

1980

Against Epistemology - Comment

Daniel R. Sabia

University of South Carolina - Columbia, sabia@sc.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/poli_facpub



Part of the [Political Science Commons](#)

Publication Info

Published in *Journal of Politics*, Volume 42, Issue 4, 1980, pages 1154-1154.

<http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayJournal?jid=JOP>

© 1980 by Cambridge University Press

This Article is brought to you by the Political Science, Department of at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact digres@mailbox.sc.edu.

*Comment
on Paul Kress'
"Against Epistemology"*

DANIEL R. SABIA, JR.

REGARDING PAUL KRESS'S "Against Epistemology" (May, 1979): Perhaps I misunderstand him; certainly I am simplifying his argument; yet what Kress recommends (in large part) is that political theorists return from the *vita contemplativa* (specifically their current obsession with epistemology) to the critical study of politics, of public speech, action, policy, institution. I applaud. I should like only to footnote that the lament that political theorists have lost their way—*this* time to epistemology—is quite like the lament that political theorists had lost their way in the 30s and 40s—*that* time to the history of political theory. Cobban, cited by Kress on page 526, made just this argument as did, e.g., Pennock and Strauss and Easton and others in the early 50s. Of course their contention was as exaggerated (though not altogether unfounded) then as it is now, and it is unfortunate that Kress fails to recognize those theorists whose concern for public affairs surpasses their interest in epistemology.

To footnote the footnote: Given the recurring theme and spectacle of theorists losing their way, sociological explanations do seem requisite, just as Kress at times suggests. The culprits seem to me to be the "professional" academy (recipe for constricted imaginations and intellectual freedom) and the liberal state (recipe for either complacency or resignation depending on one's tastes).