History of Political Thought

Also by John Morrow

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History of Political Thought

A Thematic Introduction

John Morrow

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For Ruth Cook and in memory of Bill

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Preface

This book is designed to provide an introduction to the history of political thought that will be useful for students studying this subject in both history and politics programmes. It considers the full range of Western political thinking from the ancient world until the middle decades of the twentieth century and concludes with some brief indications of important developments in contemporary political theory. Although the book focuses on Western thought, it also contains a few side-glances at non-Western treatments of similar or related issues.

Unlike many introductory surveys that present a series of chronological chapters discussing the ideas of a more or less exhaustive list of important thinkers, this book focuses on themes and explores the ways in which the issues raised by them have been addressed by a range of historically significant political thinkers. This approach has been chosen with a view to identify varying responses to common or at least related concerns that have been of lasting significance to Western political thinkers. Each chapter discusses a number of thinkers who have had interesting points to make about the issues under consideration. An attempt has been made to identify the relationship between various thinkers and to trace patterns of development across extensive periods of time. Some thinkers are discussed in a number of chapters while others make a more fleeting appearance.

Three charts reflecting the conventional distinction between the ancient and medieval (c. 400 BC–1500 AD), early modern (1500–1800) and modern (1800–) periods (see pp. 7, 8, 11–12) provide a chronology that relates thinkers to one another and to major historical events. Boxes located within the text present biographical information on a wide range of important thinkers discussed in the book: the location of these is indicated by bold entries in the personal name index.

While working on this book I enjoyed a period of research leave in Cambridge. I am most grateful to the Leave Committee of Victoria University for granting me leave, and to the Warden and Fellows of Robinson College who, by electing me into a Bye Fellowship, provided a congenial environment during my stay in Cambridge. Staff of the Robinson College Library, the Cambridge University Library and the Victoria University Library have dealt courteously and efficiently with many enquiries. Miles Fairburn of the History Department at Victoria and Patrick Maloney of the Politics Department at that University have read various chapters of this books. My wife Diana Morrow has read the whole work in a number of forms and has helped me correct the proofs. Members of the Politics Department at the University of Keele responded to a seminar outlining the project, and I have also benefited greatly from the insightful and patient comments of my publisher's three anonymous readers. Adrienne Nolan has cheerfully provided valuable secretarial assistance. In thanking these people for their efforts on my behalf, and in acknowledging Steven Kennedy's efficient and encouraging editorial oversight, I do not, of course, absolve myself of responsibility for any of the shortcomings of this work.

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