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John Dunn

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In this collection of recent essays (several appearing in English for the first time), John Dunn brings his characteristically acute and penetrating insight to a wide range of issues facing politics – past, present and future.

In the first essay, ‘The history of political theory’, Professor Dunn argues for the importance of a historical perspective in political thought. Other studies engage with central concepts of political philosophy such as obligation, trust, freedom of conscience and property. A group of essays tackle specific contemporary problems and future dangers, for example racism and the dilemma of humanitarian intervention. The volume as a whole articulates the many dangers, but also the huge importance of contemporary politics, and provides a representative collection of work by one of the most astute political commentators writing today.

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For Heather
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Contents

<i>Preface</i>	<i>page xi</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>xii</i>
1 Introduction	I
2 The History of Political Theory	II
3 Contractualism	39
4 Political obligation	66
5 Trust	91
6 The claim to freedom of conscience: freedom of speech, freedom of thought, freedom of worship?	100
7 Property, justice and common good after socialism	121
8 The dilemma of humanitarian intervention: the executive power of the Law of Nature, after God	136
9 Specifying and understanding racism	148
10 Political science, political theory and policy making in an interdependent world	160
11 Democracy: the politics of making, defending and exemplifying community: Europe 1992	178
12 Is there a contemporary crisis of the nation state?	196
13 Political and economic obstacles to rapid collective learning	211
14 The heritage and future of the European left	219
<i>Index</i>	<i>229</i>

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Preface

These essays, written over the last five years, reflect the pleasures (and I hope also in some measure the benefits) of thinking about the history of political theory in Cambridge in the intellectual atmosphere established over the last three decades, especially by Quentin Skinner, Richard Tuck and Istvan Hont, and steadily enhanced more recently by very many others. They also reflect the continuing stimulus of a remarkable range of colleagues and students who come to, or pass through, Cambridge from all over the world. It is a privilege to work in a setting of such beauty as that of King's College, and to work amongst such a rich and constantly changing array of friends and intellectual companions: a privilege which entails too many intellectual and personal debts for me even to begin to try to register them here. I should, however, like especially on this occasion to acknowledge what I continue to owe to my friends in Japan (above all to Professor Takamaro Hanzawa and Professor Takashi Kato and to their remarkable teacher Professor Kan'ichi Fukuda), to my King's colleague Istvan Hont, to my students over the last decade (Nick Taylor most of all), and to Silvana Dean and Helen Gibson who do so much to make the Department of Social and Political Sciences an enduring framework in which to work as a university teacher, even a decade and a half after the coming of Margaret Thatcher.

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Chapter 3, 'Contractualism', was first printed in Italian in volume II of the *Enciclopedia delle scienze sociali* by the Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana (Treccani) in Rome in 1992 and is published here by permission of the Istituto, who hold the copyright.

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Chapter 8, 'The dilemma of humanitarian intervention: the executive power of the Law of Nature after God', was initially prepared for a conference on the spirit of conquest in the Faculté des Sciences Sociales et Politiques, University of Lausanne, in the summer of 1993. It was first published in *Government and Opposition* in 1994 and is published here

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xiii

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Chapter 14, 'The heritage and future of the European left', was initially prepared for a conference on the future of the left organized by the Fondazione Rosselli in Turin and was first published in English in *Economy and Society* (Routledge, London, 1993). It appears here by permission of the editor and publisher of the journal.