

Pangle was born in and grew up in [Gouverneur, New York](#).^[1] He graduated from [Cornell University](#) with a [Bachelor of Arts degree](#) in 1966,^[2] "with distinction in all subjects" and ranked fifth in class, having studied political philosophy under [Allan Bloom](#). Pangle received his [Ph.D.](#) in political science in 1972 from [University of Chicago](#). His [dissertation](#) was "Montesquieu and the Moral Basis of Liberal Democracy," completed under the supervision of [Joseph Cropsey](#), [Herbert Storing](#), and [Richard E. Flathman](#).

From 1971 to 1979 he taught at [Yale University](#), first as a [lecturer](#) and then as an [assistant professor](#) and [associate professor](#). In 1979 he was appointed to Graduate School at the University of Toronto as an Associate Professor and was awarded [tenure](#). He became a professor in 1983 and was named University Professor in 2001. During his tenure at the University of Toronto Pangle first a [fellow](#) at [Victoria College](#) from 1979 to 1984 and then at [St. Michael's College](#) from 1985 to 2004. Pangle left the University of Toronto after 25 years to accept the position of Joe R. Long Chair in Democratic Studies in the Department of Government at the University of Texas at Austin, citing concerns about [mandatory retirement](#). [Harvard University](#) made an offer and the University of Toronto made a counteroffer but ultimately Pangle decided to move to the University of Texas.^[3]

Pangle was a visiting professor at the University of Chicago in 1984 and at the [École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales](#) in 1987.^[4]

Pangle is married to fellow professor [Lorraine Smith Pangle](#), who was also a faculty member at the University of Toronto and is currently an associate professor in the Department of Government at the University of Texas.

Academic interests

Pangle's writings on ancient political theory attempt to show how Socratic arguments for the supremacy of the philosophic virtue shape, enrich, and ground the classical republican teaching on civic and moral virtue and on the spiritual goals of self-government. His studies of medieval and biblical political thought seek to revive the mutually challenging dialogue between the competing Socratic and scriptural notions of wisdom and of the cultivation of wisdom in civic life.

His interpretations of the thought of the American Founding, and of its philosophic foundations in [Locke](#) and [Montesquieu](#), go together with his confrontation with [Nietzsche](#), as the most radical critic of this modern rationalism. These studies argue for the significance, within modernity, of a continued if eclipsed commitment to the life of understanding pursued for its own sake; but at the same time, Pangle diagnoses the costs and the benefits—for civic virtue as well as for the life of the mind—of the diminished public or civic status of the moral and intellectual virtues in modern republicanism.

Pangle is a Fellow of the [Royal Society of Canada](#), and has won [Guggenheim](#), [Killam-Canada Council](#), [Carl Friedrich von Siemens](#), and four [National Endowment for the Humanities](#) fellowships. He has been awarded The Benton Bowl at [Yale University](#) (for contribution to education in politics) and the [Robert Foster Cherry Great Teacher of the](#)

[World Prize](#), [Baylor University](#). In 2007 he will deliver, at the invitation of the [Bavarian Academy of Sciences](#), the [Werner Heisenberg](#) Lecture.

Pangle's conception of philosophy

Inspired and guided by [Leo Strauss](#)'s revival of Platonic political philosophy, Pangle's work has as its unifying aim the clarification and defense of the original Socratic conception of political philosophy. In the manner that Pangle understands it, the Socratic conception is controversial.

What the Socratic conception of political theory amounts to, Pangle contends, is a lifelong vindication, through conversational refutations that purify common sense notions of justice and nobility, of self-knowledge and of inquiry into the nature of things as the highest and supremely fulfilling dimension of human existence. This notion of the true human good, as the good that makes all relativistic and egalitarian outlooks appear impoverished and inauthentic, obviously contradicts or directly clashes with what most people today are told and believe is the life they ought to lead. Pangle, in his advocacy of the awakened philosophic life as the only truly human life, challenges conformity.

University teaching

Pangle was denied tenure at [Yale](#) University, in a widely noted scandal, during which a senior colleague explained, in a now infamous pronouncement (which became the theme of a protest panel at the annual convention of the [American Political Science Association](#)): "academic freedom is one thing, but there are two types who will never be permitted tenure at Yale: Leninists and Straussians." The [Wall Street Journal](#) ("Dry Rot at College," Editorial Aug. 31, 1979, p. 6), [Commentary](#) ("God and Man at Yale—Again," by Robert Kagan, February, 1982; Letters exchange, August, 1982) and other journals ([The New York Review of Books](#), May 12, 1983, pp. 56-57, "Saving the Free World: An Exchange," statement by Eugene Genovese; [Yale Political Monthly](#), Dec. 1979, pp. 2-11, "Academic Freedom at Yale: the Pangle Case"), published editorials, columns, and articles attacking what they perceived to be [Yale](#)'s denial of academic freedom. [Yale](#) or its spokespersons vehemently denied the imputations. [Yale](#) set up a judiciary panel, led by the noted historian [Edmund Morgan](#), to hear the case—amid campus-wide protests and marches on Pangle's behalf ([Yale Daily News](#), Sept. 10, 1979, p. 1, "2,300 Students Protest Tenure Policy"); the panel decided in Pangle's favor and rescinded the decision denying tenure by the Department of Political Science, on the basis of shocking testimony from graduate students about what Political Science faculty had declared in public about the grounds on which Pangle was being denied tenure. [Yale](#) instituted an unprecedented new procedure that took the decision out of the hands of the department and lodged it in a board, specially designed for Pangle's tenure review, that was composed of five internationally famous scholars, two not from Yale (led by [Peter Gay](#)): Yale University News Release, Monday afternoon, Oct. 15, 1979; [Yale Weekly Bulletin and Calendar](#), Oct. 22-29, 1979, p. 1; [Yale Daily News](#), Extra Edition, Oct. 16, 1979, "Pangle Wins New Tenure Review: Original Decision Overruled; Professor says he is

'gratified'. At that point, Pangle resigned, having been offered a tenured position at the University of Toronto, famous for its strength in political philosophy and hospitality to diverse points of view (see entries on [C. B. Macpherson](#) and [Allan Bloom](#))—and because, as he publicly declared, he no longer felt he could comfortably live with his colleagues in the [Yale](#) Political Science Department.

List of Works

- *Montesquieu's Philosophy of Liberalism: A Commentary on The Spirit of the Laws*. University of Chicago Press, 1973.
- *The Laws of Plato: translated with notes and an interpretive essay by Thomas L. Pangle*. Basic Books, 1980
- *The Roots of Political Philosophy: Ten forgotten Socratic dialogues translated, with interpretive studies*. (Editor) Cornell University Press, 1987.
- *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism: The Moral Vision of the American Founders and the Philosophy of Locke*. University of Chicago Press, 1988.
- *The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism: an introduction to the thought of Leo Strauss: Essays and lectures by Leo Strauss selected and introduced by Thomas L. Pangle*. University of Chicago Press, 1989.
- *The Ennobling of Democracy: The Challenge of the Postmodern Age*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992.
- *The Learning of Liberty: The Educational Ideas of the American Founders* (with Lorraine Smith Pangle). University Press of Kansas, 1993
- *Political Philosophy and the Human Soul: Essays in memory of Allan Bloom*. (Editor with Michael Palmer). Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1995.
- *Justice Among Nations: On the Moral Basis of Power and Peace*, (with Peter J. Ahrensdorf). University Press of Kansas, 1999.
- *Political Philosophy and the God of Abraham*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003.
- *Leo Strauss: An Introduction to His Thought and Intellectual Legacy*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006

Noted lectures

- Speaker at the [National Endowment for the Humanities](#) Inaugural Colloquium on the Bicentennial of the Constitution, [Wake Forest University](#), 1984.
- [Exxon](#) Distinguished Lectures in Humane Approaches to the Social Sciences, at the [University of Chicago](#), 1987.
- [Thomas J. White](#) Lecture, at [Notre Dame](#), 1988.
- The Plenary Address, [Association of American Law Schools](#) Annual Meeting, 1989.
- Feaver MacMinn Visiting Scholar at the [University of Oklahoma](#), 1990.
- The [Ronald J. Fiscus](#) Lecture, [Skidmore College](#) (2001).
- [Werner Heisenberg](#) Memorial Lecture at the Carl Friedrich von Siemens Foundation, [Bavarian Academy of Sciences](#), Munich, Germany, 2007.

Notes

1. [^](#) Alphonso, Caroline. "Law feeding brain drain: U of T loses leading professor to U.S. over Ontario's mandatory retirement." *Globe and Mail*: 20 Feb. 2004.
2. [^](#) Pangle, Thomas L. "[Curriculum Vitae](#)". University of Texas website. Retrieved 2006.
3. [^](#) Alphonso, Caroline. "Law feeding brain drain: U of T loses leading professor to U.S. over Ontario's mandatory retirement." *Globe and Mail*: 20 Feb. 2004
4. [^](#) Pangle, Thomas L. "[Curriculum Vitae](#)". University of Texas website. Retrieved 2006.