Thinking Politically

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“In actually THINKING vs. just BELIEVING,” Doug Matheson discusses the importance of learning how to think, not just what to think. The failure to do this has huge repercussions. He also calls upon us all, including Christian conservatives, to take seriously humankind's stewardship of the planet on a practical level, and he asks everyone to take action to correct the sad inequalities of a world in which, in his words, “our myopic preoccupation with economic growth and personal accumulation of wealth” leads us to ignore deterioration of ecosystems at home and around the world, and the growing threat to political stability globally. This book is of value to anyone who believes we can be doing better.” “This is powerful and will have wide appeal it’s fresh, challenging, and interesting.” The above quotes are from Gwyneth Cravens, author of numerous articles published in The New Yorker and Harper's Magazine, and of several books including, “Power to Save the World: the Truth about Nuclear Energy.” “Actually THINKING” is about our mindssets and our future. It examines our biases, it deals with the real-world politics of terrorism and our foreign policy, and it delves into a variety of internal matters that will ultimately keep us a stable and sustainable nation and culture, or see us fragment and weaken into irrelevance, or even devolve into chaos. The contrast between believing, based on conscious choice or not, and analytically thinking is the central theme of this book. It points out that we cannot begin to deal realistically with the myriad challenges of our time without first recognizing the influence of our philosophical starting points, and then learning to step beyond the shoes we have to grown up in.

This paper critically reviews evidence on “thinking and working politically” in development. Scholars and practitioners have increasingly recognised that development is fundamentally political, and efforts are underway to develop more politically informed ways of thinking and working. The literature does not yet constitute a strong evidence base to link these efforts to more effective aid programming; much evidence is anecdotal, does not meet high standards of robustness, is not comparative, and draws on self-selected successes reported by programme insiders. We discuss factors reported by programme insiders. We discuss factors commonly considered to explain the success of politically informed programmes in areas where conventional programming approaches fail short. We consider evidence in three areas - political context, sector and organization - and provide guidance on where to focus next. Finally, we outline ways of testing the core assumptions of the “thinking and working politically” agenda more thoroughly, to provide a clearer sense of the contribution it can make to aid effectiveness.

New Critical Legal Thinking articulates the emergence of a stream of critical legal theory which is directly concerned with the relation between law and the political. The early critical legal studies claim that all law is politics is displaced with a different and more nuanced theoretical arsenal. Combining grand theory with a concern for grounded political interventions, the various contributors to this book draw on political theorists and continental philosophers in order to engage with current legal problematic, such as the recent global economic crisis, the Arab spring and the emergence of biopolitics. The contributions instantiate the claim that a new and radical political legal scholarship has come into being: one which critically interrogates and intervenes in the contemporary relationship between law and power.

Contributed articles.

A concise, lively account of Marxist thought and American culture The Incomplete Projects reevaluates the role of Marxist theory in the study of culture and makes a case for Marxist cultural analysis as a relevant political practice. Part I provides the reader with a comprehensive and lively overview of Marxist thought. Part II is a collection of case studies analyzing a wide range of cultural objects, from the novels of Philip Roth to the television series Mad Men. The objects of study are either American or British in origin, reflecting the dominance of Anglo-American culture in our new global economy; they are also what Friedman describes as ‘middle culture,’ falling somewhere between the bifurcated categories of high and low art. Through these case studies, Carl Freedman shows that it is impossible to make sense of capitalism without the Marxist critique and demonstrates that cultural analysis is an especially appropriate form of discourse in which to begin thinking politically. This book is particularly timely and relevant to anyone interested in the study of culture.

The rise of populism, Donald Trump’s election and the result of the EU referendum in the UK have been widely interpreted as a rejection of the post-war liberal order – the manifestation of a desire to undermine the political system that people feel has let them down. Yet mainstream politicians and analysts have been slow to grasp the changing situation, instead relying on a rhetoric of ‘hard data’ and narrow economic arguments while failing to properly engage with the politics of identity. This book argues that the relationship between methodology and politics is now more important than ever – that politics, if it is anything, is about engaging with people’s interpretations and narratives of the world in which they find themselves. Politics in this new “post-truth” era will require an appreciation of the fact we live in an uncertain world of endless diversity and potential for change. This thoughtful book addresses how we might think about and do politics in these strange new times.

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international arena and generated significant resources for country programmes. That initial commitment is now declining, and if AIDS is to maintain its visibility and contribution to global solidarity, human rights and dignity, its politics will have to evolve to reflect the profound geo-political, economic and social transformations underway today. This volume brings together leading scholars from a variety of disciplines who work at the intersection of politics and HIV. They reflect on the lessons learned from the past thirty years of the politics of AIDS and how political science, writ large, can further contribute to the understanding and practice of political mobilization around AIDS. Through case studies and analysis, new insights into identity politics and social movements in countries as diverse as Brazil, Switzerland, Vietnam and Zambia are offered alongside new approaches to understanding the determinants and incentives which generate political will and commitment. This book was published as a special issue of Contemporary Politics.

Following Bourdieu, this book seeks ‘to think about politics without thinking politically’, advancing the view that politics as conventionally understood does not take place in a social vacuum, but in the context of a certain topography of society that cannot be reduced to formal spaces (such as a parliament). Engaging with Bourdieu’s theory of fields and focusing specifically on the notion of the ‘political field’, the author analyses from a sociological perspective the functioning of the political field, seeing it not simply as a formal space, but as encompassing a sphere that is increasingly autonomous from others and driven by reasons and motives beyond those conventionally recognised as political. Illustrated with cases from the real political life of different countries, Acting Politics examines the nature of the practices of the agents who inhabit the political field, building a picture of a type of competitive political activity that is fundamentally social and symbolic. A sociological reading of the agents, struggles and forms of the contemporary political field, this book thinks with and against Bourdieu in a broad dialogue with different sociological currents and debates in other disciplines. As such, it will appeal to scholars of politics and sociology with interests in social and political theory and political sociology.

This book gives some insight into the profession of political science and about ‘thinking politically’. It shows how thinking politically contributes, in a significant fashion, to answering those questions that, from curiosity or necessity, mankind has incessantly raised and wished to solve.

This book offers an original analysis and theorization of the biopolitics of development in the postcolonial present, and draws significantly from the later works of Michel Foucault on biopolitics. Foucault’s works have had a massive influence on postcolonial literatures, particularly in political science and international relations, and several authors of this book have themselves made significant contributions to that influence. While Foucault’s thought has been inspirational for understanding colonial biopolitics as well as governmental rationalities concerned with development, his works have too often failed to inspire studies of political subjectivity. Instead, they have been used to stoke the myth of the inevitability of the decline of collective political subjects, often describing an increasingly limited horizon of political possibilities, and provoking a disenchantment with the political itself in postcolonial works and studies. Working against the grain of current Foucauldian scholarship, this book underlines the importance of Foucault’s critique of the capacity of the political to designate how thoughts, acts, and bodies enter into the ‘development’, and with particular attention to the predicaments of postcolonial peoples. It explores how we can use Foucault’s ideas to recover the vital capacity to think and act politically at a time when fundamentally human capacities to think, know, and act purposively in the world are being pathologized as expressions of the hubris and ‘underdevelopment’ of postcolonial peoples. Why and how is it that life in postcolonial settings has been depoliticized to such dramatic effect? The immediacy of these themes will be obvious to anyone living in the South of the world. But within the academy they remain heavily under-addressed. In thinking about what it means to read Michel Foucault today, this book tackles some significant questions and problems: Not simply that of how to explain the ways in which postcolonial regimes of governance have achieved the debasements of political subjectivity they have; nor that of how we might better equip them with the means to suborn the life of postcolonial peoples more fully; but that of how such peoples, in their subjection to governance, can and do resist, subvert, escape and defy the imposition of modes of governance which seek to remove their lives of those very capacities for resistance, subversion, flight, and defiance.

A little over one hundred years after his birth, and not quite twenty-five years since his death, interest in the French political philosopher and sociologist Raymond Aron (1905-1983) continues to grow. Aron is now widely recognized as one of the most significant intellectual figures of the postwar period, whose wide-ranging reflections played a key part in preserving liberal democracy in Europe and abroad. His sober analyses of modern society, his trenchant critique of ideological politics and every form of totalitarianism, and his philosophical reflections on politics and history have given powerful support to democratic liberalism throughout the western world. Aron’s work combines passion and observation, disinterested reflection and love of liberty in a way that is an imitable model for humane and balanced political reflection. In this stimulating collection of essays, inspired by the centennial of Aron’s birth, a distinguished group of North American and European scholars including Pierre Manent, Stanley Hoffmann, Irving Louis Horowitz, Liah Greenfeld, Claude Lefort, and Aurelian Craiutu examine four key aspects of Aron’s thought and work: his educative legacy, his reflections on other philosophers and intellectuals, his distinctive approach to international relations, and the unique character of his own political reflection. The result is a masterful engagement with Aron’s intellectual legacy and a thoughtful coming to terms with the political and intellectual substance of the twentieth century.

A special issue of South Atlantic Quarterly

A collection of the most important writings of Michael Walzer, one of the world’s most influential political thinkers Michael Walzer is widely regarded as one of the world’s leading political theorists. In a career spanning more than fifty years, he has wrestled with some of the most crucial political ideas and questions of the day, developing original conceptions of democracy, social justice, liberalism, civil society, nationalism, multiculturalism, and terrorism. Thinking Politically brings together some of Walzer’s most important works to provide a wide-ranging survey of his thinking and the vision that underlies his responses to contemporary political debates. The book also includes a previously unpublished essay on human rights. David Miller’s substantial introduction presents a detailed analysis of the development of Walzer’s ideas and connects them to wider currents of political thought. In addition, the book includes a recent interview with Walzer on a range of topical issues, and a detailed bibliography of his works. This collection will be welcomed by scholars in politics and philosophy, as well as anyone keen to engage in discussion on some of the key issues of our times.
Competition and competitiveness are roundly celebrated as public values and key indicators of a dynamic and forward-thinking society. But the headline embrace of competitive market principles, increasingly prevalent in our neoliberal age, often obscures the enduring divisiveness of a society set up to produce winners and losers. In this inspired and thoughtfully argued book, Andrew J. Douglas turns to the later writings of W. E. B. Du Bois to reevaluate the very terms of the competitive society. Situating Du Bois in relation to the Depression-era roots of contemporary neoliberal thinking, Douglas shows that into the 1930s Du Bois ratcheted up a race-conscious indictment of capitalism and liberal democracy and posed unsettling questions about how the compulsory pull of market relations breeds unequal outcomes and underwrites the perpetuation of racial animosities. Blending historical analysis with ethical and political theory, and casting new light on several aspects of Du Bois's thinking, this book makes a compelling case that Du Bois's sweeping disillusions with Western liberalism is as timely now as ever.

Liberal education has been under siege in recent years. Far-right ideologues in journalism and government have pressed for a uniform curriculum that focuses on the achievements of friends of the Earth play a central role in the competitive, who hold an advantage environmental liability issues. The evils of society, have attempted to redeem multiculturalism in education. In this eloquent and passionate book a distinguished scholar criticizes these positions and calls for a return to the tradition of independent thinking that he contends has been betrayed by both right and left. Under the guise of educational reform, says David Bromwich, these groups are in fact engaging in politics by other means. Bromwich argues that rivals in the debate over education have one thing in common: they believe in the all-importance of culture. Each assumes that culture informs identity, decides the terms of every moral choice, and gives a meaning to life. Both sides therefore see education as a means to indoctrinate students in specific cultural and political dogmas. By contrast, Bromwich contends that genuine education is concerned less with culture than with critical thinking and independence of mind. This view of education is not a middle way among the political demands of the moment, says Bromwich. Its earlier advocates include Mill and Woolfstonecraft, and its roots can be traced to such secular moralists as Burke and Hume. Bromwich attacks the anti-democratic and intolerant premises of both right and left--premises that often appear in the conservative guise of "preserving the tradition" on the one hand, or the radical guise of "opening up the tradition" on the other. He discusses the new academic "fundamentalists" and the politically correct speech codes they have devised to enforce a doctrine of intellectual conformity; educational policy as articulated by conservative apologists George Will and William Bennett; the narrow logic of institutional radicalism; the association between personal reflection and social morality; and the discipline of literary study, where the symptoms of cultural conflict have appeared most visibly. Written with the wisdom and conviction of a dedicated teacher, this book is a passionate plea to recover a true liberal tradition in academia and government--through independent thinking, self-knowledge, and tolerance of other points of view.

Organized across national boundaries and with millions of supporters worldwide, transnational environmental activist groups such as Greenpeace, the World Wildlife Fund, and Friends of the Earth play a central role in the world's environmental efforts. But how the world addresses environmental issues. This book provides the most systematic and theoretically informed study to date of the strategies these organizations use to advance global environmental protection. Based on case studies of three transnational groups, it argues that in addition to lobbying governments, activists operate within and across societies to effect widespread change. They work through transnational social, economic, and cultural networks to alter corporate practices, educate vast numbers of people, pressure multilateral development banks, and shift standards of good conduct. Wapner argues that because this activity takes place outside the formal arena of inter-state politics, environmental activists practice "world civic politics"; they politicize global civil society. The theoretical import of this book is to bring the practice of world civic politics into sharp relief and generalize its significance beyond environmental affairs to explain the efforts of all NGOs in world politics.

U.S. political theory rarely engages with black political thinkers, despite the fact that the problem of racial inequality is central to the entire enterprise of American political theory. To address this lacuna, Balfour focuses on the political thought of W.E.B. Du Bois. Eventually every conqueror, every imperial power, every occupying army gets out. Why do they decide to leave? And how do political and military leaders manage withdrawal? Do they take with them those who might be at risk if left behind? What are the immediate consequences of departure? For Michael Walzer and Nicolaus Mills, now is the time to ask those questions about exiting-and to worry specifically about the difficulties certain to arise as we leave-Iraq. Getting Out approaches these issues in two sections. The first, entitled "Lessons Learned," examines seven historical cases of how and how not to withdraw: Britain's departure from the American colonies and from India, the French withdrawal from Algeria, Israel's unilateral withdrawal from Gaza, and the U.S. decision to leave (or not leave) the Philippines, Korea, and Vietnam. These cases offer a comparative perspective and an opportunity to learn from the history of political and military retreats. The second section, "Exiting Iraq," begins with an introduction to just how the United States got into Iraq and continues with an examination of how the U.S. might leave from a diversity of voices, ranging from those who believe that the Iraq war has produced no real good to those who hope for a decent ending. In addition to essays by volume editors Walzer and Mills, Getting Out features contributions by Shlomo Avineri, Rajeev Bhargava, David Bromwich, Frances FitzGerald, Stanley Karnow, Brendan O'Leary, George Packer, Todd Shepard, Fred Smoler, and Stanley Weintraub.

Thinking Politically brings together a series of remarkable interviews with Raymond Aron that form a political history of our time. Ranging over an entire lifetime, from his youthful experience with the rise of Nazi totalitarianism in Berlin to the denouement of the cold war, Aron meditates on the threats to liberty and reason in the bloody twentieth century. In addition to the interviews published in the original edition, Thinking Politically incorporates three interviews never before published in book form. This supplemental material clarifies Aron's role as a voice of prudential reason in an unreasonable age and allows unparalleled access to the principal influences on Aron's thought. The volume concludes with "Democratic States and Totalitarian States," an address by Aron to the French Philosophical Society as well as the accompanying debate with Jacques Maritain, Victor Basch, and other intellectuals.

Political conflict in our society is inevitable, and the results are often far from negative. How then should we deal with the intractable differences arising from complex modern culture? In Agonistics, Mouffe develops her philosophy, taking particular interest in international relations, strategies for radical politics and the politics of artistic
practices. In a series of coruscating essays, she engages with cosmopolitanism, post-operaism, and theories of multiple modernities to argue in favor of a multipolar world with a real cultural and political pluralism.

Ideas are at the heart of our politics. They are the means by which people are influenced and mobilised. Australian politics have been shaped by distinctive patterns of political thought from the colonial period to the Rudd government. But how have these patterns arisen? And what have been their effects on shaping what we think is politically possible or desirable? This book is not a survey of theory but an invigorating history of people trying to make sense of their world, fighting to establish the principles governing the way politics is pursued and justifying their own perspectives. What Were They Thinking? is a compelling story of winners and losers, of individuals interpreting and trying to influence their times, and of how ideas and power are linked.

Thinking Politically brings together a series of remarkable interviews with Raymond Aron that form a political history of our time. Ranging over an entire lifetime, from his youth and his working experience with the rise of Nazi totalitarianism in Berlin to the denounced of the cold war. Aron meditates on the threats to liberty and reason in the bloody twentieth century. Originally published as The Committed Observer, this volume provides one of the fullest accounts available of the dramatic events of the "short century," which began with the pistol shot in Sarajevo in 1914 and ended with the collapse of the ideological monsters whose deadly nature Aron had ruthlessly exposed for a half-century. In addition to the interviews published in the original edition, Thinking Politically incorporates three interviews never before published in book form. This supplemental material clarifies Aron's role as a voice of prudential reason in an unreasonable age and allows unparalleled access to the principal influences on Aron's thought. The volume concludes with "Democratic States and Totalitarian States," an address by Aron to the French Philosophical Society as well as the accompanying debate with Jacques Maritain, Victor Basch, and other intellectuals. Thinking Politically serves as an ideal gateway into Aron's reflections, and offers a superb single-volume introduction to the major events and conflicts of the twentieth century. It will be a welcome addition to the libraries of political theorists, historians, sociologists, philosophers, and citizens wishing to understand the political and intellectual currents of the age.

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What does it mean to say that human beings think politically, and what is distinctive about that kind of thinking? That question is all-too infrequently asked by political theorists, or is dealt with through generalizations, abstractions, and dichotomies. People display when thinking politically, identifying six features of political thinking. They include the role of making ultimate decisions and regulating all social affairs, ranking collective priorities, mobilizing support for groups or withholding it, conceptualizing social order and stability as well as disorder and instability, projecting future visions and constructing plans for a society, and engaging the power aspects embedded in language, by means of reason, rhetoric, emotion or menace. Concurrently the untidiness and occasional failures of thinking politically are acknowledged alongside its quest for neatness. A large number of case studies is employed, drawn both from professional political theorists and philosophers and from various instances of vernacular usage: politicians, political commentators, or protest groups. Both contemporary and historical evidence from different cultures is utilized in illustrating the theoretical framework of the book. This is the first systematic study of political thinking as a cluster of thought-practices, combining insights from political theory-traditional and recent—the study of language and discourse, and political science. This investigation of 'the political' as a mode of thinking challenges many conventional understandings of political thought in the current literature, teases out what is political—not philosophical or ethical—in political theory, and locates it as a complex and ubiquitous social practice present at all points of human interaction and at diverse levels of articulation.

Liberalism is the dominant ideology of our time, yet its character remains the subject of intense scholarly and political controversy. Inspired by the work of Michael Freeden, this book brings together an internationally-respected cast of scholars to debate liberalism and to redefine the very essence of what it is to be a liberal.

The parliamentary style of politics has been formed over centuries; nobody theorised it in advance. This book presents a thought experiment to spell out key principles of the parliamentary ideal type of politics. Max Weber offers the main intellectual inspiration, Westminster parliament provides the main historical reference and the author's studies on parliamentary procedure and rhetoric provide the background for the book. Parliamentary acting and thinking offer us the best example of politics as a contingent and complex activity. Just as the parliamentary imagination, the author constructs the ideal type in five main chapters: dissensual modes of proceeding; rhetoric of parliamentary debate; parliamentary formation and control of government; parliamentarians as politicians; and parliamentary time as their common subtext. In the last two chapters, the book outlines the possibilities of extending parliamentary judgment to politics beyond parliaments proper and the chances for parliamentary politics succeeding today.

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What is politics? Is it a universal feature of all human societies, past and present? Is it tied to specific institutional arenas? Or is it found in all groups and organizations, large or small, formal or informal? This new textbook seeks to provide answers to these important questions. Starting with what it means to 'think politically', the book goes on to explore a wide range of meanings attributed to the concept of politics from a variety of perspectives and theoretical traditions. It offers succinct and coherent overviews by some of the foremost scholars in the field, and each invites the reader to see the activity of politics in a distinctive way. Topics covered include politics as a form of rule, feminist approaches to politics, Marxism and politics, the politics of human behaviour, environmental politics, politics as collective choice, and Islam and politics. Written with the new student in mind, this concise introduction to the study and activity of politics is essential reading for all those coming to the discipline for the first time.