

INTRODUCTION

States and Societies is made up of commissioned essays written by Professor Neal Wood's academic friends, colleagues and former students. The editors of this issue of *History of Political Thought* are exceedingly grateful to the editors of the journal and to its proprietors for undertaking to publish an issue dedicated to Neal Wood. It is especially appropriate that Neal's career should be honoured in *History of Political Thought* since he contributed to the first volume of the journal and has been a staunch supporter of it ever since. Neal's scholarly work and the ongoing success of the journal are significant signs of the flourishing condition of a field of historical and political studies that has risen to a position of some prominence in the last thirty years.

Neal Wood was born in Los Angeles on 10 September 1922 and was brought up in that city. During the Second World War he served in the Royal Air Force in England, having volunteered for service before the United States entered the war. In 1945 Neal was transferred to the US Air Force and served in Italy. On his discharge he took advantage of the GI Bill of Rights to enrol as a student at the University of California, Berkeley. Moreover, while Neal's friends have never been able to establish his exact role in the RAF, they attribute his acquisition of unrivalled knowledge of the country pubs of the area and of the local brews of East Anglia to that period of his life. These experiences seem to have stimulated an interest in aspects of English culture that long survived the accommodating patronage of the Air Force. Neal was a research student in the Faculty of History at Cambridge from 1955 to 1957, supported by a Rockefeller Foundation Pre-Doctoral Award while writing his PhD thesis. He has returned to England on many occasions. Since the late 1970s he and Ellen have spent part of most years in London where they have a house in Camden, a district that once housed Friedrich Engels. Given these details of Neal's biography it is perhaps not surprising that much of his scholarly work has focused on Roman, Italian and British thinkers.

Neal undertook both undergraduate and graduate studies at the University of California, Berkeley, graduating with the highest honours in history in 1951 and taking a PhD in Political Science in 1958. After short-term teaching positions at Deep Springs College, California, and Barnard College of Columbia University, New York, Neal crossed the road to take up an appointment as Assistant Professor of Government at Columbia in 1958. From 1963 he was Assistant Professor and then Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of California, Los Angeles. In 1966 he was called to a chair in Political Science in the recently established York University, Toronto. Neal remained there until his retirement in 1988, at which time he was appointed Professor Emeritus of Political Science and Senior Scholar, York University.

At all stages of his career Neal has been an active participant in university and professional organizations. Involvement with the Graduate Programme in Social and Political Thought at York and a leading role in the Conference for the Study of Political Thought mark two particularly significant contributions to these areas of academic endeavour. From 1967 to 1971 Neal was the founding organizer of the Graduate Programme in Social and Political Thought and served as a member of its Executive Committee until the year before his retirement. SPT attracted students to York from around the world: Neal's long-running commitment to the programme played an important role in maintaining its profile and promoting the work of its historically focused students. At about the time that SPT was being set up at York, Neal Wood collaborated with John Pocock and Melvin Richer in founding and organizing the Conference for the Study of Political Thought. Earlier, while still at Columbia, Neal had been interested in English intellectual circles such as the seventeenth-century Great Tew Circle, the Invisible College and Gresham College. The idea for a group to study and discuss political theory seems to have emerged from this interest. Neal was a member of the Executive and Editorial Committees of the Conference from 1969 to 1971 and thus played a crucial role in establishing a scholarly society that now has a broad, internationally based membership.

A number of the contributors to this volume first knew Neal as a teacher and dissertation supervisor. At Columbia, UCLA and at York, Neal taught a wide range of courses in aspects of political theory and the history of political thought and gained a well-deserved reputation as an inspiring, considerate and effective teacher of both undergraduate and graduate students. At York, in particular, he excelled as a dissertation supervisor, providing incisive, timely, immaculately hand-written critical commentaries to encourage his students and to improve their work. Neal has continued to assist his former students, proving himself to be a tireless, uncomplaining source of advice, references and other support for those who have been determined to seek an academic career. This aspect of Neal's commitment to his students will be recalled with great affection and gratitude by many of them, not least by those whose work appears in this volume.

But while Neal's achievements as a colleague, teacher and supervisor would grace any academic career, the contributors to this volume would wish above all to emphasize his distinction as a scholar, researcher and author. These distinct but related areas of academic endeavour provide the basis for Neal's work as a teacher and as a colleague but they are demonstrated most forcefully in the list of publications printed at the end of this collection of essays. These publications are distinguished by elegant prose, by incisive and clear reasoning and by meticulous attention to subtle textual and historical nuances; they are all underwritten by extensive research. It is upon these works that Neal's international reputation rests and it is through them that the

fruits of his ongoing engagement with the history of political thought are made available to students and scholars throughout the world.

Neal Wood has set himself consistently high standards and submitted his work to the best journals in the field: *History of Political Thought*; *Political Theory*; *Political Studies*; *Journal of British Studies* and the *Journal of the History of Ideas*. In articles published in these and other journals and also in eight book-length studies Neal has worked across the whole chronological range of Western political thought, from Socrates to pre-war communist intellectuals in Britain. Within this range one can discern figures who have been of particular interest to Neal — Aristotle, Cicero, Augustine, Sir Thomas Smith, Machiavelli, Locke —and one can also see a consistent concern to locate historical political thought within the social and political context in which it was written. Methodological concerns have provided the focus for some of Neal Wood's scholarly work in the past and are still at the forefront of his attention as he continues to enjoy a vigorous and productive retirement from teaching and the non-research burdens of university life. Current projects include a volume of essays on historical political theory, tentatively titled *A Voice of Reason from the Past* and a multi-volume social history of political thought from Plato to the French Revolution, co-authored with Ellen Wood.

Neal's many academic friends, former colleagues and students will wish to join with the authors of these essays in thanking him for his past contributions and in signalling their anticipation of the outcomes of his present and future work. These expressions reflect our great admiration for Neal's distinguished contributions to the history of political thought. They are also prompted by our appreciation of his civility, his warmth and his loyalty to his students and friends that inform the personality lying behind his work. Recalling Neal's great scholarly and personal generosity, and relishing his gruff good humour, the authors of the essays dedicate this volume to him with affection and admiration.

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