Preston King

History, Toleration, and Friendship

Edited by Kipton E. Jensen

PETER LANG

Currents in Media, Social and Religious Movements in the Middle East / 3

This volume celebrates the remarkable career of Dr. Preston King, an African American political philosopher with an international reputation. King's first degree was from Fisk University (1956). He moved directly to the London School of Economics (LSE), completing his M.Sc. (Econ) in 1958 with a Mark of Distinction. He taught at LSE for the next two years. A scrape with Jim Crow America kept him in exile for the next 40 years. Major friends and influences at LSE were Professors Sir Karl Popper, Michael Oakeshott, and Dr Bernard Crick. King took up subsequent lectureships at the universities of Keele, Ghana, and Sheffield. He was Senior Research Assistant at the Acton Society Trust (London), then professor at the universities of Nairobi, New South Wales (Sydney), and Lancaster, returning at last to the United States as joint Woodruff Professor at Emory and Distinguished Professor at Morehouse. The essays comprising this volume are by internationally renowned scholars. They creatively explore history, toleration, and friendship as three seminal themes running through Preston King's sizeable oeuvre. The first third of this book consists of essays on time and history, with brilliant contributions by Professors Browning, Lawson, Moore, and Cherribi. The second third consists of essays on time and toleration, with memorable and penetrating analyses by Professors Jones, Read, Modood/Dobbernak, and Brown. The final third consists of essays on time and friendship, with offerings—both charming and insightful—by Professors Devere, Smith, and Coleman. The book concludes with a novel and captivating chapter by King himself, on the philosophy of time, which constitutes the substratum of so much of his work and reflection.

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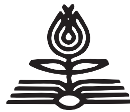

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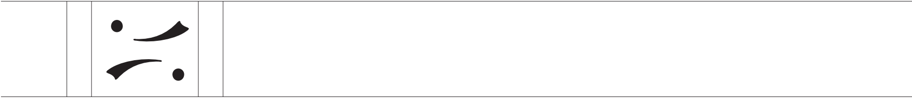


Editor's Preamble

The trajectory of Preston King's academic career has not displayed the mathematical equivalent of the shortest distance between two points, but neither must we concede that our lives are lived upon a Euclidian plane. Professor King was born in the USA, in Albany, Georgia and received his B.A. (Phi Beta Kappa) from Fisk University; he subsequently pursued his graduate education in England; there he earned his M.Sc. (Econ.) and received, with a Mark of Distinction, Leverhulme Award, followed by the Ph.D., both from the London School of Economics. Dr. King subsequently began his teaching career in England, at LSE, at Keele, and later at Sheffield. For as much as forty years, King was caught up in the so-called Commonwealth matrix. This arrangement landed him in such countries as Ghana, Kenya, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. Dr. King was a Distinguished Visiting Professor of political science at Fisk University (2006) and at Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia (2007). He has held Chairs previously in Nairobi and Sydney with visiting professorships at McGill University, Australian National University, the London School of Economics, Yaoundé (Cameroon), Suva (Fiji), University of the South Pacific, and Emory University. A very distinguished scholar and a gentleman, Dr. King was previously chairperson of the Political Philosophy Research Committee of the *International Political Science Association* and was the founder and always fastidious co-editor of the *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy.*

Professor King is the author and editor of a wide array of works—engaging, lively, sometimes dense but also concise, profound, and probing, always convivial and quickly-paced yet ambitious in its breadth—only some of them covered in this Festschrift: viz., *Fear of Power: An Analysis of Anti-Statism in Three French Writers* (1967), *Politics and Experience* (1968), *The Ideology of Order* (1974), *The Study of Politics* (1977, editor), *Federalism and Federation*

(1982), *The History of Ideas: An Introduction to Method* (1984), *An African Winter* (1987), *A Constitution for Europe: Comparative Study of Federal Constitutions and Plans for the United States of Europe* (1991), *Thomas Hobbes: Critical Assessments* (in 4 volumes, 1992), *Socialism and the Common Good: New Fabian Essays* (1996), *Toleration* (1997), *Thinking Past a Problem* (2000), *The Challenge to Friendship in Modernity* (2000), *Trusting in Reason; Martin Hollis and the Philosophy of Social Action* (2003), *Friendship in Politics* (2008), and *Black Leaders and Ideologies in the South since the Civil War* (2013).

This volume constitutes a collection if not collocation of twelve fine essays that focus on three of the seminal themes in the work of Preston King. When invited to contribute to this volume, the authors were dissuaded from writing peons to the man but rather to pay him the honor granted Socrates by Simmias and Cebes: that is, to earnestly engage with his works, to raise serious objections, and to wrestle with his ideas. This volume is titled as *Preston King: History, Toleration, and Friendship*. Professor King agreed to respond to these eleven essays. What caught his eye was the prospect that significant voices might be heard paying critical attention, whether in parallel or counterpoint, to at least some of the themes that have absorbed his attention over an extended career. The essays included in this collection are organized along the lines of the three prominent themes underscored by the title. What is offered here may be read off as a Festschrift, except that it is really something more than that. Over the past decade, I have worked alongside Preston King as part of the Leadership Center at Morehouse College, where he continues to serve as a scholar-in-residence, and over those years, I have come to appreciate him as an exceptionally gifted philosopher, an editor of extraordinary talent, and a public intellectual of international renown.

The more I read of his work, and the work of those he influenced, the more convinced I become that King is one of the most insightful and engaging political philosophers of the last half century. Three features that stand out in his work are its comprehensiveness, coherence, and relevance. He does not write textbooks, as important as these are, nor compose ideologies, as useful as such approaches remain. He has not sought to supply one all-embracing account of his subject matter. Rather, he has picked upon one problem, as it seems, interconnected with the next, each spiraling round and from the other in a predominantly historical and analytical style. The sheer range and steady acuity of his oeuvre is impressive. Beyond his publications and distinguished service to the academy, beyond his contribution or indeed the collective contribution of the King Family of Albany to the civil rights movement and the freedom struggle, both here and abroad, beyond the courageous stand he

took against the Albany Draft Board in 1958, Professor King is one of those exceptional individuals "in whom both greatness of mind and mellowness of character are manifest." In the editor's Preamble, I am less concerned with the details of King's arguments, whether single or cumulative, than with the broad themes and dialectical movement of his writings.

Wittgenstein suggests that "the work of the philosopher consists in marshalling reminders for a particular purpose" (PI 127). Non-dogmatism and the ethics of restraint or toleration is the leitmotif that runs through all of King's writings. The worst thing that can occur when dealing with one another is dogmatism or the absence of restraint. Understanding, empathy, education, all these things are ways of creating toleration and restraint. In *Thinking Past a Problem,* Professor King advises us to focus as critics but by no means fixate on the "data underfoot" and also to "look to the horizon" construed as the interpretative frame of reference. Not altogether unlike John Dewey, a century ago, Preston King provided, back in 1967, a half a century ago, a penetrating and sober analysis of how power works and how we might more wisely wield it. In "Force, Violence, and Law" (1916), Dewey suggested that while "the political thinking of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is out of date, the thinkers of that period [were more] clear-headed than we are in acknowledging that all political questions are simply questions of the extension and restriction of exercise of power on the part of specific groups in the community." Given his longstanding fascination with Hobbes, King would agree with Dewey, though he would hasten to add—as he did in 1967—that the French luminaries of power politics in the nineteenth century had become somewhat less clear-headed than their predecessors.

In his modest if not restrained yet suggestive conclusion to *Fear of Power*, King claims that "it is not universally necessary either to adore or to fear power. Nor does this imply a universal necessity to strike a balance between these poles. It is appropriate that power be greater or less, as circumstances require; that power be praised or damned, as occasion demands" (133). *Fear of Power* ([1967] 2003), writes King in *Toleration* (1976), "constituted an attack upon certain simplistic views, and acceptances, of liberty (or individualism)" whereas *Ideology of Order* (1974)—and, similarly, *Federalism and Federation*—focused on "simplistic views, acceptances, of power (or authoritarianism)" (14). The common thread running through both these works is liberty and power. King argues that we must "mediate between these real or only apparent polarities, with a view of achieving some truer approximation to just action" (ibid). King would agree with Dewey, the meliorist, who wrote that "any political or legal theory that will have nothing to do with power on the ground that all power is force and all force is brutal and non-moral

is obviously condemned to a purely sentimental, dreamy morals." Although the "dominant moral and political paradigm of our own age is constituted by a widespread aspiration to liberty," writes King thirty-five years later, "[t]he logical difficulty with the ideal of liberty is that it so readily converts into the ideal of power" (2000: 4), since "we conceive of few or no effective means to defend liberty, save by deploying power"; indeed, "Liberty is the head, Power is the foot, of this aspiration" (ibid.).

In *Fear of Power*, King provides us with sensitive readings of Tocqueville, "who believed that democracy both was and was not compatible with liberty" (1967: 20), Proudhon, the anarchist, and Sorel, the syndicalist, as dialectically distinct expressions of anti-statism in France, all nineteenth-century thinkers who shared the well-intentioned but ultimately misguided assumption that power is inherently evil. King demonstrates, for example, the false dilemma suggested by those defenders of the existing order who suggest that the only alternative is anarchy. It is never simply a question of order or disorder, but rather a choice between various types of order. In Proudhon, for example, political or philosophical anarchy implies a different type of order—but an order to which one adheres voluntarily. Ideologies of order are replete with ideological illusions, for example, the "typical liberal contractual assumption" as employed by Sorel that "the natural order is inherently simple, harmonious and beneficent" (90). This sort of thing, argues King, "constitutes a sort of philosophical compost heap." Professor King methodically disabuses us of these and other conceptual muddles and sociopolitical illusions. Indeed, this constitutes his signature move as a political philosopher and a cultural critic.

In the same year that Preston King published *Fear of Power*, 1967, Martin Luther King, Jr., that other King, both from storied families, the former in Albany and the latter in Atlanta, wrote—in *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community*?—that "in the future, we must become intensive political activists. We must be guided in this direction because we need political strength more desperately than any other group in American society." By intensive political activists, that other King meant something very much along the lines of what our Dr. King, Preston, a freshly-minted Ph.D., was doing overseas, just then, namely, "uniting social activism with educational competence" (163). That other King recognized that "necessity [would] draw us toward the power inherent in the creative uses of politics," including the power of the theorist's proverbial pen and the strength of his or her wit, and "together acquire political sophistication" (164). And that other King also claimed that "our policies should have the strength of deep analysis beneath them to be able to challenge the clever sophistries of our opponents" (ibid.). What Martin Luther King was describing as our need for "intensive

political activists" serves as a fitting description of Preston King's life work. Though both men were activists, each in his own way, though to differing degrees, they were also what might be called social justice-oriented thought leaders.[1] As a cosmopolitan, a polyglot, as a polymath, as a political philosopher, Professor King provides the reader—already back in 1967, when *Fear of Power* first appeared—and continues to provide us today—with a rare blend of breadth and depth. King serves as a reliable guide to the history of ideas, but he also provides a diagnosis of "the data underfoot" and a prognosis for "what's on the horizon."

History

> History is always a part of something larger, so we can't guard against that, but we can guard ourselves against partiality in the sense of arbitrary, dogmatic, narrow, slanted, distorted—in short, unreliable. . . . History is always a theoretical exercise: it is never a matter of simply recovering primitive, independent data that belong to no larger context. In this regard, it is sometimes supposed that writing history is a matter of describing what is non-recurrent or unique. The difficulty is that we have no way of gaining access to what is unique—to commit to history as recovery of the unique (or alien or inaccessible) is a confession of explanatory bankruptcy. . . . So we do not write histories to recover the unique; we do so, rather, inevitably selectively, in order to display what is representative. (King, 2000: 14)

When it comes to discussing the past and present, and the delicate logic that binds the one to the other, King insists that we ought not dogmatize. The contributed essays that comprise the first section of this volume focus on King's critique of the Cambridge School of historiography in general and the contextualist thesis espoused by Quentin Skinner in particular. But for those who read him carefully, King is less concerned with his critique of Skinner than with his appreciation of Michael Oakeshott. King's *History of Ideas* and *Thinking Past the Problem* argue that as Gary Browning puts it in the first essay in this volume, "Preston King: Beyond Contextualism," that "Skinner's concentration upon the immediate ideological context of a piece of political thought is misconceived" and that "[t]here is no substitute for analyzing the logic of philosophical texts." Skinner's early work, writes Stephane Lawson, in "Contextualism and Incommensurability," the second essay in § I, "sought to remedy perceived errors of anachronism and presentism." According to Lawson, "the effort to denounce presentism in historical studies has led to an approach to history stressing discontinuity while often explicitly rejecting continuities." King's work on the history of ideas rejects the dogmatism inherent in both presentism and particularism. "The

upshot of King's reading of the variety of ways in which the term 'the present' operates in our understanding of history," writes Browning, "is that past and present can be recognized to differ and yet also be intimately related." Avoiding the dogmatism of "facile universalism" on the one hand as well as "exaggerated claims about the specificity and otherness of the past" on the other, King advises the historian of ideas to maintain what Lawson calls "a constant critical reflectivity."

The history of ideas is not an account of past thought as such and as a whole. Since there is no alternative to selectiveness, there can be no point in deploring it: the basic problem for the historian rather is the imminent and persistent risk of unreliability. King's claim is not just that ages differ, but arguably that the most critical of these ways consists in the overarching manner in which the people of an age may think. It is the substantive or paradigmatic thought that constitutes an age, not its abstract location in time qua chronology. King's prime concern is with such thinking, of course among elites, but more importantly with the ways in which elite thought and that of ordinary folk are interwoven. The weave or texture of such thought serves to establish the substantial differences between one era and the next. King's position, first instantiated in *Fear of Power*, is then approached more analytically in *The History of Ideas* and comes most fully developed in *Thinking Past a Problem*. When it comes to writing about history, King has strummed a clear and steady chord:

> There is no History as such. There is this history or that. No history covers everything, is everything. A history that assumes the contrary, loses its head; it surrenders the fundamental ground of its rationality, which is the recognition by history of its selective structure, and thus its acceptance of the need to elicit, at least to seek to elicit, the criterion by which selection (here or there, now or then) proceeds. Any history unavoidably 'sins' by omission. . . . One of the most important functions of the present is simply to accommodate the past. To know about the past is to know about it in the present, as a part of the present, from a present perspective; otherwise we cannot know it at all. . . . The commitment to keeping the past out of the present is based on nothing so much as a confused appreciation of the delicate logic of this interrelation.

Sustaining this "delicate logic" of the interrelation between the past and present, as well as the future, anticipating Lawson's extended argument, is crucial for historians of ideas. Taken to the extreme the contextualism thesis would seem, writes King, in *The History of Ideas*, "to exclude the possibility of a later writer being influenced by any predecessor" (298). By acknowledging the influence of King's work, the contributing authors assembled here are, collectively, and as Professor Browning turns it in the conclusion to his essay,

"upholding the validity of intellectual influences and supporting King's own critique of a contextualist dismissal of their claims."

In his "Political Theories and Histories of England in the Early Eighteenth Century," which is the third essay in the first section of this volume, James Moore finds precedent for Preston King's challenge to "historians of ideas who imposed their own ideas and principles upon the political actors and institutional arrangements of the past" in the skeptical perspective of David Hume. As a case in point, Moore adumbrates six different constructions of the history of England. In his own day, writes Moore, Hume considered it "a shameful delusion of modern historians to imagine that all princes, who were unfortunate in their government, were also tyrannical in their conduct." In a manner that anticipates King's critique of the Cambridge School of historiography, the "interest and intellectual delight of Hume's *History* is not to be found in the discovery of primary sources, but in his engagement with the theories that informed the historical work of others." Moore suggests that in his "skeptical exercise conducted with insight and penetration," Hume's work resonates with the ideal of history espoused by Preston King in *The History of Ideas* and *Thinking Past a Problem*. The indirect influence of King on the work of Sam Cherribi, whose "Painted Portrait of Africa" constitutes the final contribution of § I, consists in applying the methods and insights of the former's *African Winter* on the latter's analysis of identity and violence in the Middle East. In ways that resonate with Preston King's methodology, whether in *African Winter* or *Fear of Power*, whether in *Toleration* or the *Ideology of Order*, Professor Cherribi admonishes us that "[n]o one approach that is taken exclusively or dogmatically can be altogether persuasive." Political realities are to be understood in terms of relations rather than entities or fixed formulae. It is not the case that power is intrinsically evil, nor is authority inherently bad, or liberty always good.

In a way that anticipated what was to follow, King's earliest publication, *Fear of Power*, was really quite radical in its subversive appropriation of the social contract tradition in Europe and, as inheritors of the same tradition, more or less, including the attending muddles apropos the conceptual triad of liberty, authority, and justice. The algorithm is dialectically dynamic and compensatory. Toward the end of his analysis of Tocqueville, Proudhon, and Sorel, Professor King suggests that "none of these men attained a satisfactory understanding of social justice, not simply because an a priori criterion for this appears to be impossible, but because social justice must be frankly acknowledged to demand, not necessarily the exercise, but the potential exercise, of force. . . . They all demanded order, but attacked authority; wanted government, but not force; desired harmony grounded in liberty. . .

Their opposition to power was fundamental" (132). Expressed crisply, with cadence, often with a lilt of levity, and concise to the extreme, par usual, Professor King writes:

> [Their common assumptions] permitted them to invoke or assume an antinomy and a notion of balance between liberty and authority, wherein liberty had two meanings, [only] one of which was compatible with authority. The double meaning was convenient because one could begin by suggesting that liberty qua autonomy was an ideal, but then change horses mid-trot by arguing that authority could 'realize' liberty qua justice. For, if liberty means justice conceived as 'rights,' protection, or constitutional guarantees, then clearly it must frequently demand, rather than preclude, the resort to authority, to force, the imposition (and acceptance) of restraint; and this conception of authority is not compatible with liberty conceived as autonomy. But because liberty can change its meaning, the change permits it to be balanced, to be 'limited' (but ultimately 'realized') by or through authority. (132)

And alas, liberty has been changing its meaning, oscillating between this "convenient double meaning" of liberty ever since: ideally, the double meaning constitutes a principle of internal critique.

Toleration

> Given the unequal spread of positions, capacities, capabilities, within or between societies, the exercise of restraint [or tolerance] by those advantageously placed becomes a matter of no mean importance. (King, 1983: 14)

At the heart of King's literary corpus lies the concern with the transition from despotic to corporate rule—or from monarchy to democracy. Democracy, if it exists, is obviously a form of corporate rule, but democracy that is unrestrained can easily deteriorate into autocracy. The promotion of tolerance, which is not the same as toleration, for King, and for this reason, "basically presupposes inequality, but an inequality that has to be accepted" (15). For King, "we can only dispense with tolerance (or alternatively naïvely promote it) in direct relation to the degree of feasibility or otherwise of a system of equal rights—which is to say, democracy"; thus "the promotion of democracy basically presupposes an inequality, but one that can and should be removed" (ibid.). But unrestrained, what passes for democracy can occasionally devolve or deteriorate into what Tocqueville once called the tyranny of the majority, which is an inequality of a different type.

In pursuit of some less dogmatic form of rule than monarchy, King found himself fascinated with federation as a step in the direction of setting up different loci or centers of power, such that they might attend to one another

not by force but on the basis of some common understanding as captured in a charter or constitution. (This volume does not deal with King's *Federalism and Federation,* though it is relevant to the central themes discussed here.) King sees how decentralized if not corporate rule was challenged by the transition from early entities such as hunter- gatherers to early states to imperial regimes. King recognizes an impulsion by smaller entities, as they expand or are absorbed, to maintain their intimacy, which is also their unity. King's account runs to the effect that Hobbes's powerful and influential argument allows on the one hand that all states are equally despotic, and on the other that this is empirically and logically necessary. This is relevant to us because King's position is that Hobbes's argument, in this essential respect, among many contemporaries, and appearances to the contrary, remains current. Its currency is what King calls the ideology of order. "Human order is not a genetic given within the species but an artificial or fabricated system of rules or understandings that change over time and space," writes King, "[a]nd that is one reason why the enlightened capacity for compromise is so valuable, and because dogmatism is so full of holes" (2018: 14).

Toleration moderates one's unrestrained and dogmatic demand—driven by resentment or animosity and drive for retribution rather than restitution—for a proverbial pound of flesh. One may be wrong, or one may exhibit a proclivity to overdo it. "No man should be judge in his own case," thought Locke. It is a persistent misnomer that toleration means that one must accept everything and anything. Not true, insists King, but even when one disagrees, or when one's mind is already made up, one must give way to a process that allows truth and contradiction as the conditions for possibly changing one's mind.

King's work on toleration, which Peter Jones characterizes as "path-breaking," was written "at a time when political theorists, unlike historians, seemed to have lost interest in toleration." Professor Jones rehearses King's fine distinction between tolerance, which "does no more than perpetuate unjustified hierarchy and inequality" (Jones, below; King 1998: 11), such that "the power to tolerate must be adjudged intolerable," and toleration, which in a system of equal rights "supersedes tolerance" (ibid.). And because King believes that a system of equal rights, again Jones, as the most complete negation of intolerance, it similarly constitutes "the fullest form of toleration"; in a subsequent section of his analysis, Jones writes that a "system of equal rights is tolerant because it instantiates an ideal of toleration" and "immures people against the possibility of suffering intolerance." Rather than placing the fate of the tolerated in the hands of those who tolerate them, whether in terms of enlightened self-interest or supererogation as a means to the end of tolerance,

Jones approves of both King's aspiration and strategies for "structuring their political and legal relations so that they cease to be subject to others' power and so cease to be vulnerable to their intolerance."

Whereas Professor Jones's essay in § II of this volume provides the reader with a rigorous exposition of King's conceptual argument, Jan Dobbernack and Tariq Modood "explore toleration with an interest in democratic debate and political mobilization." Dobbernack and Modood aim at extending "King's concern with the balance of power, with relationships of domination or equality, and with the status that such differentials that the tolerating relationship implies," to what lay *beyond* tolerance and toleration. Following what they take to be "King's productive suggestion" that "[t]o move beyond tolerance can only mean destroying that sort of fixity, but not through the suppression of free speech, but by bringing it to a full flowering, by extending the range of public debate," Professors Dobbernack and Modood are interested primarily in "how tolerance maps onto public discourses and political mobilizations." What lies beyond tolerance if not also toleration is nothing less than recognition and respect as well as "political and interpretive struggles over the nature and meaning of tolerance." By means of a critical-deconstructive analysis, Dobbernack and Modood demonstrate how "distinctively liberal formulations of intolerance" or multiculturalism and secularism are sometimes deployed against vulnerable minorities in ways that are undemocratic and domineering or otherwise insulting. Similar to Dobbernack and Modood, who suggest that the language-game of tolerance has been "increasingly weaponized in liberal struggles" since the time that King first published *Toleration*, Chris Brown adumbrates the usage of tolerance and intolerance has been employed in forms that ultimately undermine the aspirations of democracy.

Friendship

> The virtue of friendship, despite other limitations, is that it may develop in the subject a degree of self-awareness, self-understanding, self-acceptance, and—by extension—an abstract empathy that carries wider political implications. (King, 2007: 13)

What is true of the State, thinking of Plato's treatment of justice, is sometimes true also for the individual soul. The self that is hidden, suggests King, is a sustained lie to itself and "the self can never be explored in the absence of the other" (2007: 17). It is interesting that in early Greece, but also in Rome, the notion of friendship—speaking to the unity, affection, and intimacy of the earliest societies—retained a significant, even dominant, intellectual, and

moral place. King emphasizes how struck he was, in teaching the history of political thought, from a moment when barely out of his teens at the London School of Economics, and over the years, again and again, by the massive caesura separating discussion of the subject of friendship among the ancients (e.g., the Seven Sages, Socrates, Plato, Cicero, Seneca, and inter alia) and among major medieval or modern thinkers, the latter ignoring it or treating it with simple indifference to hostility. The question King sees arising is how seriously it may be possible to reinsert serious contemplation of this subject in the modern philosophical repertoire as a part of politics and not as enemy to liberty and equality. "Nesting friendship amongst other political values," writes Graham Smith, with whom King published *The Challenge of Friendship in Modernity* (2000), "King has sought to show the significance of friendship and political life." And Heather Devere adds that "King is the inspiration behind much of the work related to 're-inspecting friendship as a major philosophical category'."

In his contribution to § III, Smith takes as his motif the perspective that "friendship and politics are fragmentary concerns in the sense of having become separated, and in this sense that they are necessarily incomplete and must resist all attempts at completion." As a case in point, Smith claims that "although there are models of friendship, there is no ideal model." We find ourselves concerned with violence, we're appalled by abuses of power, we wallow in personal liberties, we often abhor equality as a form of mass thinking, but the moral capstone is, or ought to be, some construct of friendship. King concedes that affection has an enormous range, from mawkish to morbid (2007:14), but he takes it as a working definition that "a friend is one in whose company one is comfortable, but not lost" (24). While Dr. King's primary concern has centered on the theorization of institutions, *Friendship in Politics*, also published with Smith, focuses on the ubiquitous notion of friendship in the ancient world but not in modern politics. King theorizes that liberty is increasingly running into the sands of alienation, anomie, and escalating social tension. He believes ideals of freedom, especially as non-oppression, and of entrepreneurialism—construed as sustained, local, and individual innovation—are indispensable. But he argues that there is now a need to shift the post-modern paradigm more energetically in the direction of a friendship society—that is, one grounded in open discussion, extensive social tolerance, avoidance of dogma, social and environmental care, and more bottom-up or at least less top-down modes of organizational development. Whether overt or covert, ancient or modern, respectively, friendships of sundry sorts permeate the political. In opposition to the modern tendency to "reduce politics to the arena of conflict and power, or "a Schmittian perspective that the heart

and soul of politics lies in enemy-recognition" (2007: 4), Smith claims that '[e]very form of politics is infused with friendship; and every form of friendship suggests a politics."

"If a good society—meaning a civil society—has a constitution," writes King, "then friendship is it" (2007: 28). Increasingly, however, friendship has been construed as something "private, personal, and particular." King's work on tolerance is by no means unrelated to his interest in friendship, since "the content of friendship as a moral matter is the specific morality of tolerance of divergent judgement" (2007: 24) and "unity as shared affection is crucial to reciprocity in friendship" (25). Taken together, the morality of tolerance or friendliness if not friendship, which is the "ultimate check on despotism," is important because "it involves prioritizing an underlying mutual affection over a perhaps irresolvable difference of perception or understanding" (26). The morass of game theory assumes on the contrary that it is always foolish to trust one another. The lack of trust undermines, King argues, not only the pursuit of truth but also democratic processes: "If friendship fuels trust, and trust facilitates honest debate, and honest debate is crucial to rational resolution of difference, then to prize the underlying motive of friendship from the overarching practice of competition—whether in sport, business, corporate behavior, education, medical practice, or elsewhere—may greatly endanger the establishment or maintenance of democratic norms" (2018, 5:1, 7).

Professor King is fond of quoting Aristotle's dictum, which is illustrative of a bygone age and attitude, that "it is friendship that seems to hold cities together and that legislators seem to be more concerned with it than with justice." Even if not altogether true, and while it could be taken to an unjust extreme, there's something to this Aristotelian insight. More than merely what's due to someone, beyond even one's fair share, trust and latitude or social relaxation and openness are among the socio-ethical or civic requirements for thinking and working together. Aristotle's insight is to be found in Cicero, too, but even Machiavelli understood that "if you don't have virtue, you can't have a Republic." In her contribution to this volume, Heather Devere follows King's "recommendation that we must pay more attention to some of the 'immense sophistication' of the ancient analyses on friendship" by drawing our collective attention to "some of those hidden histories of women writing about relationships, friendship and politics in Ancient Greece." As illustrative of a largely neglected tradition of discourse, Devere focuses on one of the best known of these women poets and philosophers of antiquity, Sappho of Lesbos, but she also discusses Myrtis, Tellesilla, Praxilla, Erinna, Moero, Anyte, Nossis, and Korinna. Devere notes that "there is still much digging to do."

In her concise yet suggestive contribution to this volume, Janet Coleman, in ways similar to Devere, takes seriously King's sage admonition in *Friendship in Politics*, not only that we return to the "immense sophistication" of antiquity on the theme of friendship, but also that in the absence of some kindly human presence "the self *in se* can be no more meaningfully human than an embryo" (2007: 17). Professor Coleman's focus is on the anthropological pre-linguistic conditions in Aristotle's notion of the self and the role of friendship in identity formation. Coleman's "Reflections of the Self Itself" shows how, in Ancient Greece in general and in Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics in particular, "the instinctive social impulse to friendship, co-operation and solidarity with others of one's kind, including but transcending kin, is held to be the natural precondition for social justice and law."

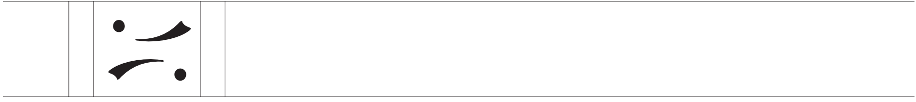
King's work on friendship over the years is by no means unrelated to his work on liberty, power, ideologies of order, tolerance, and history. Indeed, writes Smith: "Friendship is central to [King's] thought." King surmises that "civic interlocutors who inject friendship into their relations—rather than intruding indifference, neutrality, or hostility—are better positioned to point their discussions in the direction of purposive conversation than vituperative argumentation" (2018: 25). Though it may be true, as Aristotle says, that humans are political creatures, it is also true that there are a wide variety of *poleis* or, stated differently, sites of habituation. As Coleman reminds us, and for Aristotle, "it makes all the difference in the world where one becomes habituated, well or ill, and hence, whether there are sufficient facilitating conditions of friendship and reciprocal partnerships that enable a man to become an excellence instance of his kind." Perhaps more than ever before, given what appears to be a "steady and significant decline of civic concern with mutuality, recognition, and fellowship," these thoughts on the role of civic friendship are both prescient and pressing. King asks: "Is it really reasonable, in our global circumstances, to think that privileging indifference and neutrality, excluding an affective dimension to civil society, can marshal effective and systematic protection of free expression, civic engagement, and minimally equitable distributions?" (2018: 12). What modern political interactions lack, but what we direly need, if we wish to flourish, is what Preston King exemplifies in his life and work: collegial relationships "laced with affection, respect, mutuality, tolerance and rationality" and, alas, "one in whose company one is comfortable, but not lost" (2007: 24).

Conclusion

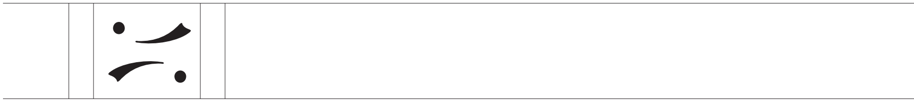
If each of the volumes in King's literary corpus were imagined to constitute a stately and sprawling grove of trees, each one exhibiting seminal similarities or family resemblances but also displaying unexpected variations wrought by seeds planted in diverse climes, both near and far, some in fertile soils while others were rocky and thorn-ridden, (e.g., in Jim Crow Georgia, Albany, then to Nashville, later to London and France, then to Africa at a time of the Independence Movement, as well as a decade of teaching in Australia and New Zealand, so imagine a giant cottonwood or oak tree here and a baobab over there, hither a Tōtara and thither a Tānekaha, some all branches or showy blossoms but others composed mostly of roots and stock, either way sturdy), one may well have a fitting metaphor for his literary corpus considered as a whole. There is to be found, should one take the time to examine it, an underlying and organic unity to his very sizable literary corpus, interwoven roots with interwoven roots, some philosophical and others political, most of it quite theoretical or analytic in character but laced with volumes that are quite practical and pressing. Some of his work attends to the political branches while the largest share of his corpus is devoted to disclosing the philosophical roots of the social problems that continue to bedevil us today.

Note

1 The comparison between the forms of leadership exemplified or personified in Martin Luther King, Jr., and Preston King is not altogether uninstructive. Think, for example, of that telling line of thought about leadership in the case of Ida B. Wells: "In the period before the civil rights era, restricting attention to the South, there could be no black leadership of political groups with an agenda. This has nothing to do with the potential for leadership, which is ever present, but with its actual exercise. . . . The problem of protest [as a form of leadership in the period before the civil rights] was that it could kill you. The problem with protest in exile is that it might not, and likely would not, be heard. All the same, the relevant power redounding to significant and transformative black leadership, the only kind of power on offer under despotism, is that divorced from formal institutions. Such [thought] leadership consisted simply in the articulation of ideas, dilemmas and stratagems, by pen and mouth—inevitably from a position of exile, to the North, or abroad. . . . The argument that thinking and writing can constitute leadership can be extended and made more imposing. For it can be contended that social, political and economic ideas, in general, are necessarily more important—and if that is too strong then at least no less important—than so-called material interests."



I. Historical Method



1. *Preston King: Beyond Contextualism*

GARY BROWNING

How are we to understand the history of political ideas? The nature of an historical study of political thought is disputed. Quentin Skinner's article, 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas' (Skinner 1969) remains groundbreaking in its insistence on a decidedly historical perspective in which the pastness of past thought and its distinctness from the present is to be respected. Whereas the history of political thought had hitherto been practised in heterogeneous ways it had tended to presume that a disciplined and critical reading of texts of political philosophy would elicit valuable arguments that retain a relevance for present-day politics, Skinner's article decries readings of past texts that assimilate the past to the present. Texts, for Skinner, are to be supplemented by an understanding of past contexts that furnish underlying frames of meaning in relation to which past ideas are to be understood. Hence, scholars, like Plamenatz, who would consider texts again and again, are to be declared ahistorical in their approach and to be seen as purveying mythologies rather than adding to our understanding of things (Plamenatz 1963: xxv).

John Dunn's *The Political Thought of John Locke: An Historical Account of the Argument of 'The Two Treatises of Government'*, like Skinner's 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas', was published in 1969 and his text is equally forthright in its declaration of a resolutely historical approach to the history of ideas (Dunn 1969). For Dunn, there is simply nothing in Locke's political thought that can speak to the late twentieth century political context in which he interpreted Locke's writings (Dunn 1969: x). The die was cast by these two pieces of polemical intervention into the study of the history of political thought. In subsequent years, Skinner and like-minded colleagues, such as Pocock, Dunn and Collini, developed interpretations of Machiavelli, Locke, Mill and other theorists that were decidedly contextualist