the American Political Science Association undertook a comprehensive review of where it should go given the experience of where it had – and had not – been.

The numbers problem turned from an ongoing challenge into a worry when, after the initial spurt of new memberships through the mid-teens, there was a noticeable flattening of membership growth right into the mid-1920’s (Gaus 1934, 729). Moreover, ‘quantity’ concerns were exacerbated by losses on the ‘quality’ side of the membership equation as well. Within a decade of its founding, “public officials and others interested in political affairs” had become “a relatively small portion” of the Association membership and Review contributors “and their places have not been taken by others of like professions or vocations.” Yet these developments hadn’t rendered completely moot the hopes of the founders in fulfilling the extra-academic responsibilities of the discipline, for "On the other hand, many members of the Association have had an active influence in public affairs; and cooperation between the student in public officials is much greater than it was" (Fairlie 1930, 2).

Fairlie’s conclusion (1930, 4) that "The Association may be said to have fully justified its formation, to be firmly established, and may well look forward to continued life, with an expanding field of usefulness" was however a rather wishful interpretation that was already looking out-of-date by a period of at least five to seven years. A recurrent theme at the APSA annual meeting in the early years was the recruitment of new members, but it eventually came to be recognized that “Efforts to enlarge the membership of the Association from the public at large have met with very little success” (COP 1930, 17). One of the more interesting – and perhaps from our (clearly anachronistic!) perspective, amusing -- efforts to do something radically innovative to try to bolster the numbers was attempted in 1929. Apparently, however, sending to
prospective members free copies of the *Review* along with letters of invitation from both Association and local political notables did not produce the desired effect; of 500 “good prospects” in the Pittsburgh area who in 1929 received these packages, only 12 signed on as new members (COP 1930, 17). I doubt that many political scientists today would be bold enough to suggest a similar strategy – no matter which of the discipline’s main journals might be used.

What all of this meant was that changes in the composition of the Association’s membership and the *Review’s* readership “made the Association more fully than ever a professional academic society” (Gaus 1934, 733; my emphasis). This was of course a very serious challenge to the founders’ hopes for a broad public profile for the discipline. But what made matters even worse was that being “a professional academic society,” or even “the chief professional organization of college and university teachers of political science” (COP 1930, 16) did not even guarantee that the Association, or the discipline more generally, was secure within the academy. It fact, over the first few decades of the 20th century, the expansion of the American Political Science Association and the discipline of political science did not keep pace with the expansion of American higher education. As a result, when “compared with other groups of teachers in the social sciences” or “non-social-science departments,” “the number of political science teachers [in colleges and universities] appears small” (Gaus 1934, 732 my insertion). Partisans of the discipline, like Charles Merriam, might then boast that “The number of serious students of politics is obviously increasing,” but this was hardly a robust endorsement of the discipline’s *bona fides*, qualified as it also was by the “striking fact” that those numbers were “still small and pitifully him to inadequate to the task they undertake” (Merriam 1926, 3).

It was certainly not news that academic institutions were not supportive of the public presence of political science. Back in 1915, Charles Haines (reporting then for the committee he chaired on political science instruction in higher education) said that the standing of political science in colleges and universities was thin enough “to support the judgment that far too few of our higher institutions have recognized the high responsibilities of training either for citizenship or the public service” (Haines 1915, 355). A decade and a half later, matters apparently hadn’t changed much for the better. In 1931, “The Sub Committee on Political Education also reported upon its efforts to overcome the inadequate recognition of political science in the curricula of normal schools, teachers colleges, and courses of study in the secondary and elementary schools” (Progress Report COP 1931, 1062). And even among those who did take up the challenge of teaching political science, it seemed “however, that [the Association] by no means embraces all of the teachers of political science subjects.” In fact, “Nearly one-half of college and university teachers” who took the trouble to respond to an Association survey in the late 1920s were not members of the Association, and as if to emphasize its diminished public profile within the academy, the Association noted that “Comparatively few persons engaged in teaching government in the elementary and secondary schools” had become members either (COP 1930, 16).

To add insult to injury -- as if it weren’t enough that discipline was both shrinking in its non-academic appeal, and failing to grow within the academic community -- there were additional complicating issues related to the problematic organization of higher education in the United States. Some of these seemed to derive from trying to graft a German-influenced model of academic practice in the *University*, after which many of the structures of the modern academic disciplines were fashioned, on to the American model of the *College*. (Here I follow the lead of Turner and Bernard 2000).
One problem was the split between graduate and undergraduate education – the first emphasizing specialization, and the other tending to emphasize “broad grasp and integration of knowledge” (Turner and Bernard 2000, 224). By the 1920’s, as both the number of American colleges and universities increased, and the numbers of students swelled, the idea that the demands of ‘teaching’ might interfere in ‘research’ became an increasingly common concern. In his 1928 APSA Presidential Address, Jesse Reeves (1929, 15) lamented that of those "eminent American historians” who had done so much to advance the understanding of American politics, "it is to be noticed that few have occupied academic positions,” and “none of these lived in an environment wherein a heavy "teaching -- load" (the phrase of iniquitous import, as smug sounding as foot -- pounds or ton -- miles!) and a small salary would have made anything more than a desire of accomplishing a magnum opus a bitter irony. " But Reeves was not idiosyncratic in his complaints about the demands of teaching; two years earlier, Charles Beard (1927, 8) – in his APSA Presidential address – noted that among the "several academic usages detrimental to creative thinking” the first of those “is the weight of teaching hours.”

A related problem was that the PhD was becoming the gateway degree to employment in the American academy, and this had a number of problematic implications. One was that because of pressures to service the burgeoning institutional growth and growing populations of college students, the interests of higher education administration were developing in directions at odds with the conditions conducive to excellence in training future scholars. Beard complained that "It does not appear in the records that any college or university in the country gives its instructors in government either the leisure or the money necessary to travel and observe political institutions at work in all parts of the earth,” and that “we seldom promote a lively young instructor to a position of comfort and financial ease until he has crippled his mind by writing textbooks acceptable to the president and trustees or has grown so old that the fiery hopes of youth out of which the future is made have died down into the dull embers of reminiscence.” Moreover, as both Beard and Reeves observed, trying to fill so many academic positions meant that “by making success in some minute and unimportant academic study the gateway of admission to the profession, we admit to our fellowship students with no claims whatever to capacity for independent thought, venturesome exploration, or stimulating speculation” (Beard 1927, 8-9), and “by subsidizing so generally all aspirants to advance study, the graduate schools may find themselves… [promoting] a policy which is far from one attracting the best minds” (Reeves 1929, 13).

It may well have been that these issues would have never develop into such prominent concerns had they not been complemented by the simultaneous failure of institutions of higher education to recognize the importance of civic education (which we already saw), and the “revaluations” (Freund 1916, 1) of disciplinary purposes ratcheted by the upheavals of the so-called Great War, which drove concerns about “what help can political science give in this emergency? (Ford 1920, 2; see also Smith 1918, Newell 1919). But there was more: not only was political science needed and not appreciated, but there was also a broad anti-academic movement afoot, and it was not only the tasks of civic education, and the tasks of service through research, and the challenges of meeting the post-war needs of the polity that were at issue, but the very substance of the work of political science was in question. In the 1913 Proceedings it was reported that the Association established a committee to “examine and report on the present situation in American educational institutions anise to liberty of thought, freedom of speech, and
security of tenure for teachers of political science” (Dodd 1913, 42). In the May 1916 issue of the APSR, the Association published – in a separately bound part of the issue, no less -- the "General Report of the Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure" which presented the findings of the committee established at the 1913 meeting. The report read that “The committee… had scarcely been constituted when a number of cases… were brought to its attention,” ranging from "dismissals of individual professors to dismissal or resignation of groups of professors, and including also the dismissal of a university president" (Prefatory Note 1916, 4). What’s more, between these dates the American Association of University Professors was also (in 1915) established. As Merriam (1925, 3-4) would later observe, the “popular tendency toward political fundamentalism,” one of the most significant effects of which is “indirect, or even direct, suppression of speech or inquiry,” was a real and (apparently now) a long-term threat to “the substantial progress and solid achievement… of those who aided in launching the Association.” “If we lose freedom of speech in the quest for scientific truth,” Merriam worried, “our descendants will find it necessary to retrace some painful steps over a flinty way.”

Taken together, all of these developments conspired to give many of those who believed that the discipline had been more or less established on a sound, workable, normatively justified, and promising footing, cause for concern. As the Association approached its third decade, it was difficult to avoid the conclusion that something was deeply amiss. In the American ‘marketplace of ideas,’ political science did not ‘assume and maintain a leadership… that can be subject to no dispute.’ Quite the contrary. Yet no one seemed to doubt that it should, even in the face of so much counter-evidence. The Review was serving its real and intended publics. The Association was promoting the real and intended purposes of engaging a broad cross-section of the populace. Education for citizenship, education for expert service to the state, education for producing new generations of scholars who could continue the work of the discipline, and excellent scholarship, including "many studies of great value" written by political scientists (COP 1930, 7): all of the arrangements that could be reasonably expected to meet the challenge of securing the discipline’s political purposes seemed to be in place. And yet those promising arrangements were being compromised, and battered, and subverted by forces beyond the control or the intentions of the members of the guild. And so by the early 1920’s there was a noticeable shift in the tone of the obligatory paeans to the discipline’s achievements; what was once thought to be a bright future now began to look like a promising past in crisis. The change would prove portentous: soon enough, the promising past in crisis would give way to the chimera of an ideal that no one seemed to have gotten quite right. That time, however, was not the time our predecessors believed they were in.

Trying to make the most they could of what was clearly a very bad situation, the Association embarked on what must be in retrospect recognized as an incredibly generous – and an incredibly problematic -- approach to the failure of the discipline’s mission. Rather than attributing that failure – as they should have -- to the ongoing and in some ways worsening deficiencies of American politics that informed the establishment of modern higher education and academic political science in the first place, the Association instead launched what would become a nearly decade-long, comprehensive disciplinary stock-taking. "Probably the most important action taken at the [1927] meeting from the standpoint of the future of the Association," JR Hayden reported, "was the creation of the committee on Association policy"
intended to "survey the problems of research, instruction, and publication in the field of government, with a view to enlarging the activities and increasing the efficiency of the Association in relation to its members and the public" (Hayden 1927, 154). It would prove to be one of those rare predictions made by political scientists that actually turn out to be right.

Under the auspices of the aptly named Committee on Policy (hereafter, COP), the Association proposed “to survey the field of political science activity” and “to analyze the part now played therein by the Association” with the specific intention of reviving the discipline’s defining ambitions. For the intent of the survey was not merely to catalog, let alone embrace or promote the status quo, but “to make recommendations as to ways in which the Association might be made to contribute more to the solution of problems of government, politics, and administration which admittedly are so close to the welfare of this and other peoples” (COP 1930, 1).

The Committee held fast to the founders’ hope that the “effectiveness of the work now done by political scientists may be increased, to the lasting benefit of the whole commonwealth” (COP 1930, 3), but of course the realities on the ground were not very promising. Nonetheless, the Association redoubled its efforts, and the results were emphases both familiar to us (although mostly, I think, in misinterpreted forms) as well as some that carried on for decades to become practices from the past that we have (perhaps conveniently) reinterpreted as legacies of failure.

Perhaps the most familiar of these emphases was that the discipline doubled-down on doing the best research possible. The theme of doing good science was, and continues to be, a staple point of emphasis in just about every Presidential address delivered to the Association, but in the early 20’s a systematically self-conscious revaluation of research was launched because, it was thought, the context was one in which “most of [the] problems [in politics and administration] require immediate action,” yet “everyday decisions of great public importance [were being] made without adequate knowledge of the facts and theories that are involved.” What this meant was that “the great need of the hour is the development of a scientific technique and methodology for political science,” and as it is “the function of political science to provide this science of politics” because “those in charge of public affairs rarely have the time and opportunity for political research,” this set “the burden primarily upon the teacher and the scholar.” This was not science for its own sake, it was science to solve problems in politics. Thus – once again reiterating the valorization of political sovereignty and higher education -- the Association asserted its special responsibility in this matter by claiming that "Until these problems are more vigorously and successfully attacked, political science cannot make any substantial contribution to the success of our political democracy" (Hall 1924, 119-120)

This was a sentiment that would I think warm the cockles of even the most hardened Perestroikan’s heart. And if it weren’t for the fact that the problem solving intentions of this ‘science of politics’ have been obscured by our preoccupation with reading anachronistic constructions backwards into the initiatives that followed, conceptions of science our predecessors did not in fact hold, we might better interpret the history of the National Conferences on the Science of Politics (1922, 1923, 1924), the creation of the Social Science Research Council (1923), and other initiatives intended to boost the epistemic authority of the discipline, as expressions of intentions to preserve the best of the discipline, instead of radical departures from its constitutive purposes.
We might also perhaps understand that moving the task of ‘educating experts’ into a distinctive yet related field of disciplinary work, a process more or less complete by the mid 1920’s, was not meant to marginalize that task, but to enable its *more effective and efficient* realization. Any other reading does not make sense given the context of perceptions that there were obvious practical deficiencies in administrative management leading up to, during, and of course after the Great War. Back in 1914 Edward Fitzpatrick had called for the establishment of dedicated schools of public administration, arguing that “Nowhere in the United States is there a training school for public service in connection with the University” (Fitzpatrick 1914, 674). And when the Committee on Policy (in Reed 1931, 1061) “suggested that there was a possibility that those interested in public administration would split off from the Association and form an association of their own,” that was because it was “felt that the Review, on its present lines, does not and perhaps cannot, adequately meet the needs of this field” -- not because the discipline was moving away from its commitments in this matter.

All of the recommendations made by the Committee -- encouraging better research, better education, better policies and procedures for recruiting and retaining academic personnel, and last but not least, better communications with the discipline’s various publics through the Review -- suggest that by 1930 the leadership of the American Political Science Association had reached the point where they believed that conditions that informed the buoyant optimism of the past had changed, and that a sharper, more focused, more critically self conscious effort was required to meet the challenges of new and very different circumstances. But they did not believe that this required changing the discipline – only later would this critical moment of revaluation be mistakenly interpreted as attempts to “recast the discipline” (see Somit and Tanenhaus 1967, 87-100). Perhaps the best evidence for recognizing the continuity between the founders’ vision and the second generation’s hopes was the fact that the Review remained virtually unchanged right through to the beginning of the Cold War. Indeed, what the *Review* was in 1906, or 1916, or 1926, or 1936 – in fact, what the journal more or less remained right up until Frederick Ogg stepped down in 1949 -- was exactly what a disciplinary journal that was ‘accessible and influential beyond the academy’ might be.

The difference between how we think about the problem of disciplinary identity, and how the members of the second generation thought about the problem of disciplinary identity, is that we seem to believe that fixing the *failings of the discipline* is the only way to enable it to fix politics, while our predecessors believed that the only way to fix the *worsening circumstances of politics* was to do everything possible to preserve the best of what the discipline could do. Where we demand new journals and new disciplinary arrangements to do what the ‘old’ ones apparently could not, they tried to preserve what they knew had already worked *even in circumstances that conspired against further success*. There may be no better evidence of this difference – and this brings us back to where we began this historiographical journey – than in the fact that many of us believe that Perspectives will have to do the work that the Review does not, while the second generation believed that the Review could do more of the work it once had done, and might again do. Not only did the Review remain more or less the same in its substance for two more decades, but one of the most significant initiatives the Committee established, after years of struggling to pay for the Review, after years of watching its readership change, after years of worry that it would become an ‘academic journal’ like so many others -- was to publish it *more often* as the best way to make it “render wider and more effective service” (Ogg 1930, 187).
From 1932 through 1949, the APSR was published bimonthly so that it might be able to better serve its various publics, even though it was becoming increasingly evident that political science could not keep the publics that it wanted, and the publics that it had did not want what political science could offer.

The establishment of the Committee on Policy represented a moment in the discourse of identity in political science when a belief in imminent success was supplanted by fears that the contributions of the discipline might not be appreciated and embraced. In 1941, the last of the Committee’s members to hold the Presidency of the Association, William Anderson, had to remind his colleagues that "the prospects of higher learning in general and of the social sciences in particular in the postwar world are [still?] none too bright," but that they should nonetheless "be of good cheer, but be also of great courage" (Anderson 1942, 16; my insertion). These were hardly the sentiments of someone who thought that the discipline had failed in some fundamentally correctable way – but these were also the sentiments of someone who was out of touch with an increasingly common discursive form in which political science took the blame for failing to figure out how to fix what was wrong with American politics. It was a bizarre change indeed that turned an effort to do some good into a force complicit in what it opposed. But perhaps if political scientists had taken their own inquiries more seriously, they might recognize that changing the discipline may be irrelevant to the task of changing politics – and they might also recognize that continuing to demand that the discipline change may also produce consequences antithetical to the goals they seek to promote.

4. Politics, not Political Science

Perhaps the most fundamental issue raised by the disciplines’ founder’s aspirations concerned the need for the discipline in the first place. Academic political science in United States was justified by an analysis suggesting that politics in America could not promote the realization of political progress.

If bold intentions were a sufficient guarantee of approval and support, the discipline of American political science might have become just what its founders intended it to be. But the political analysis that justified the discipline also presupposed a conception (or conceptions) of the purposes and ends of politics incommensurable with what the founders thought those ends ought to be.

For the first several years, there was good reason to believe that the discipline might have the kind of influence its partisans sought. When American politics did not quite change in the ways expected, and then changed in quite unexpected ways -- and that included developments in the way that higher education was both understood and practiced – it should perhaps of come as no surprise that proponents of political science might take up the task of rethinking how they could maintain the project they had inherited. Why the Committee on Policy expected a better response from its efforts is however surprising, especially given what they said about how little Americans know about politics, and about how American higher education catered to principles radically at odds with those it ostensibly embraced.

The Committee on Policy started as a concerted effort to respond to changes in the context in which the discipline was forced to work; the discourse it set into motion was one that turned the problem of identity in political science into a problem of political science.
Explaining this is at once difficult and surprisingly obvious. The difficult part is trying to understand how it is that political scientists do not typically make the connection between the failure of the discipline to make good on its public purposes, and the disdain for those kinds of conceptions that is rampant today, and has been rampant since the founders first criticized American politics. The fact of the matter is the findings of the research industry on American politics, on American culture, and on the character of American higher education, clearly demonstrates that, quite simply, too many Americans do not think of politics as promoting the commonweal, and that too many Americans think of the privileges of higher education as the opportunity to “get ahead” rather than "getting better." And it is perhaps all the more surprising that political science continues to blame itself for its failure to change American politics given the ways in which faculty almost always talk about their students, university administration, and public discourse about the purposes and functions of higher education: very little of that talk is flattering. It is just frankly bizarre that all of that is more or less put to the side when we take up the cudgels of disciplinary identity.

Explaining this is surprisingly obvious however because it appears that academics believe deeply and profoundly that what they do matters, and that -- to use the language of the Committee on Policy – the burden of showing how it matters falls “primarily upon the teacher and the scholar.” Seen from one perspective this could be interpreted as a remarkably generous sentiment, in the same way that picking up the challenge of trying to do political science better was a remarkably generous sentiment when it informed the work of the Committee on Policy. But the difference between the Committee on Policy and the way in which the discourse of identity in political science has taken shape over the years, is that perhaps having witnessed the failure of just about every approach, every kind of theoretical innovation, every kind of methodological practice, every kind of conceptual twist, we have come to believe that no one has quite discovered the right way to do things. For the Committee on Policy this was not the question – the question was figuring out how to convince those who had no interest in the findings of political science that those findings were worth taking seriously. The demand for good political science was not a demand to do something that hadn't been done before, it was a demand to work hard at showing that what the discipline had done, what it did offer, and what it could offer was potentially useful. And so in that sense the Committee was far more generous to its predecessors, to its contemporaries, and to its successors than its successors have been to their predecessors, their contemporaries, and no doubt to those who will succeed them.

In any case, there is no good reason for this kind of ungenerous blame when political scientists should be striving to identify the insights and lessons that the discipline has produced – even when those insights and lessons may not be evident or obvious to those who actually produce them. Criticism and critique is appropriate, but ungenerous attributions of failure are hardly the stuff of productive inquiry. We know that the research shows that serious questions can be raised about the interests that citizens have in public issues, that many students neither aspire to civic excellence or self improvement, and that American higher education has become a huge industry that often promotes goals radically at odds with its justified purposes. There is always something useful to be learned from thoughtful inquiry, even when it is wrong, but those are lessons that we ought to be conveying to those who do not share a belief in the constitutive purposes of promoting the commonweal through forms of higher education rather than dismissing those lessons because they haven't produced the desired effects. That is a bridge to nowhere – and those who travel on routes with bridges to nowhere often find themselves much worse off than they would have been if they had more carefully considered the travels of those...
who had gone before.

5. Where We Are, and Should Not Go

In his "Notes from the Editor" to the February 2003 issue of the APSR, Lee Sigelman welcomed readers "to the first ever February issue of the APSR" (III). Of course he should have added "since volume 44, some 53 years ago," for the APSR had a February issue since its inception, and published a February issue every year -- even after it started running bimonthly in 1932 (volume 26), until 1949 and Volume 44 when the Review returned to quarterly publication - - now without its February issue.

My point in bringing it to attention is not to upstage the Editor of the Review, but rather to suggest that the identity we share today, as both partisans and critics of the Review, if not the discipline writ large, seems to proceed apace without our being overly preoccupied with what our predecessors did – until we begin thinking about what is wrong, or right, with that identity. I will not suggest that Professor Sigelman intended to rewrite the history of the discipline by ignoring the APSR before 1950 – it was likely a completely innocent mistake – but given that the shift to a February publication date for the Review was “made to accommodate the APSA’s new Perspectives on Politics,” and the challenge of having two disciplinary journals is now “for the APSR… to claim, or to reclaim, the attention of those who in the past have opened up the APSR” for features that were being exported to Perspectives (Sigelman 2003, iii), all of those vexing questions about the purposes of these journals that we have been examining here must of necessity return.

It is of course purely coincidental but nonetheless interesting to note that 1950 was also the year that the APSR began to shed its ‘founding’ model, but an argument could be made that it is in fact the then- emerging model of a ‘new’ APSR to which readers of the APSR in 2003 had to be ‘reclaimed.’ But if the Review had to be of interest to those who hadn’t found much of interest there since, perhaps, 1950, the question begged here, as we have seen, is whether Perspectives could promote the purposes that the Review had supposedly dropped. The difficulty now, however, is that Perspectives – or any other disciplinary outlet, has to be understood as resolving a problem that the Review could not even when it was specifically designed ‘to make scholarly research more accessible and influential beyond the academy.’

By the argument and analysis I have advanced here, that is a task at which any journal in political science will likely fail. And the reason for that is the same reason that the work in the Review didn’t succeed: there were other interests, other concerns, other purposes that guided the discipline’s publics appropriation of what the discipline offered. The Review was the focal point for the discipline’s failure to correct those interests, those concerns, and those purposes. And critics of the Review (and the discipline generally) who were also partisans of Perspectives (and changing the discipline) would be wise to remember that even the best work in political science is unlikely to be useful to anyone who isn’t interested in the uses for which that work is intended. And so when Perspectives appears to be failing as well, we ought to think carefully about what that failure really means.

One thing it might mean is that the discipline is still securing its status and standing in a
context where its constitutive purposes are at odds with the incommensurable ideals to which many members of its publics subscribe. This is what the Committee on Policy recognized. Whether the task of preserving that standing is worth the effort to continue doing the best work one can, or whether the failure to promote the constitutive purposes of political sovereignty and higher education is cause for razing the discipline and starting anew, is not an issue I am prepared to argue here. What I am prepared to argue is that when we think about those alternatives, we ought to remember that sometimes institutions and practices may be loose enough to accommodate even incommensurable purposes — and that one potential outcome of trying too hard to be perfect in the game you believe is best may mean never getting in if everyone else is playing another game altogether.

We can argue about what it would take to do better political science, but we should disabuse ourselves of the idea that doing better political science will produce better politics. This is not to say that we should abandon the hope that it might — and that is the reason we would want to do better political science. But “better political science” is about better explanations, accounts, and interpretations of how politics works, and there is no method, no approach, no theory that can guarantee what is “better.” We have to make the best arguments we can, using the best tools we think appropriate, and then put them out for scrutiny. In fact, this is much of what we do and have done. But fixing political science will not fix politics — and fixing political science will not happen by arguing that the “best” work is work that will fix politics. If that means living with the contradiction of knowing that your best work — like the best work of generations of political scientists before you — will likely come to naught, that may be the price to pay for preserving the ideal. But we shouldn’t fool ourselves into believing that disciplinary self-preservation is bad faith choice for those who should be doing what our predecessors were too backwards and narrow minded to achieve. Once we fully accept that the problem for political science is politics, and that the problem of politics is not a problem of political science, we can relieve ourselves of the angst that informs our disciplinary identity talk, and get back to what holds us together: the belief that there is some value to higher education about politics, even in a thoroughly uninterested world.

1 This essay can be read as an examination of the phenomenon of disciplinary identity crisis. On the use of disciplinary history as a ‘historiography of problems’ for practitioners, see Farr 1995, 135-138
2 STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) disciplines are the best examples, and although they are not exempt from identity crises — as the evolution/creationism controversy, and the cosmology/deity controversy suggest — there are very good reasons having to do with the central themes of this essay that in part explain why this may be the case. On the evolution/creationism controversy, see Kitcher 1982. On the cosmology/deity controversy see Kraus 2012.
3 This would require a comparative analysis of the historiography of disciplinary identities. That is a project for which I have sketched the outline of an essay, but the empirical evidence for that project is at this point grounded in nothing but unsystematic, impressionistic, and anecdotal findings
4 This is a form of immanent critique: a critical — empirical reconstruction of disciplinary practices, informed by normative ideals about disciplinary purposes, grounds the projection of a prescriptive account of how political science (sometimes as inquiry, sometimes as profession) ought to be practiced.
5 Note here on current attacks on higher education, and how these are similar to the past.
6 What follows here is in a sense a specifically focused line of inquiry informed by the analytical framework intimated in Foerster’s study, and in Gunnell’s work. Foerster frames the issues as a ‘difference of opinion’ about ‘service’ and ‘power’; my intention is to show that disciplinary identity talk is an artifact of trying to preserve ‘service’ in the face of ‘power.’ Gunnell describes the condition as “congenital” because PS is a different order of discourse than politics. My intention is to show that it is the different purposes of higher education, not the fact that it is a different order of discourse, that is at issue.
I take all this to be complementary to if not always consistent with the arguments that Foerster and Gunnell make.

On Foerster: his “American State University” can be read as a prototype of the “crisis of the university” literature, which grew increasingly large after the 1930’s, and with which we are so familiar today. It is a particularly provocative read for two reasons: one is that Foerster is writing at the moment that serious doubts about the project of reform, and significant adjustments are being promoted in response, in American higher education (and we will examine some of these here). (See Foerster’s claim, “most of the criticism and most of the proposed reforms are shallow, concerned with the mechanism of education rather than its controlling spirit and ends.” Page 3). The second is that his reconstruction and critique of American higher education in the 1930’s could be, with a few minor editorial changes, easily passed as a critique of contemporary American higher education. In other words, Foerster’s book marks the moment when what appear to be resolvable difficulties for the identity of higher education and its disciplines turn out on closer examination to be recognized as congenital failures.

7 Foerster may have been specifically addressing the “state university,” but the analysis and critique did not preclude the “private” colleges and universities. The elasticity of the new model covered both types of institutions. See for example Foerster’s discussion of graduate education (pp 105-115), and his comment that the “evils” of modern higher education “have appeared… also in the privately endowed colleges and universities, some of which seem to have vied with the public institutions in the promotion of demoralizing purposes.” (Page 7)

8 Note on references to various works on the history of higher education, the social disciplines, and political science. See Farr (history of social sciences article) and Gunnell (imagining the American polity, last chapter) for discussions of this extensive literature.

9 Karl Polanyi (2001, especially 124-125) makes a complementary argument about the critical importance of the social sciences in advancing the forces of change in the nineteenth century. Later I will return to these arguments in accounting for the differences in identity discourse in the social sciences and the natural sciences.

10 What follows in the next few paragraphs is cribbed from Leonard 1995. For complementary accounts see Farr 1995, especially 142-147; Gunnell 2004, especially 53-99; Kaufman-Osborn 2006, especially 50-55. A list of useful related works, from TKO n22: “For accounts of the liberal arts colleges of the nineteenth century, as well as the emergence of universities and, more specifically, graduate programs in political science, beginning in the 1870s, see Robert Adcock, ‘The Emergence of Political Science as a Discipline: History and the Study of Politics in America, 1875-1910.’ History of Political Thought 24 (Autumn 2003): 481-508; Anna Hadow, Political Science in American Colleges and Universities, 1636-1900 (New York: D. Appleton-Century 1939); Ricci, Tragedy of Political Science, 29-56; Dorothy Ross, “The Development of the Social Sciences” in Discipline and History 81-104; Somit and Tanenhaus, Development of American Political Science, 11-41; Laurence Veysey, The Emergence of the American University (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965); and Dwight Waldo, “Political Science: Tradition, Discipline, Profession, Science, Enterprise” in Handbook of Political Science, 18-41.

11 Farr on the Enlightenment of Enthusiasm

12 Scholarly journals are not of course the only form of mediating relations between the publics of academic disciplines, but they are (at least in this historical context13) arguably the most prominent expression or embodiment of disciplinary identity. It may be that scholarly journals will lose the particular primacy I attribute to them here. Indeed, one consequence of addressing the contentions I examine might be a shift in the primary mediating practice in the relationships between the discipline and other social groups. Be that as it may, if my account here is sufficiently perspicuous it should also predict both the substance and the outcomes of those shifts -- even as it may itself be part of that process.

13 Johnson uses “second order” differently. He calls talk about PS second order, when in fact it is PS itself that is a second order discourse. I bury this in a footnote because raising it as a point of criticism would be needlessly gratuitous, especially as I agree with so much of what Johnson says. For a useful discussion of the levels of analyses for orders of discourse, see Gunnell, Orders of Discourse.

14 The irony is that Perspectives was supposed to provide an outlet for purposes that the Review did not serve, but since it was an artifact of the failure of political scientists to settle the question of how those purposes are best served, it should come as no surprise that in the new “political science public space” (as the most recent editor, quite un-ironically, conceptualized the identity of the journal [Isaac 2010]), the
need to figure out how political science works might on some occasions (as Johnson perceptively noted) reasonably trump the need to figure out how the world works. 

15 Note here on the so called trend of engagement with other disciplines. They are perhaps suspect, too. Even the STEM disciplines have their examples: see the March 2012 of Professional Engineer

16 I do not know of a better way of expressing the point, and this way may lend itself to some confusion, so let me explicate a bit more. I am not arguing that it is chimerical to believe that political science can fix politics; logically and conceptually speaking, this is false. There is nothing in principle that prevents political science from having the kind of influence its partisans believe it should; other disciplines do, and in some cultures, it might be argued, ‘political science' is an integral dimension of political discourse. The point is that we continue to believe that we haven't yet realized what that ideal would require, and the fact that we have not succeeded ‘proves' that the idea itself is chimerical. The history of political science is a history of unmitigated, recurrent, persistent failure to achieve the ideal of a ‘well ordered science' to which all (or at least a significantly vociferous number of us) aspire. That ideal is required if we are to have the influence we seek. Figuring out how political science can be fixed so that it can fix politics is a chimera.  

17 This thesis flies in the face of so many accounts about the “inherent tensions” in political science, but I do not believe it has to be inconsistent with those accounts: there are inherent tensions, but they are emergent, not genetic

18 We might even argue that this vision is not what a well-ordered science would look like (although that would be an argument against the idea of a politically relevant political science, and a debate about the merits returning to scholasticism in higher education is beyond the scope of this essay).

19 This is of course ambiguous, but necessarily so for the purposes here. We can dispute whether this level of education is democratic in the sense of being attainable by all, or democratic in the sense of being open to all, or somewhere in between. But the point is that it is not intended to be elitist and exclusive, even if it cannot be universal. See the discussion of "The Political Basis" in Foerster chapter 1. There are of course many works that address this set of issues. A particularly provocative treatment is Ben Barber's “Aristocracy of Everyone”

20 Anderson, in Haddow (1939, 258) estimates that of the 214 original APSA members, between 50 and 100 were academics. My count for the 1905 membership – using only institutional affiliations and (my admittedly limited) personal knowledge of names from the period as a guide, suggests that of 307 members, only 108 were academics (or academic institutions). The use of institutional affiliations for identifying academics may be less than fully satisfactory, but in every instance where I have been able to verify by other means the academic/non-academic standing of members, the affiliations on the membership lists have proven correct. Admittedly, many of the names on the lists were not verified in this way; I have been thus reduced to this less than ideal rule of identification, though I am fairly confident of its adequacy, even if not its complete accuracy. There may be better information in the APSA archives, but the current condition of the archives (for which no satisfactory catalog of box contents exists) makes research using them, at best, time-consuming, and at worst, impossible.

21 As we shall see shortly, the amount of space the so-called leading articles occupied in the Review would become an issue as the character of the discipline, and thus the demands on the journal, changed. I also believe – though it has been difficult to verify this – that the matter of leading articles may have been among the leading sources of discontent with Ogg’s editorship. But in any case, the numbers are interesting: By my count, from randomly selected years, in 1906, they made up 40 percent of the journal's pages, and remained more or less steady at that level until 1926, when the total began to decline – to 30 percent in 1927, 20 percent in 1930, 8 percent in 1942, 13 percent in 1945, 21 percent in 1946, and 28 percent in 1948 – just before Ogg steps down. [Get the numbers after Ogg; go to the Mansfield years]  

22 This data was obtained by cross checking the tables of contents from the first five volumes with the information on the membership lists from 1905-1911. Affiliations of authors for lead articles was systematically reviewed for the entire 5 volume series; there were 73 lead articles over the period, 27 written by academics, and 46 written by non-academics. Affiliations of authors for notes and reviews was spot checked (in issues v1n3, v2n3, v3n3, v4n3, v4n4); a safe estimate is that about 75% of that material was contributed by non-academics. Many of these contributors appeared to be regular 'correspondents,' with (its seems) librarians and bureaucrats being most common. Interestingly, residents and employees of the State of Wisconsin were among the most commonly published. (Explaining this last fact would be an interesting exercise in social and institutional history).
On the potential problems of this construction of the data, see the note above.

The exception was Elsbree.

Note here on the difficulties of access to the APSA archives.

Do not underestimate the importance of the LHJ; many big names published there.

There may be better information in the APSA archives, but the current condition of the archives (for which no satisfactory catalog of box contents exists) makes research using them, at best, time-consuming, and at worst, impossible. In September 2005 I requested access to the APSA archives for the period under which the founding of the APSR was under discussion. Despite Sean Twombley’s heroic efforts to accommodate me, the boxes I received did not include the period in question – although I did learn a great deal about the letter writing style of Harold Lasswell, whose correspondence while President of the APSA was among the materials I did receive.

As John Gunnell (2006, 7) notes, the Academy of Political and Social Science at the University of Pennsylvania “was designed to bring together political elites and social scientists in order to pursue various matters of public policy.”

Somit and Tanenhaus’ comment that “most of the really scholarly articles in political science continued to appear in the Quarterly or the Annals, rather than the Review,” was meant to suggest an indication of the Review’s defects, rather than evidence of its strengths, as I am suggesting here. This is not the only bit of interesting (and telling) anachronism in their analysis, the usefulness of which should not be gainsaid. But as John Gunnell noted, “it was a story told from the perspective of the current mainstream image of the identity of the profession,” rather than one that took seriously the intentions of the various actors in their specific contexts.

Zink say that stability didn’t come until the 1930’s. Recurrent notes about drumming up new members. Also, For example, financial concerns were an issue in 1907; in 1908 and 1909 no comment was made about the costs of publishing the Review, but the Association secured loans (of $450 in ’08, and $349 in ’09; equal to about 10% of the Association budget), which covered the expenses incurred in the production of the Review, which at this time was running at about 75% of the Association’s annual expenses. Ogg mentioned the mix of non-academics as essential to the Review’s survival.

By 1913, the membership had grown to more than 1700, making it impossible to continue annually publishing the list of members. That feature disappeared from the Journal with the 1913 volume.

For example in the February 1921 issue of the Review it was noted “the association’s deficit was caused almost entirely by the increased cost of publishing the Review” and that “the association’s most imperative need is an increased membership, and members of the Assn. were urged to assist in adding new names to the list” (113). There was a supplemental charge of 1 dollar imposed to finance the Review in 1921, and in 1926, ”It was voted that the practice of billing members for 5 dollars, with the explanation that the payment of the additional dollar for the support of the Review is optional but desirable, be continued in 1926 and until action is taken to the contrary.” (179). It appears that after this year no further mention was made of this charge, and that the costs of publishing the journal were eventually made a permanent part of membership dues.

Later it would be noted how this was problematic for the Review and the Association’s publication of its Proceedings, as it was these non-academic publics “to whose needs the Review and the Proceedings attempted in some degree to cater” (Gaus 1934, 732). This would generate one of the more significant forms of response – increasing the publication frequency of the Review -- the discipline would pursue.

In 1916, academic authors accounted for slightly more than half of the lead articles; after 1926, in any single volume an authorship list with fewer than 80% academics would have been unusual, and in less than a decade, the norm moved from exceeding 90%, to being rarely less than 100%.

And the fact that it is today taken for granted as a critical problem for academic identity is perhaps a testament the ways in which (I shall argue) what an undergraduate ‘student public’ expects from attending College is quite different from what the University is supposed to provide in the way of public service.

This is Waldo’s dating for the time when “public administration reached self consciousness – an event symbolized by the appearance of [Leonard] White’s [1933] and [William Franklin] Willoughby’s [1927] texts" (1948:26n 12)

Inspecting the contents of any issue of the Review published under the direction of Willoughby, John Fairlie (who edited the journal from 1917-25), or Ogg, will surprise those familiar with more recent versions of the journal. The longevity of the journal-model cultivated under the direction of the first three Review editors is especially important for matters regarding the relationship of political science and its
publics, primarily because of the counter-intuitive pattern of changes in the discipline on the one side, and in the journal on the other. One later editor of the Review, Samuel Patterson, perhaps had a similar point in mind when (in 1988) he noted that “Most articles in the 1946-50 period [still] bore the earmarks of prewar political science” (Patterson et al 1988, 919; my insertion), a characterization informed by an apparent disconnect between the substance of the Review and interests of the membership, as evidenced by “the considerable criticism of Ogg’s editorship” that had developed “by the mid 1940’s” (Patterson et al 1988, 918).

It may be tempting to attribute this long-term continuity in editorial policy to the Review being Frederic Ogg’s “brainchild” (Zink 1950, 258), but Ogg did not serve without the support and consent of like minded colleagues, many of whom were among the most influential of the discipline’s leadership, and at any rate, Patterson was right to imply that the real break in the journal’s character came after Ogg’s tenure, not before. But the discontents that forced Ogg from office, initiated changes in the Review, signified a challenge to the disciplinary status quo ante, and other developments typically associated with what came to be known as the “behavioral revolution,” were not about whether political science ought to be politically relevant – virtually every major voice in disciplinary debates before (even decades before) and during the behavioral revolution was agreed on that (Gunnell 2005). Rather – and I will return to this critical point momentarily – the issue at stake was the same one that informed the founders’ discontents when they established the APSA nearly fifty years earlier, namely, how the authority of the discipline was to be secured.

REFERENCES


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