

Louisiana Law Review

Volume 20 | Number 3

April 1960

THE STUDY OF POLITICS, by Charles S. Elyneman. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1959. Pp. xi, 232.

William C. Havard

Repository Citation

William C. Havard, *THE STUDY OF POLITICS*, by Charles S. Elyneman. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1959. Pp. xi, 232., 20 La. L. Rev. (1960)

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.law.lsu.edu/lalrev/vol20/iss3/19>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Law Reviews and Journals at LSU Law Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Louisiana Law Review by an authorized editor of LSU Law Digital Commons. For more information, please contact kreed25@lsu.edu.

but is forced into the role of a moderator. While this is neither an undesirable nor meaningless role, it falls short of providing a basis for the expectation that issues which fundamentally divide two states can be settled through the Court.

The vital question for a world rule of law remains one of the degree of agreement over what these rules should be. The two works under review here illustrate, whether intended or unintended, the areas where agreement is possible and also where disagreement is inevitable. Both works are eminently worth the attention of those concerned with international law. Those concerned with a "world rule of law," however, will find only slender straws to which to cling.

*David Lehman**

THE STUDY OF POLITICS, by Charles S. Hyneman. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1959. Pp. xi, 232.

The sub-title of this book is "The Present State of American Political Science," a subject which of late has heavily engaged the principal students of politics — the political scientists. In fact, inquiry into what political science is doing seems to preoccupy so many members of the profession that one sometimes wonders whether they have not abandoned the study of politics for the study of one another.

The present volume is a by-product of an elaborate examination of the curriculum of the political science department at Northwestern University, which was undertaken with the assistance of a munificent grant from the Carnegie Foundation. During a substantial part of the time that this study was being carried out Professor Hyneman, who is best known for his work in the field of public administration and was at one time director of the school of government at Louisiana State University, served as chairman of the department at Northwestern. The self-evaluation attempted to penetrate to the core of the discipline in order to build a program of studies on a sound epistemological basis.

Those who know Professor Hyneman and/or his works would expect to find in a wide-open discussion of this type many examples of his characteristic forthrightness in tossing out chal-

*Research Assistant at the Center for the Study of American Foreign and Military Policy and Assistant Professor of Political Science at Northwestern University.

lenging ideas, his penchant for incisive and unapologetic criticism, and his willingness to leave neutrality to one side when he thinks the issues merit a partisan stand. To come to the book with these expectations is to court disappointment; for one soon discovers that Hyneman has either gone tame or is so anxious to find a *modus vivendi* for the current intellectual divisions among political scientists that he is willing to pay the high price of non-commitment.

The book is divided into three unequal parts. The first part is entitled "Political Science: The Grand Enterprise" and consists of a single short chapter on the preoccupations of American political scientists. Here the author outlines certain doubts and fears expressed by those who study politics as a scholarly vocation and suggests that political scientists engage in four kinds of enterprise: they carry on scholarly study and disseminate the results in writing and teaching; they serve in an advisory capacity and actually participate in the formation and execution of public policy; they train men and women for public service; and, of late, they assist foreign countries in education and training for government service and in the improvement of governmental functions and political practices. The last three functions are justifiable only insofar as they relate to the first, either by informing the teacher and research activity or as a direct "practical" condition under which the public will allow the independent scholarly function to be carried on. Parts two and three (consisting of five chapters each) are concerned with the condition of scholarship in political science, leaving the other activities to the limbo to which their subordinate status entitles them. Part two deals with "The Scholarly Enterprise" in terms of the objects of political science, which are rather arbitrarily divided into governmental description, examination of political ideas, construction of a science, and the development of normative doctrines and proposals for solutions to governmental problems. In part three the author considers the intellectual conflicts among those engaged in this type of scholarship: have they failed to limit the object of their investigation sufficiently, what categories of political experience should form the focus of attention in research, can the methodology of the natural sciences provide a model for the social sciences, how are "values" to be handled, and where do the classical works on politics fit into contemporary studies?

Throughout the last two parts the author is careful to set

forth hypothetical arguments representative of those advanced by proponents of various doctrines identified as important in discussions of the content and methodology of political science. He attempts to include a comprehensive variety of viewpoints and cites works which are illustrative of the different tendencies among the scholars. As a final touch he has included an extensive, useful bibliography of works which examine political science as a discipline and profession. The conclusion based on this carefully balanced presentation, as nearly as can be determined in the absence of a general summary, is that the discipline is better off in its present state of great breadth and diversity than it would be if it were limited by a comprehensive set of definitions or categories drawn from one or another of the competing "schools."

The deeper problems that underlie political science in the United States and stimulate controversy in which the protagonists fail to come to grips with one another are exemplified rather than consciously confronted in Hyneman's study. These problems relate mainly to the failure (or inability?) of political scientists to explicate the philosophical premises on which their views of the subject are based. Although Hyneman makes every effort to balance opposing points of view he never really succeeds in abstracting himself from the unarticulated tradition of a vague empiricism that has played so great a role in social science in this country. His definitions of "science" and "scientific" method (pp. 76 and 78-79), for example, are confined entirely to the logical categories on which the natural sciences are predicated; and no attempt is made to take account of other sources of knowledge or to indicate an awareness that there are scalar logical systems (e.g., Aristotelian or Hegelian) in which the knowing subject transcends the objects of its knowledge. The philosophical consequences of this naiveté are revealed in his unqualified acceptance of the idea of an absolute difference between "facts" and "values" and the relegation of all standards of judgment (normative theory) to the level of "personal preferences." Of less moment, but still disturbing, is his bland labeling of "suppositions about that which is good for its own sake" as "esthetic" values. Surely Professor Hyneman must be aware of the common epistemological division between esthetics and ethics.

Hyneman also indirectly reveals the tendency on the part of American political scientists to indulge in uninformed philosophical judgments and frequently to confuse these judgments with

"facts" or "empirical generalizations." It is this reviewer's impression that the "empiricists" or "behaviorists" are allowed to speak for themselves in the book, while the representatives of the "normative philosophers" (used for want of a more adequate term) are spoken for in the abstract. Although Eric Voegelin's *New Science of Politics* is listed in the bibliography and there are two brief references to Leo Strauss in the text, no attempt is made to indicate the scope or nature of the important work of these major figures in reconstructing political science on classical and Christian philosophical foundations. Hyneman really gives the game away when he notes (p. 60) the paucity of writings among American political scientists on the classical studies of politics and then proceeds to ignore the outstanding anti-positivists of our era.

A minor disturbing factor appears in the language used by Hyneman. Normally he is a clear, straightforward writer who enlivens his material with appropriate figures and with colloquialisms that nicely avoid the traps of cliché, slang, and jargon. But the use of terms such as "on going science" (repeated four times in six pages), "scatteration," "firm up," and "differentiable" (also used on four occasions) is too frequent to be overlooked.

Few will quarrel with the need for an examination of the pre-suppositions on which the scholarly study of politics is based and many will agree that the time is not propitious for unifying these underlying concepts. But it is doubtful whether a great deal of clarification of the basic problems and the areas of conflict over them is achieved by a work which itself rests on so many unexamined major premises.

*William C. Havard**

*Associate Professor of Government, Louisiana State University.