

# Creating an Independent Political Science

## *Fierce Controversy amid Professorial Competitions*

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### **Abstract**

This article investigates the fundamental question of the independence of political science from neighboring disciplines, especially history but also law, philosophy, statistics, and geography. This investigation is achieved through the excavation and contextualization of a great academic dispute or *Methodenstreit*, broadly understood, about the very nature of political science itself.

In 1915–1916, there were only three permanent positions for political scientists in the whole of Sweden, namely the chairs in Uppsala, Lund, and Gothenburg. Within the first six months of that academic year, all three professorships were vacated by their incumbents — the historian of political philosophy S. J. Boëthius, the political scientist Pontus Fahlbeck, and the geopolitician Rudolf Kjellén. These vacant chairs led to professorial competitions. Boëthius, Fahlbeck, and Kjellén refereed the competitions. They did so alongside the constitutional historian Otto Varenius and the constitutional lawyer C. A. Reuterskiöld. These five professors, public intellectuals, and members of parliament were the most prominent state scientists in contemporary Sweden. Their referee statements contain principled declarations of differing conceptions of political science.

A fierce academic dispute flared up around these professorial competitions. It did so through referee statements, journal articles, and the *magna opera* of Boëthius and Kjellén on state theory and political science, i.e. Boëthius's book *Om statslivet* (*On the life of the state*) and Kjellén's book *Staten som lifsform* (*The state as a form of life*), both published in 1916. Among the applicants to the professorships were the students of the referees themselves, including the precocious historian of political and legal philosophy Gunnar Rexius, who committed suicide aged 32 in 1918 after three highly unfortunate applications.

The applicants largely followed the different methodological precepts of their teachers, the referees. As in 1901, when Boëthius had applied for the Johan Skytte

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Chair in Uppsala, there was yet again a professor of history among the applicants, who were otherwise primarily associate professors (docents) in political science. This time, the history professor was Sam Clason of Lund University. The referees' assessments of the mainly historical publications of Sam Clason, Gunnar Rexius, and Axel Brusewitz (the latter two being students of Boëthius) were key to the *Methodenstreit* and to the outcome of the professorial competitions. The three sections of the article concern the three professorial competitions and the controversy surrounding them.

## 1. Competition for the Johan Skytte Professorship in Political Science in Uppsala, 1915–1916

### 1.1 BACKGROUND

This article investigates the fundamental question of political science's relation to history, law, philosophy, statistics, and geography, as well as the question of the emancipation of political science from these disciplines. This is achieved through the excavation, interpretation, and contextualization of a great controversy about the nature of political science.<sup>1</sup>

In 1915, political science was the main subject of three professorships in Sweden. Their incumbents were the historian of state theory Simon Johannes Boëthius in Uppsala, the political scientist Pontus Fahlbeck in Lund, and the geopolitician Rudolf Kjellén in Gothenburg. Turning 65 that year, both Boëthius and Fahlbeck retired from their chairs. Amid a fierce political-scientific *Methodenstreit*, the stage was set for controversial professorial competitions.<sup>2</sup>

The government added fuel to the fire when, only weeks before Boëthius's planned retirement, the Minister of Education, Law Professor K. G. Westman, launched an investigation into the potential expropriation of Uppsala University's Johan Skytte Professorship and its patronage.<sup>3</sup> The main goal of

<sup>1</sup> I translate the Swedish word *statskunskap* into the English term "political science". The relevant historical sources are relatively consistent regarding the usage of the terms *statskunskap* and *statsvetenskap*. I argue that, generally, just as politics is a social science today, *statskunskap* was a *statsvetenskap* (a state science), similar to how the German disciplines of *Staatslehre*, *Staatsrecht*, and *Staatenkunde* were some of the numerous *Staatswissenschaften* (state sciences). On *Staatswissenschaft*, see Lindenfeld 1997.

<sup>2</sup> My focus on the history of a science and the controversies surrounding professorial competitions may bear some resemblance to Stefan Collini's 1983 essay on political science in Cambridge and to Robert Wokler's 2001 essay on professorships in political thought in Oxford, Cambridge, and London. See also Ross 1991 on American social science.

<sup>3</sup> Known as the world's oldest professorship in politics, the *Regius et Skytteamus* (royal and Skyttean) Chair in *Eloquentiae et Politices* (Rhetoric and Politics) was endowed by Gustavus II Adolphus the Great and State Councilor Johan Skytte at Uppsala University in 1622. Johan Skytte was a statesman,

the investigation was to ascertain whether the right of the Skytte patron to select the new professor could be repealed. Formal discussions and votes took place on the University Board and in the Humanistic Section of the Faculty of Philosophy, to which the Chair belonged. Official statements on potentially bringing the Chair's appointment procedure in line with other (state-funded) chairs were written by Westman, Boëthius, Ludvig Stavenow (Uppsala Professor of History), Nathan Söderblom (Uppsala University Chancellor, Professor of Theology, and Archbishop of Sweden), Henrik Schück (Uppsala University Rector and Professor of Literary History), Count Axel Mörner (the Skytte patron), and others. The main result of the investigation was that *the Skytte patronage could not be repealed*.<sup>4</sup>

The large liberal newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* misinterpreted the investigation as a political battle between conservatives and liberals, alluding to Hjalmar Hammarskjöld's de facto conservative government on the one hand and the Skytte patron Axel Mörner, a liberal politician, on the other.<sup>5</sup> Professors Rudolf Kjellén and Sam Clason were prominent candidates for the Chair and, concurrently, influential conservative members of parliament. Incidentally, the editor-in-chief of *Dagens Nyheter* was the radical and liberal politician Otto von Zweigbergk, who would join Kjellén and Clason in Parliament during this academic struggle.<sup>6</sup>

Shortly after the investigation was published, the academic rivals Boëthius and Kjellén actually corresponded. Boëthius attempted to calm Kjellén's suspicions of hostility from certain Uppsala professors, in all likelihood himself, Westman, Stavenow, Schück, and Harald Hjärne, who had recently retired as Professor of History.<sup>7</sup> In a letter to Kjellén, Boëthius wrote that "*Dagens Nyheter* interpreted the investigation as the government taking sides in favor of you

rhetorician, and the teacher of Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sweden from 1611 until 1632, when Sweden became a great power and when the Academy in Uppsala was reformed under Skytte's chancellorship. Skytte was a learned Renaissance humanist of the anti-scholastic and anti-Aristotelian school following the French rhetorician Petrus Ramus (1515–1572). Interestingly, he was also a diplomatic envoy to King James I of England and King Christian IV of Denmark. On Skytte, see Ingemarsdotter 2011.

- 4 The investigation was published in the booklet *Handlingar rörande Skytteanska professurens tillsättning*, 1915. Uppsala.
- 5 *Dagens Nyheter*, 8 March, 1 April, 3 September, 3 October, and 21 November 1915. As in 1901, the Skytte professorial competition was yet again a public controversy covered by many newspapers, including *Svenska Dagbladet*, *Upsala Nya Tidning*, *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfartstidning*, *Göteborgs Aftonblad*, *Stockholms tidningen*, and *Aftonbladet*.
- 6 Like other newspapers, Zweigbergk's *Dagens Nyheter* had also politicized the previous competition for the Skytte Professorship 14 years earlier. Perhaps the newspaper did so in order to assist the then-liberal Harald Hjärne in winning Boëthius's conservative seat in Parliament, which he would retire from if he won the Skytte Chair. In 1902, Hjärne did indeed win Boëthius's old seat in Parliament but, ironically, as a conservative. "En professur i politik", *Dagens Nyheter*, 19 March 1901. On Hjärne, see Lorents 1971–1973; Elvander 1961.
- 7 Hjärne and Kjellén were often at odds, and the intellectual historian Staffan Björck (1946) asserted that much of Hjärne's authorship is a critique of Kjellén. Many of Hjärne's acolytes also eagerly criticized Kjellén.

(or Clason) against the liberal Mörner, and you seem to view it as a measure *against you*" (S. J. Boëthius to Rudolf Kjellén, 26 July 1915).<sup>8</sup> However, Boëthius himself viewed the measure as "only a result of ... Westman's political leveling desire and meddling. It is certain that the idea did not come from Uppsala. The delay in my discharge was clearly only intended to give the government time for its manipulations" (Boëthius to Kjellén, 26 July 1915), as the founding letters of the Skytte Chair stipulate that it may only be vacant for six months at a time. As such, Boëthius should have been discharged upon reaching retirement age in March 1915. Instead, he was discharged six months late, and held on to the professorial residence in Skytteanum until 1 April 1916. It seems that Boëthius was attempting to deflect the suspicions and convince Kjellén that it was the government, and not Uppsala University, that might not prefer him.

Surprisingly, Kjellén ended up *not* applying for the Skytte Professorship, having informed Boëthius of his likely decision in advance. He probably did not apply due to the resistance he perceived from the investigation and from the aforementioned Uppsala professors. Boëthius wished that a historian would succeed him to maintain the historical character of the Chair, informing Kjellén of his preference for the historian Sam Clason, should Kjellén not apply: "Since you are not applying, it seems to me desirable if Clason got the position. I will therefore inform him of your 'decision', but will ask him to seek confirmation thereof from you before he applies (if he chooses to do so). I know that he did not intend to apply if you applied and that he was hesitant to do so regardless" (Boëthius to Kjellén). Boëthius was in correspondence with Clason, encouraging him to apply. Both he and Clason considered Kjellén the superior candidate.

In December 1915, while the referees' rankings of the applicants were being completed, Kjellén was in distress. Because he had lost the competition for the Skytte Chair in 1901, his life in Gothenburg had been prolonged from ten to twenty-five years. Now, he was disheartened at the thought of being cheated, as he viewed it, of another professorship. He despaired at the situation regarding the vacant Chairs in Uppsala and Lund, thinking that his academic and political rivals were attempting to delay and block his paths to both professorships. In an explosive letter to Pontus Fahlbeck, he intimates that he "*must*" leave Gothenburg but sees obstacles and "traces intrigues from two directions, the liberal clique in Lund and the Hjärneian conservatives [in Uppsala], who have always wanted to get rid of me".<sup>9</sup> The liberal clique in Lund refers to a loose fac-

8 All translations and manuscript transcriptions are by the author.

9 "[...] jag måste härifrån... [...] jag önskar komma till Lund, där i alla fall en akademisk tradition finns, och där jag icke ... nödgas riskera allt för sura miner. Men då marken här nästan brinner mig under fötterna, ville jag dock – innan jag afstår helt från Uppsala – ha någon garanti att det icke skulle draga allt för mycket ut på tiden med ärendet i Lund... Alltså räknas mitt namn bland pretendenterna i Uppsala... På lojaliteten hos fakulteten i Lund har jag lyckligtvis ingen anledning att tvifla; men jag

tion led by Hans Larsson, the great Professor of Philosophy, with whom Kjellén was embroiled in public political polemics that very year.<sup>10</sup>

Although the 1915–1916 Skytte professorial competition was a new and rather unique situation – indeed all historical events are unique because they only happen once, as the state theorist Georg Jellinek (1914: 30) has taught us –,<sup>11</sup> there were certain parallels between it and the competition in 1901. I attempt to show that the Swedish debate regarding political science, including its relation to other sciences, not least to history, flared up again around this competition, and the reignition of an overarching *Methodenstreit* is important to recognize. Furthermore, the applicants in both cases primarily comprised associate professors (docents) in political science and one professor of history, who was older and more qualified than the rest if strictly historical publications were allowed to count. In 1901, the history professor had been Boëthius; now it was Sam Clason, who had also applied in 1901 and who was now professing history in Lund. Hence, the Skytte professorial competition was yet again a question of principle and of answering the following questions. What is political science? What is it not? What does it study and how? Much would be decided by how the referees assessed the relevance of Clason's historical publications.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to Professor Clason, the applicants were Gunnar Rexius, Boëthius's associate professor in history and political science in Uppsala, Sigfrid Wallengren, Fahlbeck's associate professor in political science in Lund, and Peter Olof Gränström, Kjellén's associate professor in political science in Gothenburg and formerly Fahlbeck's student and associate professor in Lund.<sup>13</sup> Note that since the previous Skytte professorial competition in 1901, Uppsala University had established one professorship each in geography and statistics, two state sciences for which the Skytte Professorship had been responsible but which were now en route to emancipation, to a status as independent sciences.

## 1.2 REFEREE STATEMENTS

Despite what might have been expected, Boëthius was not appointed to referee the competition for Fahlbeck's old Lund professorship in 1916. This was convenient for Fahlbeck because he disagreed fundamentally with Boëthius

spårar intriger från två andra håll, liberala kliken i Lund och den Hjärneska högern, som alltid velat mig till lifs". Rudolf Kjellén to Pontus Fahlbeck, 7 December 1915. Incidentally, Fahlbeck's referee statement is also dated 7 December.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Larsson 1915. Debate contributions were also published in the press, especially in *Dagens Nyheter* and *Nya Dagligt Allehanda*. Cf. Larsson 1908: esp. 104–114, which is cited with approval in Kjellén 1916d: 81, 84 (note 2), 105 (note 2), 110.

<sup>11</sup> On Jellinek, see Koskenniemi 2002: 21, 188, 198–208, 212, 242, 250f, 322, 406, 452.

<sup>12</sup> On the need for, and the loss of, the logic of historical thinking within various human and social sciences, see Bourke & Skinner 2023.

<sup>13</sup> On Gränström, see the obituary by his professorial successor in Gothenburg, Andrén 1927.

on political science and its nature, contents, boundaries, and general methodology. However, Boëthius did referee the competitions for the Professorships in Political Science in Uppsala in 1915 and in Gothenburg in 1917. In addition to Boëthius, the other referees in one or more of the three professorial competitions were Fahlbeck, Kjellén, the constitutional historian Otto Varenius, and the constitutional lawyer Carl-Axel Reuterskiöld,<sup>14</sup> who were all well-known state scientists.<sup>15</sup> Like the other referees, Boëthius set forth his principled convictions and academic arguments regarding political science in his referee statements.

In his Uppsala referee statement,<sup>16</sup> Boëthius acknowledged that the subject of the Skytte Chair was not history but rather political science (*statskunskap*). He divided political science into (1) positive or restricted political science, studying “the constitutions, administrations, and political significance of current states” and (2) general state theory (*allmän statslära*), “investigating … state institutions” (Boëthius in *Sakkunnigutlåtanden … Skytteanska professurens återbesättande år 1916*: 3). As such, positive political science was related to

<sup>14</sup> C. A. Reuterskiöld became Professor of Constitutional, Administrative, and International Law at Uppsala University in 1909, shortly after the death of Hugo Blomberg, his predecessor, with whom he had co-founded and co-edited the state-scientific journal *Statsvetenskaplig tidskrift för politik, statistik, ekonomi* in 1897, along with Alin and Fahlbeck. These four academics co-edited the journal until Fahlbeck became the sole editor in 1900 and moved the publication location from Uppsala to Lund.

<sup>15</sup> Political science was not represented as a university subject in Sweden's capital until 1907, when Otto Varenius became Professor of Constitutional Law with Political Science and Administrative and International Law (*statsrätt med statskunskap jämte förvaltningsrätt och folkrätt*) at Stockholm University College, where political science was thus a minor subject. Not only this chair but political science in general was partly juridical and historical at this point in time. Indeed, the study of the state and politics has been strongly oriented towards law and history for millennia, going back to Aristotle and Cicero. The Uppsala Professors Johannes Loccenius and Johannes Schefferus are seventeenth-century examples of a juridical and historical orientation within the study of politics in Sweden. The juridical and historical synthesis began to slowly disintegrate in Sweden in the 1890s and especially after the death of the Skytte Professor and constitutional historian Oscar Alin on New Year's Eve 1900. On the combination of law and history in Swedish political science, see the historian-turned-constitutional lawyer Nils Herlitz's 1928 inaugural lecture as the successor of Varenius, who retired in 1925. On constitutional-legal and constitutional-political orientations within German, British, and Swedish political science, see Andrén 1928.

Regarding the beginnings of political science in Stockholm, it is worth mentioning that the city received another professorship in the subject already in 1911, four years after Varenius's appointment, when the first Rector of the newly-established Stockholm School of Economics (Handelshögskolan i Stockholm), Carl Hallendorff, became the school's first Professor of Political Science and Economic History. Hallendorff was also a conservative Member of Parliament for a short while, and he wrote on international affairs for the newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet*. The latter work and the fact that he was a student of Harald Hjärne contributed to Hallendorff's critique of Rudolf Kjellén's works on *Stormakterna* (*The great powers*). Political science was not practiced as the main subject of a professorship in Stockholm, and was partly therefore not fully independent there, until 1935, when the Lars Hierta Chair in the subject was established, thereby removing the subject from Herlitz's Professorship, which henceforth would be in Constitutional, Administrative, and International Law.

<sup>16</sup> Uppsala University printed the referee statements (dated December 1915) on the competition for the Skytte Chair in the booklet *Sakkunnigutlåtanden afgifna i och för Skytteanska professurens återbesättande år 1916*. 1916. Uppsala. This booklet as well as unpublished manuscripts pertaining to this professorial competition are located in the files *Handlingarna rörande 1915–1916 års Skytteanska professorstillsättning* in the collection Depositio Skyteana in the regional archive Landsarkivet in Uppsala (Riksarkivet, the National Archives).

constitutional and administrative law. As a sign of the contemporary interrelation between political science and law, we note that Varenius and Reuterskiöld had applied to the humanistic Skytte Chair in 1901 but were now among Sweden's leading authorities on constitutional and administrative law, holding chairs in faculties of law.<sup>17</sup> State theory was related to practical philosophy but distinguished from it through the study of the concrete and full manifestations of the state, "especially in its historical context" (*ibid.*).

Boëthius asserted that his own perception of the Professorship's subjects was the same as Johan Skytte's original intention. To support this assertion, he quoted Skytte as saying that the holder of the Chair must be "above all a politician and a historian" (*ibid.*). If we now turn to Skytte's donation letter of 1 October 1622, which Boëthius was quoting, it actually states that "the Professor's quality and daily exercises [must] above all consist of him being a politician, a historian, and a good orator, and that he in all the aforementioned is particularly of the Ramist method".<sup>18</sup> Skytte had prescribed that the Uppsala Professor of *Eloquentiae et Politices* (Rhetoric and Politics) must be a follower of the French Renaissance humanist Petrus Ramus. Boëthius thought that this prescription existed because Skytte was inspired not directly by Ramus but rather by the jurist Johannes Althusius's seminal work *Politica* of 1603, which was "organized ... according to Ramist logic" and method, as Frederick S. Carney (1964: xvi) wrote and as Althusius himself made clear. Althusius was also influenced by the political philosopher Jean Bodin's important *Six livres de la république* of 1576, particularly by its assertion that sovereignty rests not in the realm or the people but rather in the person of the prince, an assertion that Althusius (1964 [1603]: 4f) opposed in his own theory of popular sovereignty. Boëthius thus argued that what Skytte meant by the term "politician" was a student of politics as expounded by Bodin and Althusius in these works, which contain both positive political science and state theory with contemporary and historical examples of state institutions.

<sup>17</sup> Varenius professed his subjects in the Legal and State-Scientific Faculty (rätts- och statsvetenskapliga fakulteten) in Stockholm. In his 1921 proposal for the establishment of pure faculties of state science, Kjellén repudiated the combination of law and state science in single faculties as a remnant of "an antiquated ... concept of the state from the days of older liberalism, when the state was in principle assigned to guard duty on the rule of law (rättsordningen) and nothing more". Legal and state-scientific faculties were widespread at Europe's numerous German-language universities. Generally, legal and (to a lesser extent) economic professorships dominated such faculties. See also Fahlbeck's 1893 proposal for faculties of state science; the economic historian Eli Heckscher's 1908 proposal for a state-scientific degree; Boëthius, Eli Heckscher, and Hjalmar Hammarskjöld's 1910 government-commissioned investigation into the potential establishment of such a degree: *Om inrättandet af en statsvetenskaplig examen*; and Pettersson 2003: 75f.

<sup>18</sup> The original founding letters of the Johan Skytte Chair by Skytte and the King on parchment with seals are stored in the Depositio Skyteana collection at Landsarkivet in Uppsala (Riksarkivet). Copies have been published, among other places, in Annerstedt 1877, appendices 73, 74, 76, pp. 183ff, quotation at p. 201. To my knowledge, the brilliant librarian and university historian Annerstedt was the first to publish copies of these. See also Kjellén 1922: 275.

Furthermore, he asserted that Skytte's prescription that the Professor ought to be "a historian" did not simply mean that the Professor should practice history as an auxiliary to politics, which is always necessary, but that history should be practiced as a *main subject*. This was because of the prescription that the Professor should "celebrate ... Sweden's kings". To Boëthius, this meant that future professors should practice *Swedish history*. From the establishment of the Skytte Professorship in 1622 until the death of Professor Olof Kolmodin in 1838, Roman historiography was an important part of the subject of general history, and Skytte Professors had often studied ancient history, especially Roman historians such as Livy and Tacitus.

Boëthius dismissed the subject *Eloquentiae* in the title of the Professorship as well as the prescription that the Professorship should be "oratorical" and that the Professor should be "a good orator". He did so by connecting rhetoric with *Roman historiography in Latin prose*: the Professorship needed no longer concern itself with rhetoric or ancient history, which had been replaced by contemporary political history because of changing demands. "Historical edification [is] an indispensable condition of qualification for every professorship in political science", he wrote, but the Skytte Professorship was different to other professorships in political science by being *more* historically oriented than they were. "[T]his professorship is admittedly a professorship in political science but with a special focus on the historical elements of the subject" (Boëthius in *Sakkunnigutlåtanden ... Skytteanska professurenens återbesättande år 1916*: 5).

Regarding the assessment and ranking of the applicants, the referees' different understandings of political science and the Skytte Chair would be key, and Boëthius admitted as much. Sam Clason's publications clearly outweighed those of the other three applicants, but, while the publications of the other applicants were within central subjects of the Skytte Professorship, his publications, though still within bounds, were more peripheral to the Chair's subjects. It is "a question of principle and if answered in one way, then the precedence of Prof. Clason over all his co-applicants is clear; if it is answered in the opposite way, it seems that he should not be considered". Boëthius's ranking of the applicants followed from his principled arguments. He declared all four applicants qualified to hold the Professorship, *ranking Sam Clason first*, Gunnar Rexius second, Sigfrid Wallengren third (with some doubt regarding the second and third ranks), and Olof Gränström fourth (Boëthius in *Sakkunnigutlåtanden ... Skytteanska professurenens återbesättande år 1916*: 16, 18).

In his referee statement, Pontus Fahlbeck praised his Lund colleague Sam Clason as a gifted human scientist who had published more than what was common for his age (48) (on Fahlbeck, see Carlsson 1953 and Ringmar 2014). Nevertheless, while the other applicants had concerned themselves with political science, Clason had dealt with history, and "history is not political science. History is a necessary help and partly also a prerequisite for political

science; but, both in content and in method, they are widely separate sciences", Fahlbeck maintained (in *Sakkunnigutlåtanden ... Skytteanska professurens återbesättande år 1916*: 19f; on political-scientific disputes and referee statements during the middle of the twentieth century, see Nilsson 2009; on disputes between various scientific views and on positivism critique, see Ekelund 2017, esp. pp. 275–374). If there was a fundamental difference between Clason and the other applicants, why did he apply? He probably did so because of his understanding of the Skytte Chair and because many former Skytte professors had been historians, including the three most recent ones: Boëthius, Oscar Alin, and Wilhelm Erik Svedelius.

As opposed to Boëthius, Fahlbeck was more concerned with contemporary political science than with interpretations of the traditions or founding letters of the Skytte Chair, which he found outdated, not least regarding celebrations and orations concerning kings, i.e. history and rhetoric. Uppsala University needed a professorship in political science, the practitioners of which ought not to be overlooked, he believed. Therefore, he declared *Clason unqualified* to hold the Skytte Chair. He found the other three applicants fully qualified, ranking Wallengren first, Rexius second, and Gränström third (Fahlbeck in *Sakkunnigutlåtanden ... Skytteanska professurens återbesättande år 1916*: 21, 26). He considered Wallengren somewhat juridically oriented and Rexius philosophically oriented.

The third and final referee was Otto Varenius. To him, political-scientific texts were the most relevant publications to be judged in a competition for a professorship in political science. He implicitly acknowledged those (especially the historians Boëthius and Stavenow) who argued that historical publications should also count because history and political science were closely related and because of a certain type of interpretation of Johan Skytte's intentions. He found the latter reason highly tenuous and unsupported by Skytte's two founding letters from 1622 because the subjects of the Professorship are known as eloquence or rhetoric and politics throughout. It was only when *further* specifying the Professor's responsibilities that Skytte mentioned history, and the terms with which he did so (celebrating kings etc.) indicate that he viewed history as a mere auxiliary to rhetoric and politics. Skytte attributed his fortune to the virtue of edification within rhetoric and politics, the two sciences which he therefore wished to promote (Varenius in *Sakkunnigutlåtanden ... Skytteanska professurens återbesättande år 1916*: 27f).

However, history in Skytte's time was not the same as history three centuries later, Varenius pointed out. The fragmentation, specialization, and distribution of academic labor was of course much more advanced in the 1910s than in the 1620s. Scientific specialization had also increased significantly in the last few decades leading up to the professorial competition in 1915, and this was especially true of the relationship between history and political science.

Importantly, Varenius writes that “*the nature of political science as its own independent scientific discipline has thus been expressed within the university world through emancipation, partly from history, partly from geography, partly finally ... from statistics*” (*ibid.* Emphasis added). These four sciences were taking increasingly separate paths, with distinct identities regarding professorships, teaching, examination, research, journals, study objects, and methodology.

Nevertheless, Varenius did not deny the interconnection between history and political science. Nor did he deny that history was a useful auxiliary to political science. Historical method could be helpful to the political scientist, especially when writing within the shared border areas of constitutional history, administrative history, and parliamentary history. But these areas were not central to contemporary political science and therefore publications within such areas could not be given primary importance. Varenius declared all the applicants qualified to hold the Professorship, *ranking Rexius first, Wallengren second, Gränström third, and Clason fourth* (Varenius in *Sakkunnigutlåtanden ... Skytteanska professurens återbesättande år 1916*: 37).

### 1.3 A DRAMATIC RESULT

The three referees Boëthius, Fahlbeck, and Varenius disagreed on the relation of history to political science and therefore also disagreed on Clason’s qualifications for the Chair. Moreover, they each ranked a different candidate as number one. Clason, Wallengren, and Rexius were all ranked first by different referees. However, Rexius, the acting Skytte Professor during the 1915–1916 academic year, had slightly better results due to his two second places. Wallengren had one second place and Clason had none. Despite Rexius’s slightly superior results, the Skytte patron, Count Axel Mörner, was not fully convinced that he should recommend him to the King in Council as the new professor.

The fundamental disagreement between the referees presented Axel Mörner with a dilemma once again. In 1901, he had selected a pure historian (Boëthius) primarily based on the referee statement of Ludvig Stavenow and against the counsel of Fahlbeck, who ranked Rudolf Kjellén first and called Boëthius “the least competent, not to say the most incompetent” of the six applicants (Fahlbeck to Mörner, 21 April 1901). Once again, the most qualified candidate for the position had *not* applied. In 1901, that candidate had been Fahlbeck; in 1915, it was Kjellén.

In January 1916, shortly after receiving the referee statements, Mörner approached Kjellén. This approach may have been an attempt to break the tie and disentangle the referees’ disagreement on the applicants. As usual, Kjellén was in Parliament during the winter and spring and therefore in Stockholm, where Mörner lived. The two men met on 26 January. What was said during the meeting is unknown. It is likewise unknown whether Kjellén counseled

Mörner on the applicants or on his own conception of political science and the Skytte Chair. Kjellén likely told Mörner, his practical-political opponent, about his theory of an independent political science and about Uppsala University's lack of a professor in the subject. Only one month earlier (on Christmas Eve 1915), Kjellén had written a notebook entry about his developing theory, "the system that will elevate political science to an independent existence... It is the same kind of work Linnaeus performed in botany and Berzelius in chemistry" (Rudolf Kjellén cited in Ruth Kjellén-Björkquist 1970, vol. 2: 242).<sup>19</sup> Nonetheless, the two men clearly discussed the question of Kjellén's potential appointment to the Chair for he sent a letter to Mörner the day after their meeting saying that he had considered the question and would accept if the patron selected him (Kjellén to Mörner, 27 January 1916).

A couple of weeks later (on 14 February 1916), Kjellén received the letter from Lund University that he had been hoping for since Fahlbeck's retirement the previous summer. Everything was ready for him to take up the Lund Professorship in Political Science, and a decision on the matter was required. However, only thirty minutes after receiving this letter, Kjellén's telephone rang. It was Count Mörner informing him of his appointment to the Regius and Johan Skytte Chair at Uppsala University (Kjellén-Björkquist 1970, vol. 2: 243). Kjellén was called to the Skytte Professorship on 15 February, and the King in Council ratified the calling only three days later.<sup>20</sup> He would hold his explosive inaugural lecture on 15 May 1916.<sup>21</sup>

Nevertheless, if Sam Clason had not applied, Boëthius would have ranked Gunnar Rexius first instead of second, which might have led to Rexius becoming the Skytte Professor in 1916. Furthermore, had the applicants not been considered relatively tied, Mörner may not have discussed the matter with Kjellén, who therefore might have become professor in Lund instead of in Uppsala. On the other hand, Mörner may well have selected Kjellén regardless of the rankings due to personal motivations and because Kjellén simply was the superior candidate, and Fahlbeck may have recommended him to Mörner orally.<sup>22</sup> The fact that Kjellén had not applied was quite convenient for Mörner, who could then protest against those favoring the repeal of his and his

<sup>19</sup> Kjellén was developing this system of politics or theory of political science in, among other texts, the book *Världskrigets politiska problem* (*The political issues of the world war*), which was published precisely in December 1915. Incidentally, on the same Christmas Eve that he wrote the aforementioned notebook entry, he also wrote the foreword to the German translation of that work, *Die politischen Probleme des Weltkrieges* (1916).

<sup>20</sup> See the *curriculum vitae* that Kjellén published in Schück 1916: 90–98, at 90f. Schück gives the date of the royal ratification as 18 March (which may be a typographical error, at 89).

<sup>21</sup> On Kjellén's inaugural lecture as Skytte Professor, see section 3.1 of this article.

<sup>22</sup> Mörner and Fahlbeck lived in the same area of Stockholm (Djursholm), which was then sparsely populated.

descendants' right to select the Skytte Professor.<sup>23</sup> Ultimately, the patron disregarded the referee statements (a procedural element recently formalized by the expropriation investigation) and selected a non-applicant, thereby demonstratively exercising his recently confirmed selection right.

## 2. Competition for the Professorship in Political Science in Lund, 1916

Sweden's second professorship in political science was created in 1877 when Martin Weibull's lectureship in history at Lund University was promoted to an extraordinary professorship and political science was added to its subjects.<sup>24</sup> Pontus Fahlbeck succeeded Martin Weibull in this Chair in 1889, after Weibull had taken up the historical professorship in Lund.<sup>25</sup> History was formally removed from the Chair's subjects upon Pontus Fahlbeck's proposition in 1902, and political science and statistics became its subjects.<sup>26</sup> This extraordinary professorship was finally promoted to an ordinary one in 1909, when Sweden converted all extraordinary chairs into ordinary ones.

Fahlbeck vacated the Professorship in 1915, and a competition for it ensued. There were only two applicants, Gunnar Rexius and Sigfrid Wallengren, who had both been ranked first in the recently concluded professorial competition in Uppsala by one referee each (i.e. by Varenius and Fahlbeck respectively). Varenius and Fahlbeck were also appointed as referees in the Lund competition, and they were joined by Rudolf Kjellén.<sup>27</sup>

As mentioned, the subjects of this Lund professorship were formally political science *and* statistics. Incidentally, the subjects of the Professorship in Gothenburg that Kjellén had recently vacated was formally political science

<sup>23</sup> Mörner had already argued against repealing the Skytte patron's selection right. See Mörner's statement in *Handlingar rörande Skytteanska professurens tillsättning*, 28–48.

<sup>24</sup> When Clas Theodor Odhner became Professor of History at Lund University in 1871, Martin Weibull succeeded him as Lecturer (*adjunkt*) in History. On teachers and positions in history, political science, and geography at Lund University during the late nineteenth century, see Tegnér 1897: 100–105. In fact, all of Sweden's university lectureships were promoted to extraordinary professorships in 1877. On the development of professorships and lectureships during this time, see Frängsmyr 2010, vol. 1: 91–96.

<sup>25</sup> As Professor of History at Lund University, Martin Weibull (1888–1902) succeeded Clas Theodor Odhner (1871–1887), Niklas Tengberg (1863–1870), Wilhelm Erik Svedelius (1856–1862), Ebbe Samuel Bring (1828–1855), Anders Otto Lindfors (1816–1826), Nils Henrik Sjöborg (1799–1816), Erland Samuel Bring (1779–1798), Sven Bring-Lagerbring (1742–1771), Kilian Stobæus (1732–1742), etc.

<sup>26</sup> On Fahlbeck's proposal to change the titles and subjects of the professorships within the historical group, see Weibull 1968: 303.

<sup>27</sup> The application documents, the referee statements, and the statements by the Humanistic Section of the Faculty of Philosophy of Lund University pertaining to the competition for the Professorship in Political Science and Statistics in Lund in 1916 were printed by the university in three booklets. *Handlingar rörande tillsättandet av professorsämbetet i statskunskap och statistik vid universitetet i Lund*, 3 vols. 1916. Lund: vol. 1, *Ansökningshandlingar*; vol. 2, *Sakkunniges utlåtande*; vol. 3, *Humanistiska sektionens yttrande*.

with statistics. Statistics had earlier been closely related to the German *Staatenkunde* and to the encyclopedic subject exemplified by the handbooks in political science by Wilhelm Erik Svedelius, Carl Gustaf Malmström, Hans Forssell, and Wilhelm Tham, all first published in the 1860s. However, during the early twentieth century, statistics was clearly undergoing a process of emancipation, both as a subject and as a method, not unlike political science's process of emancipation, and its content and methods were being transformed.

It was expected that Lund University would also receive funds (through Parliament) for the creation of a statistical professorship in the foreseeable future.<sup>28</sup> However, at the time of this 1916 competition, Fahlbeck's old Professorship was still in political science and statistics, and he worked to promote the latter science.<sup>29</sup> He asserted that statistics was not the Chair's minor subject; nor was political science its main subject. The two subjects were fully equal, and the appointment of the new professor ought to reflect that. However, the subjects had become clearly distinct disciplines, and no one was fully qualified in both. Due to the difficulty in finding candidates that were fully competent in both subjects, and due to the prospect of the creation of a professorship in statistics in Lund, Fahlbeck believed that *limited* competence in statistics should be accepted.

Pontus Fahlbeck had of course very recently declared both Sigfrid Wallengren and Gunnar Rexius professorially qualified in political science, and he now insisted that Wallengren maintained a very slight upper hand over Rexius in this particular subject. However, *he declared Gunnar Rexius unqualified in statistics* because he had no publications (or teaching experience) in the subject. Sigfrid Wallengren, on the other hand, had written a manuscript, a draft of lectures on population statistics. He had also upheld the responsibilities of Fahlbeck's Professorship during most terms since 1907. This was enough for Fahlbeck to declare that Wallengren was (minimally) qualified to hold a professorship in statistics. Thereby, *Wallengren was the only applicant that Fahlbeck declared qualified to hold the Professorship* (Fahlbeck in *Handlingar ... professorsämbetet ... Lund, 2, Sakkunniges utlåtande*: 3–6).

The referee Rudolf Kjellén found the 30-year-old Rexius superior to his 40-year-old co-applicant Wallengren when it came to both the quality and the quantity of their scientific publications. However, the principled questions of the *nature* of political science, of its relations with other sciences and consequently of its central and peripheral subjects became relevant once again. “Without otherwise going into the question of the true essence of political science, which is currently obviously in a time of upheaval and transition”,

<sup>28</sup> Gustav Sundbärg became Sweden's first Professor of Statistics in 1910 at Uppsala University, and was succeeded by Nils Wohlin in 1916.

<sup>29</sup> Fahlbeck endowed a Professorship in Statistics at Åbo Akademi University in 1919.

Kjellén felt that he “must maintain, as the hallmark of our science, that it lies in *the present* and in *positive state formations*”. Therefore, scientific publications on “*the presently existing state societies*” should be the only way to gain professorial qualification in political science (Kjellén in *Handlingar ... professorsämbetet ... Lund, 2, Sakkunniges utlåtande*: 19).

Almost none of Rexius’s publications were on central topics of contemporary political science. They were rather peripheral according to Kjellén, who echoed Fahlbeck’s assessment of Clason by asserting that such “studies of the historical development of constitutions and political ideas are important as prerequisites and training for the purely political-scientific work ... [and] excellent preparation for it”, but they were not purely or central political-scientific works (*ibid.*). If the subject of the Professorship had been constitutional history, Rexius would have been the clear favorite. Wallengren, on the other hand, had published more within contemporary political science. Kjellén considered this apt despite Wallengren’s preference for the juridical side of the state, a preference he found unfortunate because he considered political science to be humanistic and social-scientific and to be emancipating itself not only from history but also from jurisprudence. As he would write four years later, he believed that “politics ... is a separate and independent science, completely emancipated from jurisprudence, and the border runs between constitutional politics and constitutional law” (Kjellén 1920: 8; on Kjellén’s conception of politics as an independent science and its porous boundaries towards other sciences, see Kjellén 1916d: 36f and Kjellén 1917: 43).

Again, Rexius had no merits in the field of statistics, and statistical information was not included in his writings. Wallengren, on the other hand, had taught and examined in statistics, had written minor statistical texts, and had sometimes used statistical methods in his political-scientific works. If professorial qualification was required in both political science and statistics, both applicants would be unqualified because *neither possessed such qualification in statistics*. But such qualification could not be required in this particular case, Kjellén thought, not least because statistics was not expected to remain a part of the Professorship for very long. Nevertheless, as the subject combination remained, merits in both subjects had to be taken into account, and this, in addition to longer and superior teaching qualifications, was what gave Wallengren the position. Kjellén declared both applicants fully qualified to hold the Professorship “with real equality and a formal precedence in favor of Associate Professor Wallengren” (Kjellén in *Handlingar ... professorsämbetet ... Lund, 2, Sakkunniges utlåtande*: 21).

Otto Varenius maintained his position that Rexius was slightly more merited in political science than Wallengren was. Regarding the question of statistics and its relation to political science in this specific professorship, he set up three different potential interpretations. According to the first interpretation,



Figure. Gunnar Rexius. Undated portrait photograph by James William Bourn. "Gunnar Rexius", Hvar 8 dag. Illustreradt magasin 19(48) (1 Sep. 1918), p. 755.

both applicants were unqualified to hold the Chair; according to the second, Wallengren was the preferred alternative; and according to the third, Rexius would take precedence.

Firstly, if political science and statistics were equally important subjects of this Chair, then professorial qualification in both sciences would be required. However, such qualification would be more than any one man could realistically acquire. And requiring this would result in both applicants being declared unqualified because neither applicant possessed professorial qualification in statistics. Secondly, if political science was considered the Professorship's main subject, and statistics a minor subject requiring some merit but less than the main subject, then Wallengren, through his limited merits in statistics, would take precedence over Rexius. Thirdly, if statistics was only temporarily a part of the Professorship, and if political science was considered the Professorship's real subject, then merits in political science would be decisive and Rexius would

take precedence over Wallengren (Varenius in *Handlingar ... professorsämbetet ... Lund, 2, Sakkunniges utlåtande*: 32–34).

On the basis of the three referee statements and due to Rexius's lack of merits in statistics, the 13 professors of Lund University's Humanistic Section voted *unanimously in favor of Sigfrid Wallengren*, who was duly appointed to the Professorship.<sup>30</sup>

### 3. Competition for the Professorship in Political Science in Gothenburg, 1917

#### 3.1 RUDOLF KJELLÉN

As a theorist of political science, the state, and international politics, Rudolf Kjellén's (1916c) inaugural lecture as Johan Skytte Professor *undermined the foundations of conventional political science*, especially as it had developed in Uppsala during the preceding 34 years under the professorships of his two most recent predecessors, Boëthius and the constitutional historian Oscar Alin. He called for a scientific revolution within the study of states and politics, and demanded a new and independent form of political science, the conception of which would almost eliminate the political-scientific merits of Gunnar Rexius and the historian of constitutional thought Axel Brusewitz.

However, at the very end of the lecture – in a part that was not republished in his book *Staten som lfsform* (*The state as a form of life*, 1916) –, Kjellén clarified that his revolutionary fervor did not yet extend to the sphere of *teaching and examination*. He attempted to alleviate concerns that he would completely revolutionize this sphere of political science in Uppsala and sweep away the historical and juridical traditions of the Skytte Professorship. These were real concerns, which Henrik Schück (1916: 89), the Rector of the university, could be interpreted as expressing in the grand invitation to Kjellén's inauguration.

Kjellén's inaugural Skytte lecture is a work of epistemology, of theory of (political) science, of apology, and of implicit criticism of his rivals. Moreover, it is a declaration of *a research program, not a teaching program*. His conservative approach to the teaching and examination of political science – the change of which was his prerogative as professor – was due not only to his generous disposition but also to “considerations for the special organization and traditions of this university, with its requirements for continuity of

<sup>30</sup> The Humanistic Section voted on this matter in December 1916, when the Professors – Nelson, Hellquist, Löfstedt, Walberg, Nilsson, Moberg, Liljeqvist, Kock, Larsson, Lindskog, Wrangel, Flensburg, and Stille (the Dean) – provided statements explaining their votes. Four of the Professors even declared Rexius unqualified to hold the Chair. All of them ranked Wallengren first. *Handlingar ... professorsämbetet ... Lund, 3, Humanistiska sektionens yttrande*: 3–16, esp. at 16.

teaching" (1916c: 243). With Rector Schück in the audience, that was Kjellén's reply to his exhortation to follow the historical traditions of the Skytte Chair.

However, Kjellén did in fact change the teaching and examination of political science at Uppsala University, but not radically in terms of eliminating history and law. In the student handbook of the Faculty of Philosophy published in 1923, we find the requirements, reading lists, and instructions in political science, which were clearly written but not signed by Kjellén (*Uppsala universitet. Filosofiska fakultetens studiehandbok*. 1923. Vol. 2, *Studieplaner för fakultetsexamina*: 215–223). His conception of political science as a taught subject was generous, wide, and expansive, including legal, historical, economic, geographic, international-political, social, and diplomatic subjects and perspectives.

The reading lists are quite long and include works of authors of various and opposing schools of thought, including Kjellén himself, Fahlbeck, Boëthius, Rexius, Brusewitz, Gränström, Wallengren, Nyström/Svedelius, Reuterskiöld, Bornhak, Jellinek, Staaff, Lowell, Bryce, Seeley, Coolidge, Hettner, Naumann, Oncken, Haushofer, Keynes, Dix, Supan, Ratzel, and Vogel. Kjellén stressed that the literature lists were only provisional in that they might quickly lose their relevance and be replaced by new texts because of the contemporary great upheavals and because "the object of political science lies in the present" (Kjellén in *Uppsala universitet. Filosofiska fakultetens studiehandbok*, 2, *Studieplaner för fakultetsexamina*: 221. Emphasis added). The first entry on the list is his inaugural lecture. The second entry is his book on *Sweden*, in which his system of politics – representing his theory of political science – is used as a template to study his homeland.

Rudolf Kjellén divided political science as a taught subject into two distinct main courses or paths that the students could freely choose between. The first course was *historical-juridical*, which was particularly apt for those who also studied history and law (and combined those subjects with others into a degree). The other course was *political*, which might be suitable for those who also studied geography, national economy, and statistics (Kjellén in *Studieplaner för fakultetsexamina*, 215–223; Hornwall 1984: 319f).

Kjellén asserted a certain continuity between his own research program on the one hand and Johan Skytte's intentions, the conventions of the Professorship, and his first teacher in political science, Svedelius, on the other. "The research program in its broadest framework is not unrelated to the traditions of the Skytte Chair. I ask whether it is not intimately connected with the

benefactor's own conditions and purposes" (Kjellén 1916c: 243).<sup>31</sup> By this, he meant that Skytteamum<sup>32</sup> should be a school for statesmen and civil servants. Additionally, he was "thinking in particular of [his] third predecessor, W. E. Svedelius – admittedly the last representative of an old ('statistical') school rather than the first representative of a new school". Kjellén wished "to expand this Chair in the direction of the '*political professorship*' to which it was instituted almost three centuries ago by its farsighted founder and his great king" (Kjellén 1916c: 243). He cited Skytte and Svedelius as an apology for his academic reform program and as an attempt to alleviate the concerns of the historians (Boëthius, Rexius, Brusewitz, Stavenow, Schück, and Hjärne) that this program was too unconventional and out of tune with the purpose and traditions of the Professorship as well as political science generally. Brusewitz did not mention this passage of the lecture (perhaps because he used the version in the book instead of in the article) despite it bringing evidence to his thesis of a connection between Svedelius and Kjellén (Brusewitz 1945: 20f).

When he was called to the Skytte Professorship in 1916, Kjellén vacated the Professorship in Political Science with Statistics in Gothenburg (Sweden's third chair in political science), which had been created for him in late 1901 after he had lost the competition for the Skytte Professorship to S. J. Boëthius that year. Three associate professors in political science applied to succeed Kjellén in Gothenburg: Gunnar Rexius, Olof Gränström, and Axel Brusewitz. Four experts were appointed to referee the competition: Kjellén, C. A. Reuterskiöld, Boëthius, and the statistician Nils Wohlin.<sup>33</sup>

Kjellén's referee statement on the competition for his old professorship in 1917 is of real importance to understanding both his theory of political science and early twentieth-century political science more generally. His various calls for the fundamental reformation of the discipline were read not only in Sweden

<sup>31</sup> The two opening chapters of Kjellén's book *Staten som lifsform* are an almost verbatim republication of his inaugural lecture as Skytte Professor, "Statskunskaps objekt" ("The object of political science"), first published in Fahlbeck's *Statsvetenskaplig tidskrift*. But there are minor differences between the two published versions of the lecture. For example, the final two paragraphs of the lecture as originally published were omitted from its republication. They contain the above important quotation referring to Johan Skytte, Wilhelm Erik Svedelius, and the establishment and traditions of the Skytte Chair. I provide these quotations in context to further prove *one of my main theses, namely, that Kjellén's theories of the state, political science, and geopolitics were interventions in specific academic debates in his own lifetime, as opposed to being anticipations of later political doctrines that a dead man could have no knowledge of. Regardless of his own inclinations towards prognostication, the future remains unknowable.*

<sup>32</sup> The Skytteamum building has contained the residence of the Skytte Professors since the 1620s. It is a landmark in Uppsala (next to the cathedral) and is synonymous with the university's activities in political science and nowadays with the university's Department of Government.

<sup>33</sup> The application documents and referee statements pertaining to the competition for the Professorship in Political Science with Statistics at Gothenburg University College in 1917 were printed in the booklet *Handlingar rörande tillsättandet av professuren i statskunskap med statistik vid Göteborgs Högskola. Meritförteckningar och sakkunniges utlåtande* (Göteborg, 1917), a copy of which can be found in the regional archive Landsarkivet in Gothenburg (Riksarkivet) in the files concerning Göteborgs Högskola.

but all over the German-reading academic communities of Europe. In his Gothenburg referee statement, he cites his Lund statement, reiterating that political science “lies in *the present* and in *positive state formations... the presently existing state societies*” (Kjellén in *Handlingar ... professuren ... Göteborgs Högskola*: 59) as opposed to lying in the sometimes dead letters of constitutions or in constitutional history (Kjellén 1902). His conviction regarding the nature of political science was growing increasingly stronger, and, to demonstrate this, he referred to his inaugural lecture from the preceding year.<sup>34</sup>

Kjellén highlighted political science’s contemporary process of transformation in his referee statement. His old Gothenburg professorship, which he called “modern” and “political-statistical”, had played an internationally-recognized role in that process. He was becoming very well known at the time, especially in Germany, and his views on political science were gaining traction there. “The emphasis in our science is obviously shifting away from the constitution and constitutional history, where it used to be, towards the living reality of the state with forces ... of a geographical, demographic, economic and sociological nature” (Kjellén in *Handlingar ... professuren ... Göteborgs Högskola*: 59).

At the same time, the applicants to this peculiarly modern professorship, especially Brusewitz but also Rexius, were not well-merited in modern political science. Just as he had done at the end of his inaugural lecture, Kjellén demonstrated a measure of tolerance for different schools of thought, and attempted to alleviate concerns that he would judge the applicants solely from the perspective of his own conception of political science, a conception that was part of a larger development both in state practice and state science. “In many ways, our degree organization still rests on the old view. And the young academics who trained according to it should, with some justification, be able to assert a right to be judged according to their own terms, even after these terms, as a result of the general cultural development, have begun to appear antiquated” (Kjellén in *ibid.*: 60). Thus, in judging the applicants, he attempted to take into consideration both (1) the right of the applicants to be judged on their own terms with their “antiquated” training, especially when it came to Brusewitz and Rexius, who had studied under Boëthius in Uppsala, and (2) the peculiarity of the modern Gothenburg professorship.

Kjellén found Brusewitz “an excellent academic ... but a pure historian”, ready to potentially win a professorship in constitutional history, but he had serious doubts about awarding him qualification for this professorship in political science with statistics. Brusewitz did not have any publications in contemporary constitutional politics (Swedish or international) or within other fields

<sup>34</sup> Regarding the position of statistics in relation to political science in the Gothenburg Professorship, Kjellén considered it a minor subject of secondary importance. Political-scientific merits were of paramount importance, but statistical merits, if the applicants had any, would nevertheless be advantageous.

of modern political science. Kjellén nevertheless declared Brusewitz qualified to hold the Professorship on the basis of the two books that Brusewitz had then published. Both books were on matters related to the Swedish constitution of 1809 and ran directly counter to Kjellén's and Fahlbeck's views on that very same constitution. After Kjellén's death, Brusewitz succeeded him in the Skytte Chair. In this position of authority, the stern Brusewitz did not show much tolerance towards the legacy and students of Kjellén,<sup>35</sup> a critical attitude with a tradition of eminent Uppsala historians behind it.

When it came to deciding whether Gunnar Rexius or Olof Gränström should be ranked first in the competition, the inclusion of statistics in the Gothenburg Professorship, as well as Gränström's final sprint, meant that it was a new situation compared to the Uppsala competition less than two years earlier, when Rexius was clearly more merited than Gränström. Gränström had finished writing four books since then, compared to Rexius's two! But the decisive factor was the applicants' authorships in relation to this specific professorship. Kjellén reiterated his appraisal from the Lund competition that Rexius's "studies of the historical development of constitutions and political ideas are important as prerequisites and training for the purely state-scientific work" (Kjellén in *Handlingar ... professorsämbetet ... Lund, 2, Sakkunniges utlåtande*: 19; Kjellén in *Handlingar ... professuren ... Göteborgs Högskola*: 62). He ranked Gränström first, Rexius second, and Brusewitz third.

### 3.2 C. A. REUTERSKIÖLD

Only two months before signing his referee statement on the 1917 Gothenburg professorial competition, C. A. Reuterskiöld published an article on the three state sciences "Statsrätt, statskunskap, statsfilosofi" ("Constitutional law, political science, and state philosophy", Reuterskiöld 1917),<sup>36</sup> of which he himself,<sup>37</sup> Rudolf Kjellén, and Boëthius (and the legal-philosophical positivist Axel Hägerström) respectively were prominent practitioners. The article discusses the process of transformation that political science had been, and was still, undergoing. Therefore, the article is better understood when read in conjunction with the 1917 Gothenburg professorial competition as well as the arguments regarding the increasing academic division of labor that he had put forth in a pamphlet during the 1901 Skytte professorial competition (Reuterskiöld 1901).<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> In fact, the politically radical young Brusewitz publicly criticized Kjellén already in 1919 (Brusewitz 1919; also cited in Hornwall 1984: 316f).

<sup>36</sup> An alternative translation of the title is "State law, state knowledge/science, political philosophy/theory".

<sup>37</sup> For his theory of the state, law, and society, see Reuterskiöld 1912 (1908).

<sup>38</sup> On Reuterskiöld, see, for example, Malmgren 1944 and Jan-Olof Sundell (1998–2000).

Reuterskiöld asserted that state science had previously been divided into two main parts, political or national economy and “state science proper”.<sup>39</sup> However, “just as state science has liberated itself from history, national economy has liberated itself from state science”. He correctly understood Kjellén as having “wished to separate politics from above all the two branches of research that, together with history, have most oppressed politics so far and prevented its development according to its uniqueness, namely, philosophy and constitutional law” (Reuterskiöld 1917: 66f). Thus, both Reuterskiöld and Kjellén worked taxonomically to determine the borders between various sciences.

Reuterskiöld agreed with Kjellén that the contemporary state should be the study object of political science. “The living state in all its various forms of manifestation within the present remains the main thing for politics”. He did consider the study of political ideas to be a part of political science but only insofar as it focused on real and current manifestations of a state. However, “the exploration of these ideas as elements of political thinkers’ subjective systems of thought must be completely banished from political science as such”, he added, because that study object is *not the state but rather someone’s conception of the state*, the research of which belongs to “the history of political literature or state philosophy” (*ibid.*). This criticism echoes the state theorist Richard Schmidt’s critique of Georg Jellinek’s history of political literature (Schmidt 1901: 1–33, 116–165).<sup>40</sup>

Aside from mathematical statistics, Reuterskiöld did not consider statistics an independent science but rather a method. Nevertheless, none of the applicants had significant merits in the field of statistics, but they did have insight into history, philosophy, and geography, which Reuterskiöld considered auxiliary subjects necessary for profound studies in political science. He regarded Gränström as first among equals when it came to the non-literary merits of the applicants (Reuterskiöld in *Handlingar ... professuren ... Göteborgs Högskola*: 67).

One of Gunnar Rexius’s foremost fields of research was the literary history of political-philosophical doctrines (Rexius 1910; Rexius 1911a; Rexius 1911b; Rexius 1915a). Reuterskiöld considered the history of political ideas an important part of political science only insofar as it concerned popular abstract ideas that had influenced political decision-makers and had become a real part of the constitution. It followed that the doctrines of political thinkers would also have some relevance for understanding such abstract and directly influential ideas but that the study of these doctrines within subjective systems of thought would be either philosophy or history (depending on the method utilized), not

39 “*statsvetenskap i egentlig mening*”, by which he meant *statskunskap* and *politik*. Reuterskiöld 1917: 66f.

40 Schmidt’s state-theoretical book is a seminal work inspiring early twentieth-century state science, especially that of Kjellén but also that of Boëthius and Reuterskiöld.

political science, for which it would only be a minor subject (Reuterskiöld in *ibid.*: 73).

Following Kjellén, Reuterskiöld declared that “the object of political science is the state itself and the state’s own life, not speculation about it” (Reuterskiöld in *ibid.*). Seemingly, he did not consider studies of the ideas of individuals to be properly political-scientific, regardless of whether those thinkers had attempted to describe the state or its constitution. Thus, he did not consider Rexius’s studies in the history of political literature to be especially relevant to a professorship in political science, not least because Rexius was seen to have overestimated the importance of doctrines to the detriment of real power groupings within polities. In his referee statement on Brusewitz, whom he did not award professorial qualification, Reuterskiöld made the principled statement that “political science is as little to any significant degree constitutional history as it can be said to be political philosophy or the history of political literature” (Reuterskiöld in *ibid.*: 81f). He found Gränström and Rexius to have equal merits, but, forced to rank the applicants, he gave a slight *precedence* to Gränström (Reuterskiöld in *ibid.*: 83).

### 3.3 S. J. BOËTHIUS

Regarding the relation between the two subjects of this professorship, S. J. Boëthius, like Kjellén, did not consider statistics a main subject equal to political science. The Chair’s title, “Political Science *with* Statistics”, as opposed to “Political Science *and* Statistics”, indicated the inequality of the subjects. Rather, statistics was a part of the Chair because Gothenburg University College needed to teach the subject despite lacking funds for a professorship in it and because statistical information and methods were relevant to a professor of political science, who therefore could be responsible for statistics as a minor subject. If statistics had been an equal main subject of the Chair, then professorial qualification in statistics would have to be required of any appointee, which would have rendered all the applicants unqualified to hold the Chair. If, however, statistics was considered a minor subject, then full professorial qualification in it should not be required and the most important and decisive merits would be political-scientific (Boëthius in *Handlingar ... professuren ... Göteborgs Högskola*: 19f).

Gränström and Rexius had more publications than Brusewitz, whose main publications were his doctoral dissertation and a second book, which were enough for Boëthius to declare him professorially qualified (Hornwall 1984: 314f). Quantitatively, Gränström was ahead of Rexius, but Boëthius found this precedence to be mostly outweighed by their different writing styles and their respective number of years of literary production. Although Gränström was nine years older than Rexius, he had become a doctor and an associate professor only one year earlier than him. Therefore, the *quality* of their respective

scientific authorships should be the deciding factor, according to Boëthius. “Revealing a somewhat greater consistency, critical sharpness, depth, and stability”, Rexius’s corpus was still qualitatively “superior” to that of Gränström. Therefore, Boëthius ranked *Rexius* first, Gränström second, and Brusewitz third (Boëthius in *Handlingar ... professuren ... Göteborgs Högskola*: 36f).

*Gränström* was appointed to the Professorship on the basis of the referee statements, in which both Kjellén and Reuterskiöld ranked Gränström first and Rexius second. Unfortunately for Rexius, purely statistical professorships were yet to be established in both Lund and Gothenburg.<sup>41</sup>

However, the overarching controversy or *Methodenstreit* was not over. In a 1918 article in *Historisk tidskrift* (the Swedish *Historical Journal*), Boëthius examined the works of Brusewitz and Rexius on the political and legal thought that favored or disfavored the Swedish constitutional and representative reform of 1865 and 1866 (Boëthius 1918). He also explicitly responded to the other referees’ claims that constitutional-historical and intellectual-historical research were not central parts of political science. Boëthius had praised Gränström in his own Gothenburg referee statement, and it was not his appointment to that professorship (to the detriment of his own students, Rexius and Brusewitz) that he criticized but rather his professorial colleagues’ conception of political science, which he found too exclusive and confused regarding the development of the state.

Thus, Boëthius’s article was a defense of his own theory of political science, of his students, and of their practice of the same. Relatedly, it was a direct attack on Kjellén, Fahlbeck, Varenius, and Reuterskiöld, his adversaries from the professorial competitions in 1901, 1915, 1916, and 1917. If his intention was to convince his intellectual opponents, as opposed to preaching to the choir, one might question the effectiveness of publishing such an article in *Historisk tidskrift* instead of in *Statsvetenskaplig tidskrift* or a disciplinarily more neutral or broader journal. Publishing the article in *Historisk tidskrift* will have contributed to affirming suspicions held by political scientists regarding the historical and expropriatory nature of his project.<sup>42</sup>

In the article, Boëthius re-employs the argumentation from his book *Om statslivet* (*On the life of the state*, 1916) regarding the power of personality and the individual in history in a new situation. Comparing the state<sup>43</sup> with an

<sup>41</sup> The fourth and final referee was Nils Wohlin. He wrote a very short statement saying that none of the applicants were professorially qualified in statistics but that Gränström seemed to have more experience with statistics than the other two applicants.

<sup>42</sup> At this time, the editor of *Historisk tidskrift* was Torvald Höjer with the cooperation of Sam Clason, Ludvig Stavenow, Nils Edén (Professor of History in Uppsala from 1903 until 1920 and Prime Minister from 1917 until 1920), and Emil Hildebrand (editor of *Historisk tidskrift* from its beginning in 1881 until 1905 and national archivist from 1901 until 1916).

<sup>43</sup> Inspired by Jellinek and the historical school of law, Boëthius defined the modern state as “a people, legally organized as a continually living unit through a legal order, by virtue of which it has original sovereign power over its members and within its area” (Boëthius 1916: 242). Clearly, it is common

organism is warranted only insofar as the comparison does not imply identity, as Kjellén comes close to doing in his book *Staten som lfsform*. According to Boëthius, the main difference between the state and an organism is the respective primary parts that make them up. While the primary parts of the state are reasoning human individuals endowed with free will, an organism consists of non-thinking cells, the behavior of which are determined by laws of nature working uniformly and with strict necessity. Political ideas are formed by thinking and willing individuals. To deny the significance of political ideas to the life of the state “is rooted ... in a materialistic fatalism or in a power theory ‘jenseit gutes und böses’”, beyond good and evil (Boëthius 1918: 224). This was another implicit critique of Kjellén, who repeatedly asserted the value-free objectivity of his theory of the state as a power with that well-known Darwinian and Nietzschean trope.<sup>44</sup> Kjellén recast the idea of organisms in nature being beyond good and evil (beyond morality) as the state, especially in international politics, being beyond legality and illegality, “beyond right and wrong”, beyond the sphere of law.<sup>45</sup>

Without proper attribution, the Kjellénian trope of the state being beyond law has become an axiom of realistic international relations theory (à la Hans Morgenthau 1948) in partial opposition to the discipline of international law. The state is the highest authority. This fact leads in turn to something resembling a state of anarchy between states. Such a state of anarchy is reminiscent of the political theorist Thomas Hobbes’s idea of a *bellum omnium contra omnes*, a war of all against all (Hobbes 1998 [1642]: 12), during which no progress in science or living conditions can be made due to the lack of property rights and enforceable law. This anarchy is what international law attempts to ameliorate. Hence the image of international law as *The gentle civilizer of nations*, as the international lawyer Martti Koskenniemi fittingly calls his object of study.

Kjellén’s argument that the state is like a form of life partly beyond the sphere of law should be read within the larger framework of his theory of an independent political science. This theory asserts that politics should emancipate itself from the guardianship of the sciences of law, history, and philosophy through the study of new areas such as international politics. The argument was qualified by an acceptance that the state was partly a legal entity, but the legal aspect of the state was only one among five aspects of his conception of the state as a

to confuse a state with its people or population, as the term “nation” is often confused with “state”. Perhaps this confusion stems from doctrines of popular sovereignty. In Boëthius, it is also related to the *Volksgeist* idea of the historical school of law. See Boëthius 1908 and Boëthius 1912. On the various intellectual manifestations of the concept of popular sovereignty, see Bourke & Skinner 2016.

44 “*jenseits von Gut und Böse*” (Kjellén 1916d: 95, 151). Kjellén’s notebooks contain many references to Nietzsche.

45 “*bortom rätt och orätt*” (Kjellén 1916d: 11, 66 (quotation), 76 (quotation), 95, 151, 165). Importantly, the Swedish word *rätt* (Recht in German) also means “law”.

whole. Thus, Kjellén's state is in fact partly juridical. However, a novelty is that the government, its administration, and related authorities are merely a part of the state, not the whole state, as many legal and political theorists have assumed. Furthermore, it is mainly the natural side of the state that is somewhat separated from its legal aspect. Especially in international politics, the state is still, unfortunately, like a form of life (an animal for example), beyond the sphere of law. As a consequence of the nature of the state and because it is comprised of more than its government and constitution, the state should be studied primarily through political-scientific methodology as opposed to purely juridical methodology.

Reuterskiöld argued that the study of political ideas was only political-scientific if it did not focus on subjective systems of thought but rather concentrated on real manifestations of politics and the constitution. Boëthius rebutted this argument by asserting the power of individual thinkers. Great changes in history, society, and the life of the state were initiated by great individuals. "How would fruitful knowledge of the ideas of the Reformation, of the French Revolution, of social democracy be possible without consideration of the individuality of Luther, Rousseau, and Marx?" he asked (Boëthius 1918: 224), thereby arguing that studying political ideas and individual thinkers (who inevitably are the creators of political ideas) was an important and independent yet subordinate task of political science.

Moreover, Boëthius (1918: 226) asserted that "Swedish political science is really, to a fairly significant extent, constitutional history", using Fahlbeck's 1910 book on *Regeringsformen i historisk belysning* (*The Instrument of Government in historical perspective*) as evidence thereof, not least because he was in the opposite camp of the *Methodenstreit*. Like many of the time's so-called conservative professors, Fahlbeck, Kjellén, and Reuterskiöld were also progressive or radical in several areas, such as social-political legislation, but in terms of constitutional and representational reform, they were generally conservative. Like many conservatives inspired by Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, they believed that state institutions were and should be a product of the organic development of national history, especially the history of the national constitution.<sup>46</sup> Thus, their attempt to banish constitutional history to the periphery of political science seemed to Boëthius incoherent with their political conservatism. On the other hand, perhaps this attempt at banishment, which went against their political convictions, could be seen as a testament to their goal of scientific objectivity as opposed to political partisanship.

46 The idea of the importance of national laws and customs formulated by Montesquieu, Herder, and Burke and further developed by Burke's German readers made its way into the *Staatswissenschaften* of the nineteenth century through Adam Müller and Savigny. Particularly Müller was popular among the Swedish state scientists of the early twentieth century, not least following his treatment in Meinecke 1907; English translation: Meinecke 1970. On Burke, see Bourke 2015. On the reception of Burke in Germany, see Green 2017.

Boëthius countered the arguments of Kjellén, Reuterskiöld, Varenius, and Fahlbeck regarding the emancipation of political science, or lack thereof, from history by arguing that his own conception of political science did not jeopardize the independence of the subject and that sciences sometimes “must” reach into the domains of other sciences, as Kjellén did with his eclectic theories of political science and the state through his utilization of the tools of neighboring sciences such as geography, demography, sociology, economics, and law. That which is gained by such interventions is understood from the perspective of one’s own science, which is “so far from being degraded to a servant of the other science that, on the contrary, it is the other science that is the servant” (Boëthius 1918: 226). In other words, history serves political science. When Brusewitz won the Skytte Chair five years later, following Kjellén’s death, Boëthius spoke at the inauguration dinner, reiterating his position that the Chair’s “task has been and is still to work for state-scientific edification on an historical basis” (Boëthius 1923; Brusewitz 1945: 17).<sup>47</sup>

### 3.4 GUNNAR REXIUS

Gunnar Rexius (1886–1918) took his first degree in 1907 in Gothenburg,<sup>48</sup> where he studied under Stavenow, Kjellén, Varenius, and Vitalis Norström,<sup>49</sup> whose philosophical writings inspired him (Brusewitz 1925). That same year, he moved to Uppsala to continue his studies in political science under Boëthius. He also completed study trips to France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Austria, and Germany, where, enrolled at Heidelberg University, he attended lectures and seminars by Georg Jellinek, shortly before the mighty professor’s death.<sup>50</sup> He published an essay on the state theory of the historical school in Meinecke’s *Historische Zeitschrift* in 1911, aged 25 (Rexius 1911b). That same year, he defended his doctoral dissertation at Uppsala University (Rexius 1911a), following which the Humanistic Section appointed him to the university’s paid associate professorship in history and political science. He held this position from January 1912 until December 1917, ahead of the five years older Brusewitz. Thus, Rexius may have experienced financial difficulties in 1918 due to a lack

47 A part of Boëthius’s dinner speech and the corresponding newspaper article criticizes Kjellén.

48 For his undergraduate degree in Gothenburg, Rexius was examined in history by Stavenow, in political science by Varenius (while Kjellén was on academic leave and in Parliament in Stockholm), in theoretical philosophy by Vitalis Norström, in Nordic languages by Gustaf Cederschiöld, and in geography by Otto Nordenskjöld.

49 “Le penseur suédois le plus éminent de nos jours est M. Vitalis Norström, professeur à Göteborg”. Höffding 1908: 669. On Norström, see Persson 1994.

50 The first of Rexius’s trips was undertaken in 1910 (February–July). Enrolled at Heidelberg University for the summer semester (April–July), he attended two lecture series and one seminar series on law and state theory convened by Jellinek and one seminar series on recent history convened by Hermann Oncken.

of income, which would have made the rejections feel more dire and may have contributed to a further deterioration of his mental health.

Following three highly unfortunate applications to the Professorships in Uppsala, Lund, and Gothenburg, Gunnar Rexius received the special honor of being *called* (without competition) to the Professorship in Political Science and State Theory at the newly established university Åbo Akademi in Finland in June 1918.<sup>51</sup> However, he would never work in that capacity because, only a few weeks later, Gunnar took his own life following a mental health breakdown caused by excessive work. He was 32 years of age. When Rexius was called to the Professorship, the Great War was still raging, and the Finnish Civil War had only recently ended. Therefore, the prospect of leaving pacific Sweden for an insecure newly sovereign Finland may not have seemed a prudent choice. Indeed, he did not live to see the end of the Great War. His suicide could be viewed as a statement against the new political science and a protest against the outcomes of the three professorial competitions.

For many years, it had been known that Boëthius and Fahlbeck would vacate two of Sweden's only three permanent positions in political science in 1915. Well aware of the forthcoming professorial competitions, and knowing that failure to win would mean that another vacancy was unlikely to materialize for many years, young Rexius worked tirelessly, lecturing, writing, and publishing a great deal in a very short time. The workload, however, was too heavy and the pressure too great. He became ill and may have suffered from depression and anxiety.<sup>52</sup> "Extraordinarily intensive studies had destroyed his health, which care at a sanatorium was unable to restore; he died by his own hand", as Brusewitz (1925) wrote, later adding that he knew of "no one else within our subject who, at such a young age, has developed an authorship that is simultaneously so rich and, regarding the scientific content, so distinguished as that of Rexius. It contains works that are among the best that Swedish political science has produced" (Brusewitz 1945: 24).

The referee statements also contain lavish praise of Rexius and his writings, which were often hastily put together, but he may have taken the criticism more to heart than the praise. He may have felt somewhat cheated of the professorship in all three competitions, a feeling that does not seem entirely unreasonable. However, we must also remember that the one decade older co-applicants Wallengren and Gränström were also well-merited scholars, and Kjellén even more so. Perhaps Rexius despaired at the idea and projection that the type of political science he practiced and excelled at was not part of the discipline's future. We now know that such a projection was incorrect, as exemplified by the three

<sup>51</sup> The original subjects of the Åbo Chair were *allmän statskunskap och politik* (Thermænus 1943: 158f).

<sup>52</sup> According to the liberal publicist and professor Herbert Tingsten, Rexius was, "through his shyness and nervousness, a bad teacher; he always looked out the window, never at the audience, when lecturing" (Tingsten 1961: 137).

Skytte Professors from 1923 until 2008, namely Brusewitz, Carl Arvid Hessler, and Leif Lewin, who all practiced the history of political ideas. The rumors of the death of the history of political thought, within and outside political science, have been greatly exaggerated. Nevertheless, had the young man not fallen ill and instead lived for another five years, he would probably have become Skytte Professor after Kjellén's untimely death of a heart attack at 58 in 1922.

Rexius's main area of research was the political and legal thought underlying the reforms of the Swedish constitution during the nineteenth century (Rexius 1914a; Rexius 1914b; Rexius 1915b). He also published works on the political thought of Benjamin Höijer and Erik Gustaf Geijer (Rexius 1910; Rexius 1915a), the renaissance of US presidential power (Rexius 1916a),<sup>53</sup> the French constitution (Rexius 1917a), the concept of middle Europe (Rexius 1916b),<sup>54</sup> and financial power under King Charles XIV John of Sweden and Norway (Rexius 1917b). His greatest work is probably the book on *Det svenska tvåkammarsystemets tillkomst och karaktär* (Rexius 1915c, *The origin and character of the Swedish two-chamber system*), which quickly received considerable attention and is still a very important work on the subject. His writing is marked by a clear and nuanced style that attempts to avoid value judgments.<sup>55</sup> If Rexius had begun his work in Åbo, he would have been the only professor in the first pure faculty of state science in the Swedish-speaking world.<sup>56</sup>

In conclusion, the fierce controversy excavated in this article epitomizes political science's road to independence. The theories of political science interpreted here were world-leading. Sweden was one of the first countries in which political science was institutionalized and emancipated from history and law. Particularly Kjellén's theories were influential internationally, not only through Karl Haushofer's notorious school of *Geopolitik* but also more widely in various disciplines of the emerging social sciences. The ideas and struggles elucidated here were instrumental for the institutionalization of politics as an independent science.

<sup>53</sup> Rexius 1916a was a nod to Kjellén, who had worked on a similar topic and who argued that political scientists should focus on the present.

<sup>54</sup> Rexius 1916b was also an attempt to follow the methodological precepts of Kjellén, the coming referee in the Lund and Gothenburg competitions.

<sup>55</sup> Despite his academic and rather neutral standpoint, Rexius's personal political orientation was contemporary mainstream conservative, which is slightly noticeable in most of his writings. See, for example, Rexius 1917c and Rexius 1917d. One can only speculate how Kjellén's legacy might have been affected by a conservative succeeding him in the Skytte Chair instead of the liberal and stern Brusewitz, who was among Kjellén's strongest critics.

<sup>56</sup> On the beginnings of the State-Scientific Faculty at Åbo Akademi University, see W. E. [Werner Edvard] Nordström, *Åbo akademi 1918–1943* (Åbo, 1945), 42, 44, 46, 57–59, 68, 81, 90–92, 120–122, 196f, 219–222.

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