

9 Self-Interest in Americans' Political Opinions

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The notion that human behavior is governed at least in part by selfish urges plays a role in virtually every psychology and moral philosophy in Western thought. The great thinkers of the Christian era, such as Saint Augustine, denounced the various lusts, of which lust for money and possessions (also known as greed or avarice) was only one, and by no means necessarily the worst; others identified ferocity, pride, or envy. Thomas Hobbes regarded the human being as motivated first and foremost by self-interest. Adam Smith also concluded that hedonistic selfishness was in some contexts the ruling motive of the human species: "every man feels his own pleasures and his own pains more sensibly than those of other people." But he saw self-interest as focused particularly on one motive, "augmentation of fortune." His near contemporary, Jeremy Bentham, argued that people act simply to secure pleasure and avoid pain (including the pleasures and pains of malevolence and benevolence).

From this mixture of antecedents, classical economics has deduced three basic psychological assumptions: the idea of materialistic hedonism, or a simple pleasure-pain principle of human motivation; the idea of egoism, that outcomes to the self are weighed more heavily than outcomes to others; and rationality, that decisions are made on the basis of reasonable calculations limited primarily by the amount of information available.

Theories of self-interest have also been influential in modern psychology. Its formative years were much influenced by Darwin, so accounts of human motivation were dominated by the view that humanity is basically selfish and driven by basic biological needs that ensure species survival. Freud viewed all behavior as motivated principally by such instinctual survival-oriented drives as hunger and procreation, operating according to the pleasure principle. Mainstream academic psychology developed a not

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dissimilar view, ranging from McDougall's theorizing about human instincts to Hull's and Skinner's ideas of primary drives. Deprivation motivates overt activity, and the organism learns adaptive habits when reinforced with drive reduction. It is perhaps not unfair to say, with Campbell (1975) and the Wallachs (1983), that the dominant modern psychological theories of motivation are fundamentally egoistic and hedonistic.

Self-Interest in Mass Publics

Early studies of mass political behavior suggested that self-interest is a powerful motive in the ordinary citizen's political thinking. Studies of individual voting behavior (e.g., Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954) emphasized the importance of "position issues," whose motivational appeal was presumed to be "self-interest of a relatively direct kind" (p. 184). *The American Voter* (Campbell et al. 1960) concluded that Americans commonly responded to domestic issues in terms of "primitive self-interest" (p. 205) and "fairly concrete and short-term group interest" (p. 223), rather than ideologically. Neither work, however, actually assessed the effects of self-interest directly.

Others have demonstrated that fluctuations in the strength of the economy explain over-time changes in electoral outcomes fairly well (Kramer 1971; Tuftes 1978; Monroe 1979). Their quite plausible interpretation was that individuals were "voting their pocketbooks." Yet this inference of individually self-interested behavior from a pattern of collectively rational aggregate behavior is purely speculative in the absence of individual-level evidence.

Our own research has tested the hypothesis that the individual's self-interest determines his or her policy and candidate preferences. In defining self-interest, we wished to use terms that corresponded to the commonsense, man-in-the-street understanding, and to its usage in intellectual history. We also wanted the definition to be sufficiently restrictive that the self-interest hypothesis would be both verifiable and falsifiable. As a result, we have defined self-interest as the (1) short-to-medium term impact of an issue (or candidacy) on the (2) material well-being of the (3) individual's own personal life (or that of his or her immediate family).

This definition excludes several other possibilities that we feel fall outside the normal connotations of the term and would make its effects much more difficult to assess, such as (1) long-term self-interest, (2) nonmaterial aspects of well-being (e.g., spiritual contentment, self-esteem, social adjustment, social status, or feelings of moral righteousness), and (3) interests that affect the well-being of the individual's group but not that of the specific individual (for a similar definitional analysis, see Barry 1965, chap. 10).

Virtually all of our research has used large-scale public opinion surveys, with national or statewide samples, or in some cases local surveys conducted in Los Angeles County or the city of Los Angeles. Our specific measures of self-interest have varied along two dimensions: retrospective (e.g., having recently lost one's job) versus prospective (e.g., expectations of a tax cut), and objective (the researcher's assessment of the individual's self-interest, e.g., having children in public schools gives one an interest in school funding) versus subjective (e.g., perceiving that one's own finances have been deteriorating gives one an interest in dismissing political incumbents). Contrary to the practice of many researchers, we ordinarily do not regard standard demographic measures as adequate indicators of self-interest, choosing rather to use more proximal measures of the personal impact of an issue on the individual.

Any cross-sectional study poses problems of causal inference. First, we have assumed that any significant correlation of self-interest and policy and/or candidate preference would reflect the causal role of self-interest. This assumption has not been very controversial. Second, most of our research has contrasted the effects of self-interest with those of a small set of "symbolic predispositions," typically, party identification, self-description as a "liberal" or "conservative," and racial tolerance. The importance of this contrast lies in our theory of "symbolic politics," in which political symbols evoke longstanding affective responses rather than rational self-interested calculations (Sears 1975, 1983). These affective responses are presumed to be the residues of earlier-life socialization (not necessarily preadult), which are evoked by relevant political symbols. For example, party identification is likely to be elicited by a partisan election, and racial tolerance by a busing controversy. We selected these particular predispositions because they can be shown to have been relatively stable through most individuals' adult life spans, and so are unlikely to be substantially influenced by the individual's short-term material self-interest in adulthood.

We have used several statistical criteria for assessing the effects of self-interest. A convenient starting point is to ask whether the self-interest index correlates to a statistically significant degree ($p < .05$, two-tailed test) with the political attitude in question. However, because a relatively weak correlation can meet that minimal criterion in large survey samples, we also consider the absolute size of the correlation. From regression equations including self-interest and symbolic predispositions as predictors, we consider the statistical significance and the absolute size of the regression coefficients, as well as the variance explained by the self-interest indicators (taken as a set, or compared to that explained by the relevant symbolic predispositions).

The Minimal Effects of Self-Interest

The results of all our studies are tabulated in table 9.1. The table shows, for each study, the type of self-interest (e.g., "vulnerability to busing"), the number of self-interest measures used, the political attitude that serves as the dependent variable (e.g., "opposition to busing"), the sample area, and the date of survey. It then presents, in order, three statistical indicators: the mean bivariate correlation between self-interest and dependent variables; the proportion of self-interest measures that yielded statistically significant regression coefficients; and the mean standardized regression coefficient for the self-interest terms.¹ The other indicators are referred to in the text. These analyses were taken from previous research reports, rather than being conducted anew for this paper, so the procedures vary somewhat from study to study.

Racial Issues

Our research on the self-interest hypothesis began as an incidental by-product of our work on whites' political resistance to racial change. As the civil rights struggle shifted from the Deep South to the North and West in the late 1960s, one popular hypothesis was that racial threats had finally come to northern whites' doorsteps, thus evoking a self-interested "white backlash." We first tested this thesis in 1969 and 1973 surveys in nearly all-white suburbs of Los Angeles, when the white mayor, Sam Yorty, was challenged by a black city councilman, Tom Bradley. We measured personal racial threat to the respondents' private lives (i.e., self-interest) by asking people how they perceived (1) the dangers from desegregation of their neighborhood; (2) the economic threat they personally felt from blacks; (3) the threat of racial busing to their family; and (4) the fear of personal victimization by black crime. We also asked a series of questions about racial intolerance, which we summed into an index of "symbolic racism" (Sears and Kinder 1971; Kinder and Sears 1981).

Preference for the white candidate was strongly predicted by symbolic racism, and scarcely at all by racial threat. As entry 1 in table 9.1 shows, only 2 of the 18 regression coefficients for racial threat (11 percent) were significant, and their average was a nonsignificant +.04. In contrast, symbolic racism had highly significant effects, accounting for 22.3 percent and 15.3 percent of the variance in candidate preference in the two years.

We then conducted a series of studies focused specifically on whites' opposition to busing. Whites were regarded as self-interested in busing if they had children in the public schools, lived in districts with busing happening or threatened, or lived in all-white neighborhoods. In two national studies, only one of ten self-interested regression coefficients was significant—they averaged just .00 (see entries 2 and 3)—and the self-interest

Table 9.1 Effects of Self-Interest on Public Opinion

Self-Interest	Dependent Variable	Survey	Correlation	Regression
No. Items Type	No. Items Sample	Year	Mean Type*	Net Percent Betas: No. Tests
1. Racial threat	20 Oppose black mayoral candidate	1 Los Angeles suburbs ¹ 1969, 1973	+ .21 ^b	+ .04
Neighborhood integration	5		+ .41 ^b	+ .06
Economic competition	6		+ .21 ^b	+ .02
Racial busing	5		+ .05 ^b	- .01
Black violence	4		+ .26 ^b	+ .09
2. Vulnerability to busing	5	2 national ² 1972	+ .01	+ .02
3. Vulnerability to busing	5	1 national ¹ 1976	NA	- .02
4. Vulnerability to busing	24	14 national, Calif., Los Angeles ¹ 1964-1979	NA	+ .03
5. Vulnerability to bilingual education	9	7 national ⁷ 1983	+ .02	+ .01
6. Declining personal finances	2	3 national ³ 1983	+ .04	NA
7. Declining personal finances and vulnerability to inflation	2	18 California ¹⁸ 1979	NA	0.0
General economic issues				
8. Declining personal finances	2	Presidential performance ² 1983	+ .04	NA
9. Declining personal finances and spending	2	Opposition to taxes ² 1983	NA	0.0

(1) Kinder & Sears 1981
(2) Sears, Hensler, & Specter 1979
(3) Sears et al. 1980
(4) Sears & Allen 1984
(5) Huddy & Sears 1989
(6) Sears & Lau 1983
(7) Sears & Citrin 1985

Table 9.1—(continued)

Item	Year	Scale	Correlation	df	df	df	df	df	df	df
8. Vulnerability to inflation	1983	national	-.03	4	4	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
9. Employment problems	1976	national	NA	1	1	33.3	+ .02	(3)	Sears et al. 1980	
10. Employment problems	1983	national	+ .04	NA	NA	NA	NA	(8)	Sears & Lau 1983	
11. Women's role in the workplace	1984	national	NA	3	3	16.7	NA	(6)	Sears & Huddy 1990	
12. Personal impact of energy crisis	1974	Los Angeles County	NA	3	3	0.0	.00	(2)	Sears et al. 1978	
13. Poor health	1976	national	NA	1	1	66.7	+ .08	(3)	Sears et al. 1980	
14. Service recipients	1979	California	NA	1	1	25.0	+ .03	(20)	Sears & Citrin 1985	
15. Service recipients	1980, 1981	Massachusetts	NA	4	4	25.0	+ .03	(4)	Lau, Coulam, & Sears 1983	
16. Women's economic issues	1984	national	NA	3	3	20.0	NA	(10)	Sears & Huddy 1990	
17. Federal tax burden	1983	national	+ .10	NA	NA	NA	NA	(16)	Sears & Lau 1983	
18. State and local tax burden	1979	California	NA	1	1	90.0	+ .15	(10)	Sears & Citrin 1985	
19. State and local tax burden	1980, 1981	Massachusetts	NA	4	4	50.0	+ .12	(4)	Lau, Coulam, & Sears 1983	
20. Public employees	1979	California	NA	1	1	60.0	+ .09	(5)	Sears & Citrin 1985	
21. Public employees	1980, 1981	Massachusetts	NA	4	4	100.0	+ .14	(2)	Lau, Coulam, & Sears 1983	
22. Vulnerability to crime	1976	national	NA	4	4	33.3	+ .03	(3)	Sears et al. 1980	
23. Relatives and friends in Vietnam War	1968	national	+ .04	3	3	16.7	+ .04	(6)	Lau, Brown, & Sears 1978	
24. Vulnerability to military draft	1980	UCLA students	-.08	2	2	-20.0	-.05	(10)	Sears et al. 1983	
25. Concern about likely war	1980	UCLA students	+ .20	2	2	50.0	+ .19	(2)	Sears et al. 1983	
Total	168		+ .07			22.8	+ .04	(188)		

*Note: The number of items shown is prior to the development of composite scales. Correlation is Pearson r unless otherwise specified. Regression type included only self-interest terms, where possible (type 1); otherwise they included self-interest and some demographics (type 2); self-interest and symbolic predispositions, typically ideology, party identification, and racial attitudes (type 3); or all three (type 4). The standardized regression coefficient (beta) is shown. Net percentage significant is the percentage significant (at least $p < .05$ two-tailed) in the predicted direction minus the percentage significant in the opposite direction.

a. Whites only.
b. Gamma.
c. Non-Hispanics only.
d. Tau - c.

variables did not show any additive or interactive effects (Sears, Hensler, and Speer 1979; Sears et al. 1980). In a later study, eight surveys on bus- ing yielded 24 self-interest coefficients, which averaged + .03 (Sears and Allen 1984; entry 4). Racial intolerance dominated self-interest in all three studies, yielding highly significant regression coefficients of .39 and .31 in the first two, and an average correlation of .26 in the third.

Others who have tested the self-interest hypothesis concerning busing have obtained much the same result (e.g., Bobo 1983, using national data; McConahay 1982, in Louisville; McClendon and Pestello 1983, in Ak- ron; and Gatlin, Giles, and Cataldo 1978, in Florida). Similarly, Kluegel and Smith (1983) and Jessor (1988) have found that whites' self-interest in affirmative action (e.g., perceived personal competition for jobs with blacks) has little effect on attitudes toward racial policies, which instead are best explained by more general attitudes of racial intolerance. Similarly, Anglos' opposition to bilingual education seems to be governed more by racial attitudes than by personal experience with it (indeed those with chil- dren in such programs are the most supportive of it; Huddy and Sears 1989; entry 5). These studies of racial issues, then, have almost uniformly yielded little support for the self-interest hypothesis that racial threats to whites' private lives affect their stances on racial policies, and equally uni- formly have yielded strong effects of racial intolerance.

Economic Issues

It might be argued that racial conflicts have a complex, profoundly emo- tional quality that mask or at least complicate the effects of self-interest. Economic issues might therefore be regarded as more appropriate venues for the occurrence of self-interest. Our research in this line began with attitudes toward government-guaranteed full employment and national health insurance (Sears et al. 1980). As entries 9 and 13 in table 9.1 indi- cate, the self-interest indicators yielded rather small regression coefficients, averaging + .05, although half of them were statistically significant. Green (1988) reports similarly weak self-interest effects on these two issues. An- other study focusing on unemployment, inflation, and presidential eco- nomic performance yielded eighteen correlations with self-interest, aver- aging + .02 (Sears and Lau 1983; entries 6, 8, 10, 17). We also found that the personal impact of the 1973-74 energy crisis had no effect what- ever on individuals' political attitudes (Sears et al. 1978; entry 12).

A considerably more ambitious study (Sears and Citrin 1985; entries 7, 14, 18, 20) took advantage of three California ballot propositions in 1978-80 that offered, respectively, a massive property tax reduction (Proposition 13 in 1978), a cap on state spending (Proposition 4 in 1979), and a 50 percent reduction in state income taxes (Proposition 9 in 1980). These presented a unique opportunity to study political self-

interest, since they offered individual taxpayers large and concrete eco- nomic benefits as well as dire threats to public services and public em- ployment, with the intense and focused attention of hotly contested campaigns.

We identified four groups of self-interested respondents: "taxpayers" (those who were homeowners, felt burdened by heavy property and/or income taxes, expected large tax reductions from the propositions, or had high income), the economically discontented (those who had declining family finances or felt hurt by inflation), public employees, and the recip- ients of various government services. The dependent variables were atti- tudes toward the three ballot measures and toward size of government and spending on public services, estimates of waste in government, and per- ceptions of excessive wages for public employees.

The "taxpayers" held quite consistently self-interested political prefer- ences, as shown in table 9.1, entry 18; we will return to this below. The economically discontented, who might have been expected to support tax and spending cuts, did not. Further analyses, not shown in the table, found no evidence for interactions between these types of economic dis- content that might reflect "stagflation" (Sears and Citrin 1985:137-39). The public employees and recipients of government services were expected to defend the public sector out of self-interest, but showed only scattered support for it. The regression coefficients averaged + .03 for service recip- ients (entry 15) and + .09 for public employees (entry 20), though the latter yielded some significant effects to which we will return. Surveys done in Massachusetts before and after the vote on Proposition 2½, an- other major property-tax-cutting measure, yielded quite similar results in virtually all these respects (Lau, Coulam, and Sears 1983; entries 15, 19, 21).

The rise of the women's movement might have generated self-inter- ested support from women for policy positions benefiting them. How- ever, women have not generally supported women's issues more than have men (Shapiro and Mahajan 1986; Mansbridge 1985). Among women, support for women's issues, gender equality, and feminism and for candi- dates favorable to women (such as Mondale and Ferraro in 1984) might well have been rooted in special economic interests concerning children, marriage, and work. Our study did show that single mothers were espe- cially supportive of government aid to women, and working women were especially supportive of gender equality (Sears and Huddy 1990; entries 11, 16). But for the most part women responded to these issues as sym- bolic ones. Feminism and abortion policy proved to be almost pure sym- bolic issues.

Finally, two studies have examined self-interest among the elderly in programs that do (Social Security and Medicare) or do not (education)

especially benefit them. However, Huddy's (1989) literature review finds no greater support for Social Security or Medicare spending among the elderly, and Ponzar et al. (1988) actually find less support among them (along with less support for spending on education). The latter also find no great age differences in support for transfer payments either to low-income older people or to (presumably younger) low-income families with children. In both studies, policy preferences are somewhat more closely linked to economic position among older people, but the effects are neither very strong nor very consistent.

In short, these several economic issues yielded somewhat more evidence for self-interested political attitudes than was the case for racial issues, but even here it is unusual.

Crime and War

We have also considered the effects of violence. Analysis of a 1976 national survey tested the hypothesis that support for "law and order" policies would be produced by such self-interest variables as recent victimization by crime and fear of walking in one's neighborhood at night (Sears et al. 1980; entry 22). All told, self-interest explained only 0.4 percent of the variance (compared to 17.1 percent for the usual three symbolic predispositions). Crime would seem to be more a symbolic than a personal issue in politics.

A major source of self-interest in war is vulnerability to combat. However, we found little evidence that those with friends and relatives serving in Vietnam were most opposed to the war there (Lau, Brown, and Sears 1979, entry 23; Mueller 1973 reports similar findings). Moreover, among a representative sample of UCLA undergraduates, in a study conducted during the 1980 confrontations with the USSR over Afghanistan, vulnerability to the draft did not produce increased opposition to registration, draft, or military action toward the Soviet Union (Sears et al. 1983; entry 24). While one possible measure of self-interest, the perceived likelihood of war, was associated with antiwar and antidraft preferences, this proved one of the rare cases in which controls for symbolic predispositions completely eliminated any trace of a self-interest effect.

Pocketbook Voting

Other researchers have focused on the "pocketbook voting" hypothesis that presidential and congressional voting is responsive to the voter's own financial situation. As indicated earlier, Kramer (1971) demonstrated that as aggregate economic indicators go up, so does the incumbent's vote share. His interpretation of this finding as reflecting self-interest was, however, challenged by Kinder and Kiewiet (1979, 1981), who found that people's judgments about how well the nation was doing economically ex-

plained their congressional voting better than did their personal finances or employment status.

These findings have led to considerable subsequent research. Correlations between perceived personal finances and presidential vote in all seven National Election Studies (NES) surveys from 1956 to 1980 provide the strongest support for pocketbook voting (Kiewiet 1983).² However, personal finances have not related significantly to voting in other contexts. Kiewiet (1983) found that only 7 percent (2 of 26) of the coefficients regressing congressional vote on personal finances were significant. Scattered studies of senatorial and gubernatorial voting in the United States, and of parliamentary voting in Great Britain, West Germany, France, and Italy, yield the same conclusion (Kiewiet and Rivers 1984; Lewis-Beck 1986).

The best study of the effects of unemployment on voting is again Kiewiet's (1983), using the NES series: unemployment was associated with more Democratic voting in 30 of the 36 cases, though the effect was statistically significant in only 20 percent of these instances. Schlozman and Verba's (1979:318) careful examination of the effects of unemployment in the mid-1970s also found a slight (4 percent) shading to the Democrats among the unemployed. On the other hand, other studies have failed to find significant effects on political attitudes of either unemployment or the personal impact of recessions (Feldman 1984; Kinder and Mebane 1983). In sum, unemployment seems consistently to produce a slight tilt toward the Democratic side, particularly in presidential elections.

The personal impact of inflation seems to have had an even weaker political effect. Kiewiet (1983) found that people who said inflation was their most serious personal problem voted significantly more Republican (as predicted), but in only one of five surveys. A number of studies have found no significant political effects of feeling hurt by inflation on presidential job approval or inflation policy (Lau and Sears 1981), support for tax and spending cuts (Sears and Citrin 1985), and judgments of the national severity of inflation (Conover, Feldman, and Knight 1986, 1987).

In most cases, then, these measures of pocketbook motivation do not relate significantly to people's voting behavior. The only real dispute is over the strength of the link to presidential vote. We would agree with Feldman (1984:248), who concludes that "the accumulated evidence very strongly suggests that vote choice and presidential evaluations are at best modestly influenced by *personal* economic considerations."³

Information

Economic theories assume that perfect rationality occurs only under conditions of perfect information. That might lead us to expect that self-interest would have stronger effects among the better informed. But avail-

able research does not support that view. Sears et al. (1980) found that the better informed were actually the least self-interested in three of four issue areas, but the differences were trivial. Similarly, among better-informed college students, vulnerability to the military draft was associated with greater support for it (Sears et al. 1983). Weatherford (1983) and Conover, Feldman, and Knight (1986, 1987) tested the opposite hypothesis, that the poorly informed would be more self-interested because they could not look beyond the narrow confines of their own personal experiences. But they did not find evaluations of government performance to be any more self-interested among the less informed.

None of these political issues seems, on the surface at least, to be any more or less complex than is usual for mass politics in this country. Given extreme and unusual complexity, information may be more important. Green (1988) investigated attitudes toward a ballot proposition in California limiting rent control which was so confusing (and perhaps even deceptive) that many mistakenly voted against their own real preferences. In this case, renters (the interested parties) voted their own interests considerably more if correctly informed. Aside from this unusual case, greater political information seems not to boost the strength of self-interest very much.

Summary

Clearly averaging over these quite heterogeneous studies cannot be meaningful in any rigorous sense, but a summary statement can perhaps convey a crude approximation of the overall pattern. As shown in table 9.1, we find in our own work that only about 20 to 25 percent of the self-interest terms meet the minimal standard of statistical significance. The average bivariate correlation of $+ .07$ and regression coefficient of $+ .04$ reflect only minor explanatory contributions.

Since ours is a large sample of tests, it is not surprising that the other studies discussed in this section using the same general paradigm have obtained similar findings. Even Kiewiet's (1983) analyses of personal finances and unemployment as determinants of presidential vote yielded minimally significant self-interest terms at about this same rate. Green's (1988) extensive and important new set of studies fits this pattern as well. We would conclude, therefore, that self-interest generally has not been of major importance in explaining the U.S. public's political preferences.

It is possible that even these minimal effects may be exaggerated somewhat. Specifically, some significant findings in the literature may have resulted from item-order artifacts rather than genuine self-interest. An experiment varying the proximity of self-interest to political attitude items induced artificial self-interest effects at high levels of proximity (Sears and Lau 1983). In the National Election Studies series, "pocketbook voting"

findings, based on perceived personal finances, have tended to be strongest when the interview schedules presented just such proximal item orderings (though the strength of such artifacts in existing data probably cannot be definitively established; see Sears and Lau 1983; Lewis-Beck 1985; Lau, Sears, and Jessor 1989).

When Does Self-Interest Work?

There are always exceptions to any general principle in the behavioral sciences, and the exceptions usually clarify the principle itself. In our research there have been four cases in which virtually every indicator of self-interest had a statistically significant effect on virtually every relevant dependent variable. What general principles can we extract from these successes, and the more numerous failures, about the necessary conditions for self-interest effects?

Clear, Substantial Costs and Benefits

The strongest and most consistent self-interest effects have been associated with paying taxes. Feeling especially burdened by state and local taxes, and homeownership, and expecting large dollar savings were all substantially related to support for the tax-cutting ballot propositions (Sears and Citrin 1985; Lau, Coulam, and Sears 1983). These self-interest effects were consistent, statistically significant, and of unaccustomed magnitude, as table 9.1 shows. Similar findings have been reported by Hawthorne and Jackson (1987) on support for the tax cuts in the 1978 Tax Revenue Act, on support for the federal tax cuts proposed just prior to the Reagan administration (Lau and Sears 1981), and on acceptance of tax cheating in Norway (Lisethaug and Miller 1985). These represent fairly robust and consistent effects of self-interest on political preferences.

Why does self-interest work in these cases? Apparently partly because of the unusual clarity of the personal stakes. This has been shown in several experiments varying the personal tax increases presented as the cost of a particular policy proposal (Green 1988). Greater proposed personal tax increases (\$5 versus \$50 annually) significantly diminished support for providing shelter for the homeless (from 86 percent to 75 percent) and for building a subway in Los Angeles (from 51 percent to 29 percent). Similar findings emerged from experiments on a ballot proposition designed to clean up California's waterways and on a proposed increase in cigarette taxes (and opposition to the latter was greatest among low-income smokers). Such advertised tax costs did not invariably have a strong effect; they did not affect support for bilingual education, nor did the overall size of an environmental bond issue (as opposed to its personal

tax cost) affect support for it (p. 176). Still, self-interest can sometimes be elicited when personal tax increases or reductions are highly salient.

The magnitude of the stakes would seem also to be an important factor. In the tax revolt cases, support for a tax cut was quite specifically linked both to the burden of that particular tax on the individual and to the size of the proposed reduction in his or her own taxes (Sears and Citrin 1985). The dollar benefits to the individual in that case were substantial in absolute terms. We would also speculate that a further helpful condition was that the political remedy was certain—a constitutional amendment that would lock in a reduction in tax assessments and a cap on tax rates.

Ambiguous Severe Threats

In two other cases, threats that were both severe and ambiguous seem to have motivated self-interested political preferences. In both California and Massachusetts, public employees were substantially more opposed to the tax and spending reduction referenda than were other voters. Averaging across eleven different comparisons, public employees were more opposed than other respondents to the three referenda in California by an impressive 24 percent (Sears and Citrin 1985). Similarly, Lau, Coulam, and Sears (1983) found that public employees were more opposed to Proposition 2½ in Massachusetts, both before and after its passage. In both cases the effects held up with all other variables controlled. Public employees' opposition seems to have been based on their desire to prevent job and pay cuts. Their opposition to the spending-cap referendum was correlated with their perceptions that it would cut the number of public employees or their wages ($r = .24$), which was not the case for other citizens ($r = .02$). Green (1988:237) reports similar findings for their opposition to the later income-tax-cutting proposition.

Another set of ambiguous but severe threats seems to have stimulated the operation of self-interest in one particular phase of busing controversies. Surveys of whites in Los Angeles done after a court order mandating school desegregation, but before implementation, found a substantial self-interest basis for whites' opposition to busing (all ten regression coefficients were significant, averaging $+ .13$). However, surveys done prior to any publicity about busing in the community, or after implementation of the court order, yielded the usual crop of generally nonsignificant self-interest effects (only 17 percent of the regression coefficients were significant, averaging $+ .03$; see Sears and Allen 1984; other smaller-sample studies done prior to the court order also obtained nonsignificant results; see Caditz 1976, and Kinder and Sears 1981).

We would speculate that self-interest emerged in these cases because of the combination of uncertainty and severe negative possibilities. The uncertainty, we suspect, allowed for the most threatening sorts of fantasies

about one's own possible fate; the imagined threats could reach extraordinary peaks, helped along by the far-ranging rumors that gain circulation in a time of uncertainty and ignorance. All this was no doubt exacerbated in the busing case by the low levels of real contact and reality testing most white Americans have with blacks, and by the fantasies regarding blacks that lurk just below the surface of many white Americans' psyches.

Another example that is perhaps only superficially different has been provided by Green (1988). He has shown that smokers (especially heavy smokers) are considerably more opposed than nonsmokers to bans on smoking in public places and to increases in the cigarette tax. The uncertainties and terrors of cigarette deprivation may seem less cosmic than in the previous examples to readers who have never smoked, but perhaps not to those who are now or have in the past been heavy smokers.

Politicizing Self-Interest

A third category of exceptions consists of events that politicize self-interest. In our research we have but one example, and that arguable: the apparent politicization of economic self-interest by Ronald Reagan over the course of his presidency.

Over the 1956–80 period, there were only modest, marginally significant effects of personal finances on presidential voting in the National Election Studies, as indicated above. By our count (Lau, Sears, and Jessor 1989), the mean correlation of personal finances with vote intention was $+ .12$, and with actual vote, $+ .11$; the regression coefficients were $+ .08$ in each case. In 1980 President Reagan quite explicitly asked Americans to vote on the basis of self-interest: "ask yourself . . . , are you better off today than you were four years ago?" But this explicit appeal to self-interest apparently became salient too late in the 1980 campaign to evoke widespread self-interested voting. Overall, perceived personal finances and presidential vote were only weakly associated ($r = + .08$), and Reagan did not seem to attract more new support toward the end of the campaign from those whose personal finances had been declining (Sears and Lau 1983).

By 1984, the same plea for a self-interested vote was the centerpiece of his presidency and campaign for reelection. The association of personal finances with presidential preference showed a startling increase: the raw correlations jumped to $.36$ and $.33$, respectively, and the regression coefficients to $.19$ and $.18$. This reflects an increase in the strength of self-interest over his first four-year term of some considerable magnitude. Nevertheless, the fact that self-interest so rarely has a strong and systematic effect suggests that political events and campaigns rarely are successful in mobilizing it, even when they try.

The Narrowness of Self-Interest Effects

The evidence up to this point is that self-interest generally has quite weak effects on political preferences, and that symbolic predispositions have much stronger and indeed overriding effects. Many materialist theorists have suggested that ideology, party preferences, and racial prejudice are themselves mere creatures of real economic interests, as in the class basis of parties in the United Kingdom, Chile, or Italy, or in group conflict analyses of racial prejudice (Bobo 1988; Campbell 1965; Lipset 1981). Self-interest could therefore indirectly influence policy and candidate preferences by shaping more general ideological or partisan preferences.

This indirect influence does not seem likely to be very strong, for several reasons. The many unsuccessful attempts to find cognitively broad ideologies in most Americans (Converse 1964; Kinder and Sears 1985) should make us doubtful that self-interest motivates broad ideological points of view. Moreover, there is fairly good evidence that the affective preferences we have described as symbolic predispositions tend to crystallize and stabilize by the end of early adulthood (though they are scarcely invariant), and so should not be especially susceptible to the vagaries of adult material interests. Nevertheless, it is worth considering the possibility, given the popularity of the theory. As will be seen, even when self-interest has significant effects on policy preferences, they usually prove to be cognitively quite narrow.

Self-Interest and Symbolic Predispositions

To start with, symbolic predispositions are in most instances almost wholly uncorrelated with self-interest. Two examples make the point. Our study of the origins of four policy attitudes (Sears et al. 1980) generated twenty-nine correlations between self-interest indexes and the usual three symbolic predispositions. The largest was .11, and the median a nonsignificant .05. Even our study of the California tax revolt, which yielded several significant self-interest effects, produced similarly null results. We regressed the same set of three symbolic predispositions on our seven basic self-interest indicators, but only 19 percent of the resulting self-interest terms were statistically significant (Sears and Citrin 1985). Both results are typical of our other studies.

Four Specific Cases

But it turns out that self-interest has even narrower cognitive implications, as a review of our several significant effects reveals. First, the public employees' self-interested opposition to the tax revolt extended no further than a narrow defense of their own jobs and salaries. We analyzed their support for the public sector and for the moderate political Left across

eleven questions that did not mention the ballot propositions themselves, ranging from the quite general (political ideology and party identification) to the more concrete (desired size of government, levels of spending on public services, or imposition of tuition at public universities). Public employees supported the public sector significantly more than other respondents on just one question: whether or not they thought government workers were overpaid (Sears and Citrin 1985: 156). Similarly, Listhaug and Miller (1985) found that public employees in Norway did not oppose tax evasion any more than did other citizens. In short, public employees were willing to defend their own salaries and jobs, but demonstrated no more general support for the public sector.

During the tax revolt, service recipients did display some self-interested defense of the specific programs from which they personally benefited; for example, people with children in the public schools showed some special support for spending on the schools (Sears and Citrin 1985). But this self-interested thinking was both weak and narrow. These regression coefficients ranged only from +.06 to +.09, and were far outstripped by the effects of symbolic predispositions. The service recipients did not support spending on other domestic programs, nor oppose general tax and spending cuts or otherwise support the public sector more than other respondents. These modest and narrow effects parallel those obtained by Cataldo and Holm (1983) among public school parents on school bond voting.

Third, further analysis of college students' attitudes toward military registration and the draft turned up two limited significant self-interest effects. About twice as many students twenty-one and older were in favor of restricting the draft to eighteen- to twenty-year-olds as were students under twenty-one. Similarly, student deferments were supported by half again as many freshman males, who presumably could benefit from them, as by senior males, who could not. But the younger and older students differed only on these explicitly age-related questions; they did not differ in general support for registration, draft, or military intervention.

Taxpayers again provide one partial exception. The heavily tax-burdened (objectively or subjectively) were markedly more anti-public sector (in opposing service spending, perceiving large amounts of waste in government, and so on) than were others (Sears and Citrin 1985). Being burdened by one kind of tax also transferred to support for cuts in other kinds of taxes; for example, home owners, especially those whose property taxes had been significantly cut by Proposition 13, continued to give unusually high levels of support to the income-tax cuts proposed by Proposition 9 (holding income level constant).

The taxpayers stand out as the sole exception, however. The self-interest effects uncovered in other areas turn out not only to be rather small in absolute terms, or unreliable, but also when present, to be quite specific

to the policies most narrowly linked to the self-interest dimension in question. The effects of self-interest usually extend neither to other related policy issues nor to more general policy or ideological questions.

Can Broad Self-Interest Effects Be Induced?

If self-interest effects can be generated by politicizing personal experience (as in the Reagan presidency) or by personalizing political issues (as in our item-order experiment), can they also be made cognitively broader than usual? It would seem to be difficult to do so. Our item proximity experiment did induce several apparent self-interest effects, but they prove to be as narrow and specific as those just described (Sears and Lau 1983). In one case questions about personal financial situations were closely followed by questions on presidential performance. Some self-interest effects were induced, but they were quite specific, occurring only when the time perspective (past versus future) and dimension of performance (economic versus overall) exactly matched. Similarly, item proximity increased the correlation of perceived federal tax burden to closely matching attitudes toward federal tax policy, but not to the more distant association of perceived state/local tax burden with those same federal tax policy items (even those proposing major tax cuts). In short, it would appear that not only are self-interest effects rare, and when they do appear, quite narrow and specific, but attempts to induce them may be successful only in a quite narrow and specific arena.

Why Doesn't Self-Interest Usually Work?

What are the main reasons that self-interest doesn't usually have a major or significant effect on U.S. public opinion? Let us offer two general possibilities.

The Stakes Are Usually Neither Large Nor Clear

One reason, perhaps, is that the stakes are usually small and obscure. Ordinary people simply do not often perceive government as offering them very clear or substantial personal costs or benefits. The California tax revolt would seem to be a splendid exception: local newspapers, for example, ran preelection tables displaying exactly what property or income tax reductions voters would get if the relevant ballot propositions passed. And the absolute magnitudes of those benefits were impressive.

In contrast, large changes in national economic conditions, such as in the inflation or unemployment rates, may have unpredictable and even mixed effects on individuals, as Kiewiet (1983) has pointed out. The personal costs of unemployment may be intense, but they are concentrated in relatively small groups of disproportionately lower-income and occupa-

tional groups, which are both a small subset of the electorate and for other reasons among its least politically active. The immediate short-term costs of inflation to any given individual are difficult to establish. Prices go up, but for some, wages and/or the value of their real property go up much more, so short-term losses may be overshadowed by longer-term gains. And, as Barry (1970/1978) has suggested, when the costs of political actions (or attitudes) are minimal, other motives may take over.

Attributions of Government Responsibility

Personal well-being does fluctuate a good bit, and varies from one person to the next. How much the government is responsible for this variance is not a matter that economists, politicians, or political scientists usually agree on, much less ordinary citizens. An "almost ubiquitous" assumption in the literature on self-interest (Kiewiet and Rivers 1984: 381) is that self-interest will affect political preference only when individuals attribute responsibility for their well-being to the government.

People rarely see government as responsible for their own personal well-being, either for its present state or future prospects. People usually explain why their family's finances have improved or declined in personal (or "privatistic") rather than societal (or "collectivist") terms (Feldman 1982; Kinder and Mebane 1983). Lane observed a number of years ago that Americans "morselize" their personal experiences: "a union demand is a single incident, not part of a more general labor-management conflict; a purchase on the installment plan is a specific debt, not part of a budgetary pattern—either one's own or society's. The items and fragments of life remain itemized and fragmented" (1962: 353). Similarly, Schlozman and Verba (1979) found that the unemployed tend to perceive their unemployment as caused by individual, proximal circumstances, rather than seeing the society at large, or government, as responsible. And Brody and Sniderman (1977) found that people rarely feel government should help them with their personal problems, even the economic ones.

Does self-interest then affect political preferences only in that small subset of individuals who perceive government or society at large as responsible for their personal problems? Feldman (1982) found that perceived family finances affected political attitudes only among those who attributed trends in their own finances to societal, as opposed to personal, causes. Other studies have obtained either similar but not statistically significant differences (Lau and Sears 1981; Kinder and Mebane 1983), or no differences at all (Sears et al. 1980). The evidence seems mixed but mildly supportive of this hypothesis.

Another approach to the same hypothesis has been to look at events that can be unequivocally attributed to government. Some of these have yielded strong self-interest effects: successful tax-cutting propositions en-

sure that the government cuts taxes (Sears and Citrin 1985; Lau, Coulam, and Sears 1983), and governments are clearly the cause of busing children to racially mixed schools (Sears and Allen 1984). However, other events with unequivocal government responsibility have not produced positive self-interest effects, such as inflation (which is widely perceived as strongly governmentally influenced; see Kiewiet 1983), the Reagan budget and tax cuts, or the 1982 recession (Feldman 1984; Sears and Citrin 1985; Sears and Lau 1983; Conover, Feldman, and Knight 1986, 1987; Kiewiet 1983). In short, the attribution of government responsibility sometimes fosters self-interest effects, and sometimes does not. This attribution may be a necessary but insufficient condition for political self-interest effects.⁴

Americans appear to have a bias toward making internal attributions, that is, toward explaining behavior and events through causes internal to individuals such as motives, ability, personality, or attitudes, rather than through such external causes as social pressure, luck, the difficulties presented by external realities, society—or government. This bias has been described by Langer (1975) as “the illusion of control” and by Sniderman and Brody (1977) as “the ethic of self-reliance.” A bias toward internality is often accompanied by the general view that it is a “just world” in which people get the outcomes they deserve (Lerner 1980). If people are responsible for their own outcomes, the rich deserve their wealth, the poor deserve poverty, and accident victims deserve their fates as well. There is clear evidence that Americans value this sense of internal control; for example, Jellison and Green (1981) showed that people most like others who believe in internal control.

This bias toward internality would seem to represent a considerable obstacle to the influence of self-interest on political opinions. If people are predisposed to view their own well-being as caused by their own actions, it will be difficult for them to comprehend the full impact of government actions on their lives and thus adopt rational self-interested preferences.

Critiques

It would perhaps be useful at this point to cite briefly, and respond to, the main criticisms of this research.

Measures and Definitions

One criticism is that it has relied too heavily on objective measures of self-interest, which may be insensitive to self-interest as the individual voter perceives it (e.g., Bobo 1983; Kiewiet 1983). It is true that most (about two-thirds) of our measures have been objective, partly because they yield less ambiguous causal inferences (it is quite unlikely that being a Democrat or Republican will affect one's being a man or having a child in

school, but quite possible that it affects one's estimates of the likelihood of war or of personal finances).

However, in actuality, objective and subjective measures of self-interest have had very similar effects in this research whenever parallel measures have been available. Objective home ownership was as closely related to support for the California tax revolt as were subjective feelings of tax burden (Sears and Citrin 1985); neither subjective nor objective measures of vulnerability to busing have much influenced whites' opposition to it (Kinder and Sears 1981; Sears, Hensler, and Speer 1979; Sears et al. 1980); and the objective proportion of Hispanics in one's county increased opposition to bilingual education as much as did subjective estimates of the proportion of Hispanics in the neighborhood (Huddy and Sears 1989). Kiewiet (1983) actually found stronger effects of objective than of subjective measures of unemployment, contrary to his expectation. It is therefore difficult for us to see this as an adequate explanation for the lack of self-interest effects.

Second, our operational definitions of self-interest could be too broad, diluting self-interest by combining people with little real interest with the few genuinely interested parties. We have protected ourselves in most of these studies by examining refined combinations of self-interest variables and interaction effects, and occasionally have mentioned them above (though not exhaustively, for space reasons). In general they have not improved the case for self-interest.

On the other hand, our definition of self-interest may be too narrow. For one thing, political preferences may be influenced by long-term self-interest. For example, young workers' attitudes toward Social Security taxes may be influenced more by their desire for far-distant retirement benefits than by their current tax burdens. We have two responses. Even if that were the case, one would expect short-term self-interest to have a stronger political impact, because it is less remote, more emotionally evocative, and easier to calculate. Yet, as we have seen, short-run self-interest has had little effect. From a more pragmatic point of view, it is difficult to assess long-term self-interest. People's own perceptions of it would seem likely to be influenced by many variables other than self-interest, among them current partisan predispositions. So from a purely tactical point of view, it is not obvious how one could obtain unequivocal empirical tests of long-term self-interest.

Group Interest

Another possibility is that group interest, rather than self-interest, may have the real political clout. A number of sociopsychological theories bear on group interest, focusing variously on such phenomena as social identity, reference groups, group consciousness, or group conflict (see Con-

over 1987). The link to self-interest lies in the hypothesis that people are more likely to act politically in their own interests when acting collectively rather than individually. That is, self-interest alone may not be very potent, but it can be if linked to a sense of one's group's interests.

So far, most of the relevant empirical work has tested a realistic group-conflict hypothesis, that people's own interests are mobilized when their group is in competition with another group for scarce resources. This suggests that policy and candidate preferences promoting the group's interests have three determinants: perceptions that the two groups have real conflicts of interest; feelings of material interdependence with one's own group; and feelings of in-group solidarity (e.g., Bobo 1983, 1988). A competing view, described as a "symbolic politics" theory, focuses instead on learned antagonisms and prejudices against the rival group (Sears and Kinder 1985).

One pattern of data has emerged from studies of racial conflict in the United States. This pattern appears both in studies of whites' attitudes toward blacks and racial policies (Jessor 1988) and in studies of Anglos' attitudes toward Hispanics and bilingual education (Huddy and Sears 1989). In both cases there was strong evidence for the role of animosity attitudes, consistent with the symbolic politics view. Promajority solidarity played no role. However, in both cases there was evidence for a limited effect of perceived group conflict. In the case of race, perceived material interdependence with the in-group proved irrelevant, but in the other, Anglos' perception that the education of "people like them" would suffer if special attention were given to Hispanic children contributed to opposition to bilingual education (Huddy and Sears 1989). This reflects limited support for the group-conflict model.

Two other studies focused on the elderly's interests in old-age policies and on women's interests in women's issues (Huddy 1989; Sears and Huddy 1990). Here there was little evidence of any role of antagonistic attitudes toward the rival groups (younger people and men, respectively), nor of any role for in-group solidarity or perceptions of intergroup conflict. But in both cases there was some polarization within the in-group according to economic interests, with less affluent older people and women being particularly supportive of special government aid to the elderly and women, respectively. In short, there is a little evidence that group interest has stronger effects than self-interest, but direct tests of its effects are still in their infancy.

Symbolic Politics

A final alternative is to adopt a wholly different, "symbolic politics," approach to these phenomena (e.g., Sears et al. 1980). At a number of points

we have indicated that symbolic predispositions have considerably greater strength than does self-interest in determining policy and candidate preferences; for example, self-interest explained, on the average, 1.7 percent of the variance in policy preferences regarding jobs, health insurance, busing, and crime, whereas three symbolic predispositions explained an average of 14.0 percent, or about eight times as much (Sears et al. 1980). Similarly, Kiewiet (1983) found that party identification exceeded statistical significance in every single case, unlike self-interest, which did so less than a quarter of the time. Why do symbolic predispositions have a stronger effect?⁵ We offer two general possibilities (though other plausible ones clearly exist).

Public Regardiness

The first possibility is that people may be socialized to respond to public issues in a principled and public-regarding manner. Perhaps political socialization teaches people to weigh most heavily the collective good when they don their "political hats," and to weigh their private good most heavily only when dealing with their personal affairs (Sears et al. 1980:681). If so, symbolic attitudes might express the adult's sense of the public good, and would be quite deliberately and self-consciously given more weight than private considerations in judgments about public policy. A conservative political ideology may simply reflect the belief that an ordered, predictable, and stable society is best for all, quite aside from one's own interests. This does not necessarily imply that the public-regarding view in question is a particularly noble one. One may wish to prevent the "mongrelization of the race" by voting for genocide, or to eliminate welfare because it simply rewards sloth. Nor would it necessarily rule out all forms of self-interest; for example, de Tocqueville felt that personal and national interests converged in enlightened self-interest.

If this were true, adults should vary in their degree of public regardingness, and self-interest should have a stronger effect among the more patriotic citizens (Wilson and Banfield 1971). One test of this hypothesis (Sears et al. 1980) yielded no such differences, but we would not regard this as a definitive test.

Reflective Affective Responses to Political Symbols

A second possibility is that cognitive processes favor symbolic predispositions. Political attitudes may reflect mainly the emotions, or affects, previously conditioned to specific symbols. For example, attitudes toward "forced busing" to integrate whites and blacks would depend on affects toward such symbols as "force," "busing," "integration," and "blacks." Presumably this is partly due to the cognitive efficiencies produced by such simplifications. But it can serve political purposes as well. Politicians and

journalists constantly condense complexity into simplified symbolic terms to induce constituent and audience concurrence. Moreover, they code political issues and events in familiar symbolic terms that will evoke widespread symbolic predispositions in the citizenry. To do this they use abstract symbols such as "welfare," "crime in the streets," "patriotic," "busing," "Watergate," or "Vietnam." In contrast, it is most difficult to code the rich complexity of private experience into simple symbolic terms. Individual experiences are perhaps too close, too emotionally evocative, to lend themselves to easy generalization. As a result, personal experience may, as Lane says, be "morselized," and so not coded semantically in terms that are readily triggered by political symbols.

If personal experience is morselized and political dialogue is coded into abstract terms, the two should tend to be cognitively compartmentalized. The personal and political worlds would simply be in different cognitive realms. Indeed, as we have seen, even the strongest self-interest motives usually have quite narrow effects on political attitudes. Insofar as people do connect private interests to public life, they make that connection in a highly specific way; no general belief systems connect the two realms, and personal experience rarely gets related to more general symbols.

In short, the dominance of symbolic predispositions may come about because of a general tendency toward reflexive affective responses to political symbols. Political symbols may come semantically coded in ways that make them easy to link to symbolic predispositions, but difficult to connect to the blooming and buzzing confusion that is our daily personal experience.

Conclusion

To summarize, self-interest ordinarily does not have much effect on the mass public's political attitudes. There are occasional exceptions, as when there are quite substantial and clear stakes (especially regarding personal tax burdens) or ambiguous and dangerous threats. But even these conditions only infrequently produce systematic and strong self-interest effects, and then, ones that are quite narrowly specific to the interest in question. The general public thinks about most political issues, most of the time, in a disinterested frame of mind.

The mainstream and polarization effects

With the national inflation rate approaching the then-startling level of 7 percent, President Nixon went on television in late summer 1971 to announce a surprise decision to impose wage and price controls on the economy. Although such controls were a major departure from administration policy, the decision was immediately hailed by commentators across the political spectrum as a necessary step in the battle against inflation.

By good luck, there exist excellent data on the effect of Nixon's speech on public attitudes. A Columbia University survey of political activists happened to be in the field at the time of Nixon's announcement, and Gallup surveys on price controls bracketed the speech. The Columbia study found, first of all, that the speech had little effect on Democratic activists, who tended to favor wage and price controls even before Nixon spoke. But the effect of the speech on Republican activists was dramatic. Virtually overnight, support for controls among Republican activists shot up from 37 percent to 82 percent, a rise of some 45 percentage points (Barton, 1974-5). The Gallup surveys, meanwhile, showed that the public as a whole became about 10 percentage points more favorable toward price controls in the weeks following the Nixon speech.

This case suggests that a popular president backed by a unified Washington community can have a powerful effect on public opinion, especially that part of the public that is most attentive to politics.

This is the first of a series of chapters that aims at accounting for the effects of such elite communications on mass attitudes. In this chapter we examine two simple ideal typical situations, one type in which elites achieve a consensus or near consensus on a value or policy, so that virtually all communications take the same side of the given issue, and another type in which elites disagree along partisan or ideological lines, so that there is a roughly even flow of communications on both sides of the issue. The case of wage and price controls is an example of the first type of situation, and the nearly unified support of American elites for the war in Vietnam in 1964 is another. The sharply ideological division of elites over Vietnam in the late 1960s is an example of the second. The RAS model, as we shall see, leads us to expect that these two types of situations will have regular and predictable effects on public attitudes.

Later chapters will examine more complicated cases, ones in which the pattern of elite messages switches from mainly consensual to mainly conflictual, and others in which elites are divided, but in which the relative intensity of communications changes over time. Such changes in the flow of elite communications produce quite interesting and nonintuitive patterns of change in mass attitude reports, as will become apparent.

MAINSTREAM EFFECT

What, we may now ask, would be the theoretically expected effect on public opinion if elites across the political spectrum were to achieve a consensus in support of a particular "mainstream" policy? Or, to ask the same question in the language of the model: What would be the expected effect on public opinion if virtually all the persuasive messages carried in political media on a particular policy were favorable to that policy, and if there were no cueing messages to alert people that the policy was inconsistent with their values?

Axiom A1 suggests, first of all, that the greater a citizen's level of political awareness, the greater the likelihood of reception of persuasive messages on this hypothetical mainstream issue. If all of the cueing messages on this policy were favorable, no one would have any basis via A2 for resisting it. From this we can deduce that the greater a person's level of political awareness, the greater the number of mainstream messages the person would internalize in the form of considerations and hence, all else equal, the greater the person's level of expressed support for the mainstream policy (D25).

Researchers working on a variety of substantive problems have reported support for this implication of the model. In fact, though using different vocabularies, several have made roughly the same argument as here. For example, in *Public Opinion and American Democracy* (1961), V. O. Key, Jr., wrote that a person's level of formal education may be an indicator of the extent to which the person has been influenced by society's traditional or "official" values. Key wrote:

Probably a major consequence of education for opinion consists in the bearing of education on the kinds of influences to which a person is subjected throughout his life. The more extended the educational experience, the more probable it is that a person will be exposed to the discussions of issues as they arise. When, as so often occurs, the current discussion is heavily loaded on one side, it might be expected that this educationally conditioned exposure would have some bearing on the direction of opinion. (1961: p. 341)

Noting that education was associated with greater support for racial equality, private health insurance, and tolerance of nonconformists, Key explained that "formal education may serve to indoctrinate people into the more-or-less official political values of the culture" (p. 340).

Writing a few years later, Gamson and Modigliani (1966) noted a substantial correlation between political information and support for the government's for-

ign policies (see also Sigelman and Conover, 1981). Their explanation for this paralleled Key's argument. Information measured "one's attachment to the mainstream and the resultant exposure to influences such as the mass media" (1966: p. 189). McClosky and Brill's (1983) argument that education promotes the "social learning" of libertarian ideals, and Mueller's (1973) claim that better educated persons were more likely to support the Vietnam War because they were better "followers" of official policy likewise appeal to the notion that exposure to "mainstream" values tends to enhance support for them. More recently, the tendency of better educated persons to be more opposed to the quarantining of AIDS victims (Sniderman et al., 1991) appears to reflect the internalization of a medical consensus that such action is unnecessary to prevent the spread of the disease (Colby and Cook, 1991).¹

In a comparative study of the United States and Britain, Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina (1987) turned up a finding that nicely illustrates the "indoctrinating effect" that exposure to a particular elite culture often produces. Citizens in both countries were asked whether elected representatives should "support the position their parties take when something comes up for a vote, or should they make up their own minds regardless of how their parties want them to vote." In Britain, where Parliament depends on a high degree of party discipline, college-educated persons were more likely than those with only high school education to say that representatives should hew the party line. But in the United States, with its antiparty and individualist political tradition, college-educated persons were more likely to say that representatives should vote their own opinions. Thus, the better educated in each country are the more faithful adherents of their country's respective national traditions.

If the mainstream argument is correct, correlations between awareness and support for a policy should be strongest when elite consensus is strongest and less strong when elite consensus is less strong or nonexistent (D25). Much published evidence (to be supplemented later in this chapter) supports this expectation. For example, Mueller notes that the correlation between education and support for the Vietnam War was strong early in the war, when most elites supported it, and weak in the late phases of the war, when party and ideological elites became deeply divided. In a systematic test of this hypothesis in the domain of civil liberties, McClosky and Brill (1983: p. 421) classified more than 100 civil liberties items according to the degree of support for the libertarian option in relevant Supreme Court decisions and in the attitudes of some 2,000 elites they had surveyed. They found that for items on which the Court and other elites had strongly endorsed the civil liberties position, members of the general public who had attended college were, on average, 24 percentage points more libertarian than were those with less than a high school education. Yet education had a progressively weaker effect in inducing support for libertarian policies as elite support for them declined, until finally, education had a slightly negative

¹ This is my interpretation of the education effect reported by Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock (1991, chap. 4). For a further discussion of this point, see Chapter 12.

association with support for civil liberties on those (few) items on which the pre-Rehnquist Court and most elites took an antilibertarian position (for example, civil disobedience).²

It is widely supposed that political awareness – whether measured by knowledge, participation, or education – engenders resistance to elite influence rather than, as assumed in the mainstream model, susceptibility to it. As will become clear in Chapters 7–11, this supposition has some validity. Political awareness does appear to engender resistance to the political communications of governing authorities. But awareness does so less by engendering resistance *per se* than by increasing the person's sensitivity to the communications of countervailing elites, especially the ideological opponents of the regime. Thus, for example, it will turn out in Chapter 9 that a major source of opposition to the Vietnam War was the exposure of politically aware citizens to antiwar communications that were too faint to be picked up by the less aware. The notion that politically aware persons resist all forms of political persuasion is highly dubious.

One other comment. There are in every society ideas on which virtually everyone agrees. In such cases, the idea is unlikely to become the object of studies of public opinion, except perhaps in studies of culture. Such “motherhood issues” in the United States might include maintenance of free elections, tax-supported public schools, and state-organized attempts to repulse an invading enemy. The mainstream model is less useful for policies of this type than for policies on which there is popular reluctance to go along with an elite consensus, such as tolerance of disliked groups, or support for war when the nation is not immediately threatened.

THE POLARIZATION EFFECT

There are, of course, many cases in which political elites heatedly disagree, so that no “mainstream” exists. In cases of this type, the RAS model leads us to expect quite different patterns of mass attitudes.

To see why, let us assume a situation in which elites are roughly evenly divided on a partisan issue, with one partisan camp sponsoring persuasive messages favoring the liberal position and the other sponsoring messages in support of the conservative position. We further assume that each camp sponsors cueing messages indicating why the given policy is or is not consistent with liberal (or conservative) values. Finally, let us assume that all of these messages are equally intense in that a person at a given level of political awareness would be equally likely to encounter and take in any one of them.

Within the general public, increases in awareness will lead to increased reception of persuasive messages favoring both the liberal position and the conservative position (from A1) and also increased reception of cueing messages concerning the issue. Let us focus first on how this affects liberals. Since politically aware liberals will be likely to possess cueing messages that enable them

2 See also Chong, McClosky, and Zaller, 1984.

to see the ideological implications of the messages they receive, they will be likely to reject conservative arguments on this issue; these cueing messages will not, however, impede their internalization of liberal messages. Less politically aware liberals, by contrast, will be exposed to few persuasive messages, and, owing to their low reception of cueing messages and the lower accessibility of these cues in memory, will be less selective about the persuasive messages they internalize.

In consequence of this dynamic, the most aware liberals will fill their heads, so to speak, with a large number of considerations that are, on balance, favorable to the liberal side of the issue. Less aware liberals, for their part, will fill their heads with a smaller number of considerations, and these considerations will not consistently favor the liberal side of the issue.

The same argument, *mutatis mutandis*, applies to conservatives. Highly aware conservatives should fill their heads with mostly conservative considerations, while less aware conservatives should fill their heads with a smaller number of considerations that are less consistently conservative.

Our expectation, then, is that for cases in which there is a roughly even flow of opposing partisan messages, the ratio of ideologically consistent considerations to ideologically inconsistent ones should increase as political awareness increases.

Figure 4.1 has already confirmed this expectation. As shown there, the ratio of consistent considerations to total considerations increases from about .5 among the least informed persons to about .80 among the most informed. Two of the slopes in Figure 4.1 are statistically significant at the .01 level and the third is significant at the .10 level.³

One may expect that an increasing ratio of ideologically consistent to inconsistent considerations should translate into differences in people's attitude statements: More aware liberals will be more likely to call to mind considerations favorable to the liberal position and hence will be more likely to support it. Less aware liberals will be less likely to be able to recall considerations of any kind, which will lead to higher no-opinion rates, and less likely to endorse the liberal position when they do offer an opinion.⁴

The logic of this argument again applies equally to conservatives. That is, increases in awareness make mass conservatives increasingly likely to make conservative attitude statements when asked about the issue.

Thus, in the case of an evenly divided partisan elite and a balanced flow of partisan communications, the effect of political awareness is to promote the

3 The relationships depicted in Figure 4.1, however, apply to the sample as a whole; closer inspection of the data reveals that the expected relationships hold only for liberals, where they hold very strongly. For conservatives, there appears to be little change in the ratio of consistent-to-inconsistent considerations as awareness increases. The reason for this complication appears to be that the assumed conditions for the test have not been met, namely, a roughly even division of elite support for the opposing policy alternatives. For none of the three options is the division of mass opinion close to 50–50, as it ought to be in the case of an equal elite division. See Chapter 8 for further tests of the effect of awareness and ideology on the internalization of considerations.

4 See Krosnick and Milburn, 1990, for a review of the evidence on the effects of political awareness on no-opinion rates.

polarization of attitude reports as more aware liberals gravitate more reliably to the liberal position and more aware conservatives gravitate more reliably to the conservative position (D26).

Empirical support for the polarization effect

Much empirical evidence supports the expectation of an awareness-induced polarization of liberals and conservatives on partisan issues. The polarizing effect of political awareness on partisan (as against mainstream) issues was first noted by George Belknap and Angus Campbell (1951-2) and was incorporated into the Michigan school's classic, *The American Voter* (Campbell et al., 1960: pp. 186, 207). Using different theoretical vocabularies, Gamson and Modigliani (1966) and Chong, McClosky, and Zaller (1984) have noted the same effect. They examine public attitudes toward numerous issues on which elites disagree, issues ranging from foreign policy to civil liberties to welfare to race to economic policy. In each case, increases in political awareness were associated with a sharper polarization of attitudes between liberals (or Democrats), on one side, and conservatives (or Republicans), on the other.⁵

The data in Figure 6.1 illustrate both the mainstream and polarization effects of political awareness. When, in 1964, American elites nearly all supported the Vietnam War, increases in awareness led nonelite liberals and conservatives to become more supportive of the "mainstream" war policy. Yet when, in 1970, American elites had become deeply divided about the war, increases in awareness are associated with greater polarization of the attitudes of mass liberals and conservatives.⁶

The Persian Gulf War affords another opportunity to observe both the mainstream and the polarization effect. From the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 through the fall 1990 congressional election, there was only light criticism of President Bush's handling of the crisis and, in particular, virtually no articulate opposition to the policy of sending U.S. forces to the region. Thus, as J. W. Apple wrote on the eve of the election,

[A] midterm election campaign has taken place with war threatening in the Persian Gulf, and . . . the major foreign policy issue confronting the nation has generated almost no debate among the candidates about what the U.S. should do.

Instead, President Bush has traded insults with Saddam Hussein of Iraq, and the Democrats have barely mentioned the subject. (*New York Times*, 6 November 1991, p. A1)

5 In Gamson and Modigliani, these findings are the basis for a "cognitive consistency" model of opinion formation; in McClosky et al., they are the basis for a "contested norms" model of opinionation. Yet in both cases, the empirical regularity being explained, as well as the operational constructs in the models, are the same as in the Belknap and Campbell polarization model.

6 To validate these claims concerning elite consensus and division, I asked a research assistant to classify cover stories on Vietnam in *Newsweek* and *Time*. In 1964 prowar cover stories outnumbered antiwar ones by a margin of approximately 3 to 1; in 1970, the ratio was close 1 to 1. (See also Hallin, 1986.)

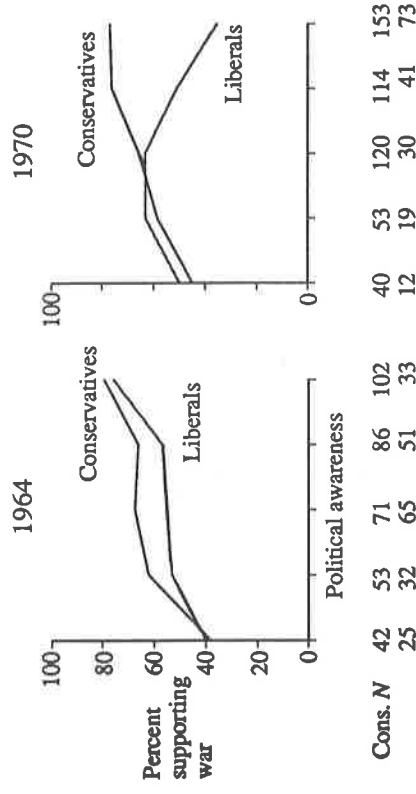


Figure 6.1. An illustration of the mainstream and polarization models. Liberals are defined as persons who rated liberals fifteen or more points higher than conservatives on separate 100-point feeling thermometers; conservatives are persons who exhibited the reverse pattern. Persons supporting the war are those who said either that the United States should "keep troops in Vietnam but try to end the fighting," which was the position of both the Johnson and Nixon administrations, or that the U.S. should take a stronger stand on the war. The awareness measure is described in the Measures Appendix. Source: 1964 and 1970 CPS surveys.

Two days after the election, however, Bush announced a decision to send several hundred thousand additional troops to the gulf. This decision sparked strong congressional criticism, leading to congressional hearings in which administration policy was harshly criticized and later to a congressional vote on a war policy resolution. As in the Vietnam case, Democrats were the most salient critics of the administration's hawkish policies and Republicans were the most salient defenders.

In view of this, we should expect, in the period before Congress reacted critically to Bush's troop announcement, to find evidence of the mainstream effect; after criticism began, we should expect to observe the polarization pattern.

By good luck, the 1990 National Election Study went into the field on the day after the election and was able to complete more than 250 interviews before congressional criticism of Bush's military buildup began. It also carried a question asking whether "we did the right thing in sending U.S. military forces to the Persian Gulf, or should we have stayed out?"

Results, which are derived from a maximum likelihood logistic regression that controls for political awareness, party attachment, gender, race, and Jewish ethnicity are shown in Figure 6.2. (The coefficients on which the figure is based are in Table 6.3 of the appendix to this chapter.) As expected, the data

7 Democrats and Republicans in the figure are constructed as persons with a score of ± 1.3 on the party variable, where party ranges from -2 (strong Republican) to $+2$ (strong Democrat). Awareness scores in the figure run from -1.8 SD to $+2.57$ SD.

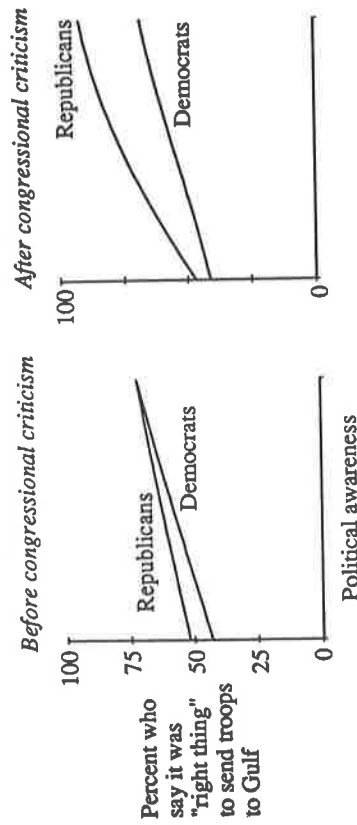


Figure 6.2. Partisans become more polarized over time on "right to send troops." Estimates are derived from coefficients in Table 6.3. Source: 1990 NES survey.

betray little evidence of partisan polarization in the period prior to the congressional criticism of Bush's policies, but clear polarization afterward. Public opinion does not appear to be as sharp as in the Vietnam case, but this is probably because elite polarization on Persian Gulf policy did not approach that of the Vietnam period in terms of either duration or intensity.

Before continuing the analysis of opinion on Persian Gulf policy, I must discuss a methodological issue. In creating Figure 6.2 from the coefficients in a logistic regression model, I had to make certain coding decisions. For example, to show the effects of political awareness, I manipulated scores from roughly the 1st percentile on political awareness to the 98th percentile. Since I need to make many similar decisions about how to create graphs from coefficients in the next several chapters, I want to standardize my procedures in an intelligible set of conventions. A summary of these conventions, which will be used for the rest of the book, is given in the accompanying box.

The 1990 NES survey carried one other question which is useful for gauging public opinion on the gulf crisis. It reads:

Which of the following do you think we should do now in the Persian Gulf:

- Pull out U.S. forces entirely.
- Try harder to find a diplomatic solution.
- Tighten the economic embargo.
- Take tougher military action.

All but the first of these options imply support for the basic United States policy of military involvement in the Persian Gulf. Since, with the possible exception of the congressional Black Caucus, virtually all of Bush's elite critics accepted this policy, we should expect to find that, among the public, political

Conventions of graphical analysis

For graphs showing the relationship between political awareness, political predispositions, and a political attitude or attitude change, the following conventions will apply in the remainder of the book:

Basic design. In all cases, political awareness will be treated as the principal independent variable and plotted against the x-axis. The dependent variable, usually the probability of a political attitude or attitude change, will be plotted against the y-axis, as in Figure 6.2. The effect of differences in political dispositions (such as, being a Democrat rather than a Republican) will be shown by separate lines within the graphs, as in Figure 6.2.

Range of political awareness. Except as noted, graphs depict the simulated effect of moving from about the 1st percentile to about the 98th percentile on political awareness. This range leaves about 1 percent of the cases outside each endpoint, though, of course, lumpiness in the data makes it impossible to achieve this range in every case. Because different awareness scales have different skews, the range of political awareness scores will not always correspond to a particular z-score range, such as ± 2 SD. The particular z-score ranges used in the simulations will be provided in footnotes.

Range of simulated attitude scores. With one clearly noted exception, graphs showing probabilities or proportions will use a scale of 0 to 1.0. When means are used, graphs will reflect the range of mean values in the data. Thus, in the case of means, the ranges can vary from figure to figure. However, unless explicitly noted, identical scales will be used in figures that are being compared to one another.

Range of predispositional variables. Throughout the analysis, party attachment is coded from -2 (strong Republican) to -1 (weak or independent Republican) to +1 (weak or independent Democrat) to +2 (strong Democrat, with all others assigned to the score of zero). In graphs that depict the effect of being a Republican or Democrat, partisans are simulated by scores of either -1.3 or +1.3, as appropriate. The effects of other predispositional measures (such as egalitarianism, hawkishness) are simulated differently in different cases, depending on how many measures are available for use in a given model. For example, if only one measure is used in a model, the range may be ± 2 SD for that variable; if three measures are used, their joint effect - that is, the effect of identical movements on all three variables - will be depicted over a smaller range. The exact values are provided in each case. The aim will be to approximate the raw data, insofar as the raw data can be directly observed.

awareness is associated with greater support for keeping U.S. forces in the Gulf - which is to say, greater levels of rejection of the "pullout" option in favor of one of the other three response alternatives. This expectation is confirmed in Figure 6.3 (see Table 6.3, the chapter appendix, for coefficients). Even within the group most resistant to using military action against Iraq - black Democratic women - rejection of the pullout option rises from about 54 percent in the lowest awareness category to about 92 percent in the highest

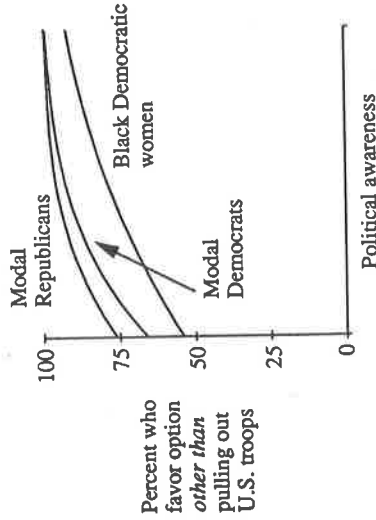


Figure 6.3. Support for keeping U.S. troops in the Persian Gulf. Estimates are derived from coefficients in Table 6.3. Source: 1990 NES survey.

category.⁸ The trends in Figure 6.3 were about the same throughout the period of the survey.⁹

It is difficult to be certain what to expect from the three response options – more diplomacy, a tighter embargo, and tougher military action – that I have counted as implying support for military involvement in the Gulf. Certainly, Democrats en masse would be expected to reject the choice of “tougher military action,” since the Democratic party in Congress was clearly identified with opposition to this idea. The problem is that it is not clear that Republicans should be expected to embrace it. For Bush’s public position, especially in the early months of the crisis, was that an embargo, in combination with skilled diplomacy, would make it possible to avoid the use of force. In mid-December, however, the Bush administration rejected a proposed January 12th meeting in Baghdad on the grounds that it was too near the United Nations deadline for Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait to be useful for averting military action. By that point, therefore, it was clear at least that *willingness* to use force was a key feature of Bush policy. One might therefore expect that at about that time opposing partisan groups in the public became increasingly polarized over the question of military force.

Figure 6.4 appears to support this expectation. Highly aware Democrats and Republicans were apparently more polarized over the use of force after December 15 than they had been before. Despite this, however, the increase in po-

8 In separate regressions for blacks and whites, political awareness is associated with rejection of the pull-out option at least as strongly among blacks as among whites. (In a simple linear regression of this question [scored 0–1] on political awareness, the intercept and slope for blacks are .55 and .047, respectively; for whites, the intercept and slope are .78 and .022, with all terms highly statistically significant; the range of political awareness is 0 through 13.) See Chapter 9 for additional discussion of the effects of elite opinion leadership on Afro-Americans.

9 Insofar as there was a time trend, it was toward less party polarization, but the trend did not approach either statistical or substantive significance.

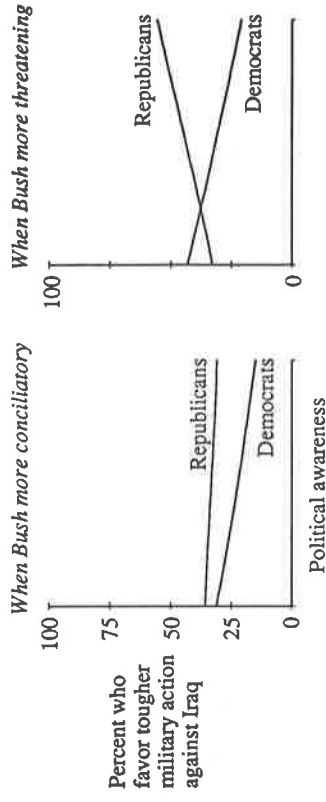


Figure 6.4. Partisans become more polarized over time on use of military force. Estimates are derived from coefficients in Table 6.3. Source: 1990 NES survey.

larization does not achieve statistical significance and must therefore be taken as equivocal support for my expectation (coefficients shown in Table 6.3).

The key point here is that exposure to public affairs, as measured by tests of political awareness, has important effects on mass attitudes, but that these effects differ across policies and across time, depending on the positions taken by political elites and reflected in the mass media. Awareness is associated with support for those aspects of government policy that have the consensual support of political and media elites, but is associated with higher levels of polarization over policies on which elites are divided.¹⁰

To demonstrate this point more rigorously, I selected items from the 1972–74–76 NES survey that seemed on their face to exemplify mainstream policies and partisan policies of the early 1970s.¹¹ Table 6.1 contains a list of these items. Selection of the items was based on my judgment of the positions of liberal and conservative elites, political party elites, and the mass media at the time of the NES study. To confirm these judgments, I asked a research assistant to read the platforms of the Democratic and Republican parties in 1972, and to rate each party on each issue. The research assistant was unaware of my expectations and did the ratings on the basis of instructions that were conveyed in writing.¹² I expected that both parties would explicitly endorse the policies I had identified as mainstream policies, and would take sharply opposing positions on policies I had identified as partisan policies. These expectations were largely

10 In showing that the public became more polarized in its attitudes toward Vietnam and Persian Gulf policy, I have been, in effect, examining mass opinion change. The actual patterns of change occurring in these cases are, however, considerably more complicated than I have been able to demonstrate in this initial treatment. For further examination of opinion change on Vietnam, see Chapter 9; for a treatment of opinion change on Gulf war policy along the lines sketched in Chapter 7, see Zaller (1992).

11 I used the panel data because this test was part of a study to test the comparative ability of political knowledge, education, political interest, media exposure, and political participation to specify relationships that a good measure of political awareness should specify. It turned out that political knowledge outperformed all of the alternative measures (see Zaller, 1990).

12 The written instructions are available from the author upon request.

Table 6.1. *Question stems for opinions on mainstream and partisan issues*

Mainstream issues

This country would be better off if we just stayed home and did not concern ourselves with problems in other parts of the world.

Do you think that mainland China should be a member of the United Nations, or do you think it should not?

Should farmers and businessmen be allowed to do business with Communist countries or should they be forbidden to do business with Communist countries?

Should the government support the right of black people to go to any hotel or restaurant they can afford, or should it stay out of this matter?

Recently there has been a lot of talk about women's rights. Some people feel that women should have an equal role with men in running business, industry, and government. Others feel that women's place is in the home.

Partisan issues

There is much discussion of the best way to deal with racial problems. Some people think achieving racial integration of schools is so important that it justifies busing children to schools out of their neighborhoods. Others think letting children go to their neighborhood schools is so important that they oppose busing.

Some people feel the government in Washington should see to it that every person has a job and a good standard of living. Others think the government should just let each person get ahead on their own.

Do you think we did the right thing in getting into the fighting in Vietnam or should we have stayed out?

Source: 1972 NES survey.

confirmed. The one exception involved an item about whether the federal government should guarantee blacks the right to equal treatment in hotels and restaurants. A provision on equal accommodations was a key part of 1964 Civil Rights Act, which, Senator Barry Goldwater notwithstanding, passed the Congress with majority support from both the Democratic and Republican parties. The Democratic platform, as I had expected, explicitly endorsed this policy, but the Republican Party, although professing general support for equal rights, made no direct reference to it. I continue, in light of the bipartisan history of the Civil Rights Act and the fact that even Southern opposition to it had collapsed by 1972, to consider equal accommodations in hotels and restaurants a mainstream government policy.¹³

¹³ In addition to the items in Table 6.1, I asked my research assistant to rate an item on whether the government should act against inflation. There was strong endorsement of this principle by both parties, but a ceiling effect on mass support for the policy prevented a test on the effect of political awareness on support for this idea.

The model used to estimate the effect of awareness on each of these policy items was as follows:

$$\text{Prob(Lib. Response)} = \text{Prob(Opinionation)} \times \text{Prob(Lib. | Opinionation)}$$

That is, the probability of a liberal response is the probability of offering any opinion at all, times the probability of making a liberal response, given that an opinion has been offered. The two parts of the model have been estimated separately.

The probability of a liberal opinion, given that an opinion statement has been made, has been modeled as a logit function of awareness, ideological self-designation,¹⁴ party identification, and standard demographic variables (race, age, income, and residence in a Southern state). In addition to these variables, the initial specification of each equation contained an interaction term for Awareness \times Ideology and Awareness \times Party. This equation was estimated separately for each of the five mainstream and three partisan issues. To maximize comparability of results across different item formats, each item was coded to a three-point scale running from 0 to 0.5 to 1.0.¹⁵

The expectation from the model is that for partisan policies, the two Awareness \times Values interaction terms will be strong, but that for mainstream policies these interactions will be anemic. The second expectation is that awareness will have an important positive impact on support for mainstream policies.

The first of these expectations is largely confirmed. The Ideology \times Awareness term gets coefficients that are large for the three partisan issues and trivial for the five mainstream issues, exactly as expected. The Party \times Awareness term behaves erratically, but its coefficients are either statistically insignificant or too small to have much impact, thus leaving the ideology interaction term to dominate the results. Let us look first at results for the three partisan issues.

The coefficients for the three partisan issues are shown in the left-hand side of Table 6.2, and a graphical analysis of these coefficients is shown in the top half

¹⁴ The question asked respondents to place themselves on a seven-point scale that ran from "extremely liberal" to "liberal" to "slightly liberal" to "moderate, middle of the road" to "extremely conservative." The question was asked in all three waves of the survey, and in the test reported below, responses over all three waves were averaged. People who gave no opinion in one year were assigned their average for the other two years; people who gave a response in only one year were assigned their response from that year. People who gave a no-opinion response all three times were assigned to the sample average. This way of including respondents with missing data would be expected to produce differences in item reliabilities across different respondents, but since this difference is constant across all dependent variables, and since the key hypothesis involves differences in the effect of ideology across different items, it would not be expected to produce biased results. Omitting respondents with any missing data would, on the other hand, undermine ability to detect the effect of awareness on support for mainstream policies, since the people omitted would be mainly less-informed persons.

¹⁵ When the original item was an agree/disagree item, "in between" responses were coded to .5 and other responses were coded zero or one. The jobs and women's rights items were originally seven-point scales; 4 was coded to .5 and the other points were coded to zero or one. Busing was also originally a seven-point scale, but it was so skewed in the antibusing direction that it was necessary to transform it; the far conservative position, which contained 68 percent of all respondents, was coded to zero, the next most conservative position was coded to .5, and the remaining five scale points were coded to one.

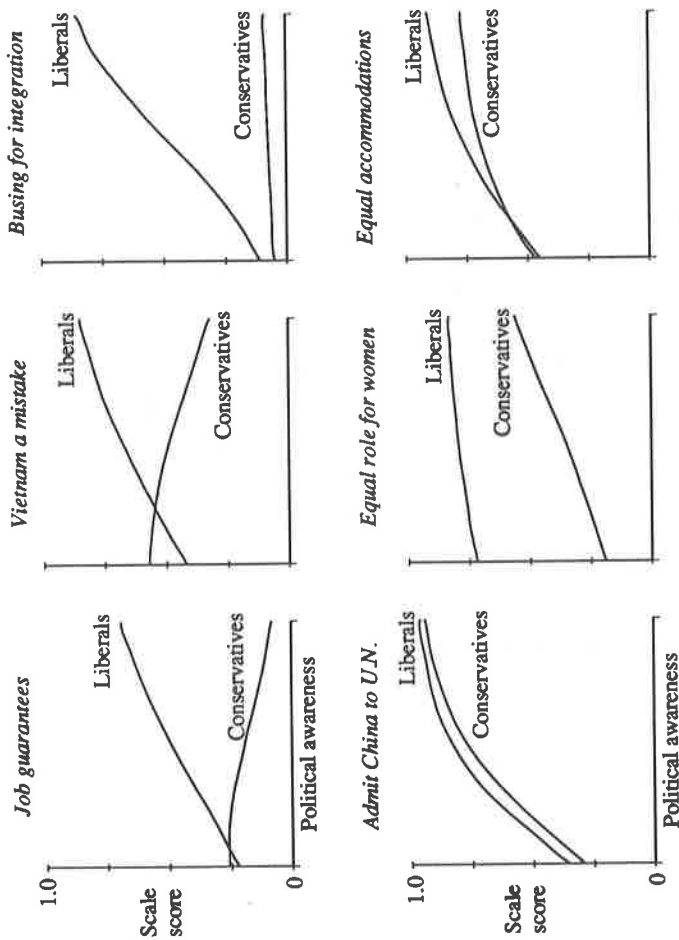


Figure 6.5. Effect of awareness on support for mainstream and partisan issues. Estimates are derived from coefficients in Table 6.2. "Liberals" in this figure have been constructed as persons who score +6 on a seven-point ideology variable and +1.3 on the party attachment scale; "conservatives" have been constructed from scores of +2 and -1.3 on these variables. Political awareness in this figure runs ± 2 SD. See footnote 14 for additional information. Adapted from figure 2 of Zaller (1990). Original variables have been recoded to have roughly equal variance on a 0-.5-1 scale, with the liberal or mainstream pole coded high. See footnote 15 for additional information. Source: 1972 wave of NES panel survey.

of Figure 6.5. The results in the top half of Figure 6.5 are consistent with expectations: Increases in political awareness are associated with more polarized scale scores (see note 15) on all three issues.

The second expectation, concerning the effect of awareness on support for mainstream policies, was difficult to confirm because of the presence of severe multicollinearity. For all five of the mainstream policies - equal accommodations, women's equality, trade with communist nations, admission of China to the U.N., and antiisolationism - the estimated coefficient for awareness was higher. Because of this, neither awareness, ideology, nor their interaction achieved statistical significance in some of the equations.

Table 6.2. Coefficient estimates for partisan and mainstream issues

Mainstream issues	Partisan issues					Direction of response function ^a					
	Job guarantees	School busing	Equal rights	Women's rights in UN	Anti-Comm. trade isolation	Intercept	Awareness (standardized)	Ideology (7-point scale)	Awareness x Ideology	Party (range +2 to -2)	Awareness x party
	-1.99	-0.57	-0.74	1.33	0.40	-1.99	-0.84*	0.37*	0.18*	0.01	0.06
	0.62	-3.52	-0.71*	0.50*	2.28	0.19*	0.27*	0.30*	0.07	-0.13**	0.01
	0.18*	0.60*	-0.09**	0.33*	-0.07	0.18*	0.60*	0.30*	0.07	-0.13**	0.01
	0.31*	0.18*	0.31*	0.13	0.01	0.31*	0.18*	0.31*	0.01	0.13*	0.02
	0.01	0.14	0.01	0.65*	0.13	0.01	0.14	0.01	0.01	0.13*	0.01
	0.06	0.73*	0.06	0.73*	0.06	0.06	0.73*	0.06	0.06	0.73*	0.06
	1.98	2.70	2.83	2.68	1.35	1.98	2.70	2.83	2.68	1.35	1.98
	0.89*	0.62*	0.51*	1.32*	1.58*	0.89*	0.62*	0.51*	1.32*	1.58*	0.89*

^a Coefficients are from logistic equation described in text. Estimation was by nonlinear least squares. Equations also included controls for race, age, South, and income; these coefficients are the same as those used, but not reported for reasons of space, in Zaller (1990).
^b Term omitted after *F*-test showed that coefficient had no statistical effect on equation; nonsignificant terms were omitted only when they caused severe multicollinearity; see text for further discussion.
 * Significant at .01 level. ** Significant at .05 level.

Source: 1972-74-76 NES panel survey.

consensus, political awareness leads to increased support for the mainstream policy, and in cases of elite division, political awareness leads to increased polarization among groups having opposed value orientations.¹⁸

ATTITUDE CONSTRAINT AND MASS BELIEF SYSTEMS

An extensive research literature has documented that people who are liberal (or conservative) on one issue tend to be relatively liberal (or conservative) on a range of other issues. This tendency is most commonly explained by means of the concept of "attitude constraint," which implies that one sort of attitude (ideological orientation) constrains other attitudes (policy preferences), thereby linking a range of attitudes into a cohesive "belief system." The classic statement of this argument is Philip Converse's famous paper, "The nature of belief systems in mass publics" (1964).¹⁹

As it happens, the logic of the polarization argument is isomorphic with the logic of Converse's account of attitude constraint in his 1964 paper. Thus in explaining mass attitude polarization on partisan issues, the RAS model has also explained attitude constraint.

This point is easily demonstrated. According to Converse, ideologies originate among a "minuscule" number of "creative elites" and subsequently diffuse through the public. Elites, thus, are the source of mass ideologies. Converse argues, however, that the diffusion of elite-created belief systems is highly imperfect. Only the politically aware pay enough attention to elite discourse to find out the ideological implications of different policies — in Converse's terms, to learn "what goes with what." As a result, attitude constraint of the conventional liberal-conservative type develops mainly among the more politically aware strata.

Compare this argument to the representation of the polarization model in the upper half of Figure 6.5: Highly aware liberals and conservatives (or Democrats and Republicans) look to appropriate partisan elites to find out "what goes with what." Having acquired this information, they are able to become consistently liberal or consistently conservative across a range of issues. The less aware, as shown in Figure 6.5, are less likely to acquire the attitude that is conventionally appropriate to their partisan orientation, and hence less likely to develop "attitude constraint" across issues. The well-established finding of belief systems studies — that average interitem correlations among issues are higher

¹⁸ Mainstream norms are determined not by what all elites actually believe, but by what the elites who have regular access to the public say in their public utterances. If, for example, there were many Southern elected officials who continued to oppose equal accommodations for blacks in 1972 but who had no access to the media to express this view, and if, on the other hand, supporters of equal accommodations had good access to the mass media to publicize their side of the issue, then equal accommodations would be classified as a mainstream norm. The elites who count as shapers of public opinion in this model are those who have or control access to the mass media.

¹⁹ For the most recent work and bibliographies of the vast literature in this area, see Wyckoff (1987) and Jacoby (1991).

However, multicollinearity can greatly reduce the precision of estimates even when the true effect of one of the collinear variables is zero.¹⁶ To test whether the Awareness \times Value interaction terms had any real effect on the mainstream policies, I reestimated each equation without the interaction terms and did an *F*-test to see if the omissions had a significant effect on the residual sum of squares. For antiisolationism, women's rights, trade with communist nations, and admission of China to the United Nations, the *F*-test indicated that the interaction terms did not contribute significantly to the fit of the model. Moreover, with the interactions omitted, awareness took on a statistically significant positive coefficient in all four cases, as expected. In the fifth case, equal accommodations, the Party \times Awareness coefficient remained significant, but with the nonsignificant Ideology \times Awareness term omitted, awareness had the expected positive effect on support for this mainstream race policy.¹⁷

The right-hand side of Table 6.2 and the bottom half of Figure 6.5 present the results for the mainstream issues. Two mainstream issues — antiisolationism and trade with communist nations — are not shown in Figure 6.5 but closely resemble the pattern for the item on admission of China to the United Nations, which is shown in the figure.

Of the five mainstream issues, only the women's role item raises any doubts about the performance of the model. Though awareness does, as expected, have a positive effect on support for gender equality, the effect on liberals in this interactive model is modest. Moreover, the effect of ideology is quite large, especially if, as I maintain, elite messages consensually favored an equal role for women.

One explanation for these results is that, despite the endorsement of the two parties in 1972, women's rights was not really a mainstream issue at that time; if so, it is no problem for the model, which takes elite consensus as an initial condition. Other explanations, however, appear more plausible. The modest slope for liberals, first of all, is the result of a ceiling effect among liberals. It would be hard to get very much positive slope in view of the fact that support among low-awareness liberals starts out at 71 percent. With respect to the large effect of ideology, recall that 1972 was near the highwater mark for radical feminism, a viewpoint that had little mass support and may have had deleterious spillover effects on support for equal rights for women (Mansbridge, 1986). Recall also that the Republican Party, although endorsing equal rights for women in 1972, was shortly to withdraw its support for the Equal Rights Amendment. All this makes the women's role issue a particularly tough test of the mainstream hypothesis. And yet the hypothesis is, in the end, upheld in the sense that there is an important positive effect for awareness.

Altogether, then, the mainstream results, along with those for the three partisan issues, support the two basic deductions of the model: In cases of elite

¹⁶ See Hanushek and Jackson, 1977: pp. 231–3; Rao and Miller, 1971: ch. 3.

¹⁷ It is not permissible to do a parallel test omitting the direct awareness term, since awareness must be in the equation if awareness \times ideology is included.

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Gaetano Mosca was a Sicilian, born at Palermo in 1858. He began academic life as a student of constitutional law and political theories, teaching at Palermo, Rome, Turin, and at Rome again until the end of his life in 1931. In 1908 he became a Liberal Conservative member of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, and served as undersecretary for the colonies from 1914 to 1916. In 1918 the King appointed him senator for life. Mosca's first major work, *Teorica dei Governi e Governo Parlamentare* (1884) enunciated many of the ideas which were later elaborated in the *Elementi*.



THE RULING CLASS
ELEMENTI DI SCIENZA POLITICA
GAETANO MOSCA

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CHAPTER VII

CHURCHES, PARTIES AND SECTS

1. Buffon reports that if a certain number of stags are shut up in a park they will inevitably divide into two herds which will always be in conflict with each other. An instinct of very much the same sort seems to make its influence felt among men. Human beings have a natural inclination toward struggle, but it is only sporadically that the struggle assumes an individual character, that one man is at war with another. Even when he fights, man remains preeminently a social animal. Ordinarily, therefore, we see men forming into groups, each group made up of leaders and followers. The individuals who make up a group are conscious of a special brotherhood and oneness with each other and vent their pugnacious instincts on members of other groups.

This instinct of herding together and fighting with other herds is the prime basis and original foundation of the external conflicts that occur between different societies; but it also underlies the formation of all the divisions and subdivisions—all the factions, sects, parties and, in a certain sense, the churches—that arise within a given society and occasion moral and, sometimes, physical conflicts. In very small and primitive societies, where there is great moral and intellectual unity and individual members all have the same customs, the same beliefs, the same superstitions, the instinct mentioned may alone suffice to keep discordant and warlike habits alive. The Arabs and the Kabyles in Barbary share the same religious beliefs. They have the same degree and the same type of intellectual and moral culture. Yet, before the coming of the French, when they were not fighting against the infidels in Algeria and Tunis, against the Turks in Tripoli or against the sultan in Morocco, they were fighting among themselves. Each confederation of tribes stood in rivalry or at open war with its neighbor confederation. There was discord within each confederation and often "gunpowder was made to talk" between sister tribes. Within the tribe the

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various douars were at swords' points, and often the douar was split by quarrels between the separate families.¹

At other times, when social environments are very circumscribed, internal conflicts arise among minute sections of fairly civilized peoples. There may be no moral and intellectual differences between the enemy parties to justify such conflicts, or even if such differences exist they are used as mere pretexts. So the terms "Guelph" and "Ghibelline" supplied pretext and occasion, rather than cause, for intestine struggles in the medieval Italian communes; and the same may be said of the terms "liberal," "clerical," "radical" and "socialist," which were bandied about by the factions that used to compete for administrative posts in the little towns of southern Italy. At moments of exceptional intellectual apathy, pretexts—even the most frivolous pretexts—may occasion serious conflicts within great and highly civilized societies. In Byzantium, during and after the reign of Justinian, the city streets were often stained with blood by struggles between two parties, the Greens and the Blues (the "Prasinians" and the "Venetians"). Now those "gangs" originated in the circus, the spectators taking sides with the charioteers who raced under the two different colors. Eventually, to be sure, one faction or another at court would try to make use of the one or the other of the gangs. Now the Greens, now the Blues, enjoyed imperial favor, so that the parties came to acquire a certain political importance, without ever quite losing their status as personal "sets," or gangs. Something remotely similar went on in a number of Italian cities before 1848, when men of the younger generation would form hostile cliques and factions about the merits of some prima donna or ballet girl.

2. In small societies as in large, when the hunger for conflict finds a vent in foreign rivalries and wars it is to an extent appeased and so less readily seeks expression in civil discords or internal strife. On closely scrutinizing the nature of the political parties, the philosophical sects, the religious factions that everywhere develop within civilized societies, one sees that the pugnacious

¹ In Algeria and Tunis the consolidation of French rule ended the day of revolts against foreign conquerors, and all but stopped internal wars between the various tribes. The same thing, one may venture to predict, will eventually happen in Tripoli and Cyrenaica and, perhaps somewhat later, in Morocco.

instinct of herding and fighting, which is the most primitive and, so to say, the most "animal" of the instincts, is mixed with other intellectual and psychological factors that are more complex and more human. In large, highly civilized societies, which are held together not only by moral and intellectual affinities but also by strong and complicated political organizations, a much greater speculative and affective freedom is possible than in small and loosely organized societies. In a great people, therefore, political and religious conflicts are further determined by the large number of currents of ideas, beliefs and attachments that succeed in asserting themselves—by the formation of different intellectual and moral crucibles within which the convictions and sentiments of single individuals are variously fused and alloyed.

So we see Buddhism developing within Brahman society; prophetism and, later on, the various schools of the Sadducees, the Essenes and the Zealots, keeping the life of Israel in ferment; Stoicism, Manichaeism, Christianity and the cult of Mithras competing for supremacy in the Helleno-Roman world; Mazdaism—a modification of Manichaeism with a marked tendency toward communism in wealth and women—sweeping through the Persia of the Sassanids; Mohammedanism starting in Arabia and spreading rapidly into Asia, Africa and Europe. Phenomena altogether similar, though molded to the more rationalistic character of modern European civilization, are the liberalism and radicalism of the nineteenth century and, better yet, social democracy, which started almost contemporaneously with liberalism but has maintained its proselyting efficiency longer, so that it will continue to be one of the most significant historical factors in the twentieth century as it was in the nineteenth. Besides the movements we have just named, it would be easy to trace a great many other minor currents in the history of civilized peoples, doctrines which have been more or less fortunate and have had more or less widespread vagues, but which in any event have helped to feed the instincts for contention, struggle, self-sacrifice and persecution that are so deeply rooted in the hearts of men.

All these doctrines, all these currents of ideas, sentiments, convictions, seem to originate in somewhat the same way, and they all seem to present certain constant characteristics in their

early beginnings. The human being—so feeble a creature in dealing with his own passions and the passions of others, often more selfish than need requires, as a rule vain, envious, petty—very rarely fails to keep two great aspirations before his eyes, two sentiments that ennoble, uplift and purify him. He seeks the truth, he loves justice; and sometimes he is able to sacrifice to those two ideals some part of the satisfaction he would otherwise give to his passions and his material interests. Far more complex and sensitive a being than the savage and the barbarian, civilized man may in some cases rise to a most delicate conception of these two sentiments.

At certain moments in the history of a given society, an individual rises with the conviction that he has something new to say with regard to the search for truth, or a loftier doctrine to teach with regard to the better realization of justice. Such an individual, if he has certain endowments of character, and if environment and any number of other incidental circumstances favor, is the seed that may produce a tree with branches spreading far abroad over large parts of the world.

3. History has not always preserved all the details that we might wish to have about the lives of these founders of religious and politico-social schools—the latter are in a sense religions too, though shorn of strictly theological elements. Some biographies, however, are fairly well known. The lives of Mohammed, Luther, Calvin and especially Rousseau, who left his memoirs, can be analyzed with relative adequacy.

A fundamental quality that all such people must have is, it would seem, a profound sense of their own importance or, better, a sincere belief in the efficacy of their work. If they believe in God, they will always consider themselves destined by the Omnipotent to reform religion and save humanity. Undoubtedly it is not to such men that one should look for a perfect balance of all the intellectual and moral faculties. But neither can they be considered altogether mad—insanity is a disease that presupposes in the patient an earlier state of sanity. They are rather to be classed with so-called eccentrics, or fanatics, in the sense that they attach an exaggerated importance to certain phases of life, or of human activity, and stake their very lives and all the effort of which they are capable on one card,

striving to attain their life's ideal by following unwonted paths which most people consider absurdly mistaken. But it is evident, on the other hand, that the man whose faculties are all in perfect balance, who has an exact perception of the results that he can achieve, as compared with the effort and sacrifice that will be required for achieving them, who takes a modest and sensible view of his own importance and of the real and abiding effects that his activity can have on the world in the ordinary course of human events, who calculates exactly and coldly the probabilities for and against his succeeding, and never launch out on any original and daring enterprise and will never do any very great things. If all men were normal and balanced the history of the world would be very different and, we must confess, not a little monotonous.

Indispensable in the leader of a party, in the founder of a sect or a religion, or, one might say, in any "pastor of peoples" who would make his own personality felt and force society to follow his views, is a capacity for instilling his own convictions and especially his own enthusiasms into others, a capacity for inducing many to live the sort of intellectual and moral life that he wants them to live and to make sacrifices for the ideals that he has conceived.

Not all reformers have the gift of communicating their own sentiments and passions to others. Those who lack it may have great originality of thought and feeling, but they are ineffectual in practical life and often end as prophets without believers, innovators without followers, misunderstood and ridiculed geniuses. Those who do possess it not only inspire their apostles and the masses with their enthusiasms, sometimes to the point of frenzy, but succeed in the end in awakening a sort of veneration for their persons, in becoming objects of worship, so that their least act acquires its importance, their every word is believed without discussion, their every nod is blindly obeyed. About them an aura of exaltation gathers. It is highly contagious and spurs converts to acts of daring and sacrifice that certainly could not be performed by individuals in a normal state of mind.

This explains the enormous success of certain preachers and certain teachers—the extraordinary fortune, for instance, of types so different as St. Francis of Assisi and Abelard, so unlike

in many respects but so alike in the art of interesting men. It explains why Mohammed was held in such veneration by his initiates and disciples that they collected his spittle reverently and cherished the hairs of his beard as relics, and why a mere hint on his part was enough to encompass the murder of a dangerous adversary. Speaking of someone whom he considered to be a great obstacle to his designs, Mohammed would say, in the presence of some young man of the more fanatical type: "Will no one ever free me of this dog?" The disciple would rush off and commit the murder. Afterwards, naturally, Mohammed would condemn the crime, declaring that he had ordered no such thing. Any number of leaders of sects and political parties have imitated Mohammed, consciously or unconsciously, in this respect. And how many of them are doing the same thing today! Plenty of people were always ready to rush into the most hazardous undertakings at a nod from Mazzini. The various enterprises in practical communism that were launched in the course of the nineteenth century, from Owen down to Fourier and Lazzaretti, never failed to find large numbers of persons willing and eager to sacrifice their worldly goods. When one of these political or religious "founders" happens to be a fighter, as Ján Ziska was, he manages to inspire his followers with an absolute certainty of victory and hence with uncommon courage.

Nor should we expect to find an altogether exquisite moral sense presiding uniformly over all acts in the lives of these eccentrics who initiate movements of ideas and sentiments. Any such expectation would be disappointed. Absorbed in the pursuit of their visions to the exclusion of everything else, they are always ready to suffer themselves and to make others suffer so long as their ends be attained. Generally, indeed, they feel a high disdain for everyday needs and for the material and immediate interests of life, or at least they are largely indifferent to them. Even when they do not say as much in words, they censure in their hearts people who are busy at sowing, reaping and storing away the harvests. They seem to feel certain that once the Kingdom of God, or Truth or Justice, in their sense of those terms, is established, human beings will be as easily fed as are the fowl of the air or the lilies of the field. When they live in rationalistic and ostensibly more positive times, they

take no account of the depletion of public resources that a mere gesture toward actuating their ideals would occasion.

There seem to be three periods through which the life of every great reformer passes.

In a first period he is conceiving his doctrine and working it out in his mind. During that stage he may be acting in good faith. He can be called a fanatic, but not as yet a cheat and a charlatan. In a second period he begins to preach, and then the need of making an impression induces him inevitably "to lay on," to overstress certain colorings, and so to become a poseur. The third period comes if he is lucky enough to be able to make a practical attempt to put his teachings into practice. Once that stage is reached, he finds himself at grips with all the imperfections and weaknesses of human nature, and he is obliged to compromise on the side of morals if he wants to succeed. All reformers agree deep down in their hearts that the end justifies the means, that if men are to be led they have to be fooled to a certain extent. So, moving on from compromise to compromise, they come to a point where the most acute psychologist would find it hard to tell exactly where their sincerity ends and acting and chicanery begin.

Father Ohrwalder was for some years a prisoner of the Mahdists and wrote an account of his experiences. At one point he describes Mohammed Ahmed, the slave trader who founded Mahdism, as a man inspired by a sincere religious zeal. At another point he makes him out a hypocrite and a charlatan. Father Ohrwalder was sharply criticized for that inconsistency. For our part we find nothing implausible about the two judgments, especially since they refer to two different periods in the Mahdi's life.

Certainly the most disparate moral elements may function simultaneously in the same individual. That was the case with Enfantin, the second high priest of Saint-Simonianism, to whom a disciple in the latter days of the movement wrote: "Others criticize you for trying to pose all the time. I agree with you in thinking that posing is in your nature. It is your mission, your gift."¹ Mohammed undeniably had a sincere and honest aspiration toward a religion that was less crude, less materialistic, than anything that had been practiced by the

¹ Thureau-Dangin, *Histoire de la Monarchie de Juillet*, vol. I, chap. VIII.

Arabs before his time. Nevertheless the verses of the Koran, which the archangel Gabriel communicated to him one by one, arrived at most opportune moments to free him of irksome promises that he had made or from strict observance of moral laws that he had laid down for others in earlier verses. It became important for Mohammed at one time to increase the number of his wives to seven, in order that he might strengthen certain political ties and incidentally satisfy sentimental fancies. In the Koran he had expressly limited the number of legitimate wives to four, and the precept had been proclaimed for all believers. But along came the archangel Gabriel with a most convenient verse, which authorized the apostle of God to ignore his own injunction.¹

To simplify our task we have been implicitly assuming that the founder of every new religion or philosophical doctrine is a single individual. That is not strictly true. At times, when a reform is morally and intellectually ripe in a historical sense and finds an environment that is perfectly attuned to it, several masters may come forward simultaneously. That was the case with Protestantism, when Luther, Zwingli and Calvin began to preach almost at the same time. Sometimes the success of a first master breeds competition and plagiarism. Moseilama, for instance, and not a few others, tried to imitate Mohammed, proclaiming themselves in their turn prophets of Allah. More frequent is the case where an innovator does not succeed in developing his doctrine fully, much less in putting it into practice. Then one or a dozen continuators may arise, and Fate the Unfair may name the doctrine after one of them instead of the real founder. That seems to be happening in modern socialism, of which Marx is generally proclaimed the founder. Its first intellectual and moral parent was undoubtedly Rousseau. The master or masters who continue the work of the first founder must not be confused with the mere apostles, of whom we are about to speak.

4. About the individual who first formulates a new doctrine there always gathers a more or less populous group that receives the word directly from the master's lips and is profoundly imbued with his sentiments. Every messiah must have his

¹ Hamner-Purgstall, *Gemäldesaal*.

apostles, since, in almost all the manifestations of his moral and material activity, the human being needs society; there is no enthusiasm that does not wane, no faith that does not falter, under prolonged isolation. The school, the church, the agape, the lodge, the "regular meeting"—any grouping, whatever it chances to be called, of persons who feel and think the same way, who have the same enthusiasms, the same hates, the same loves, the same interpretation of life—intensifies, exalts and develops their sentiments and so works these into the character of each individual member that the stamp of the association is indelible upon him.

Within this directing group, as a rule, the original inspiration of the master is developed, refined, worked out, so as to become a real political, religious or philosophical system, unblemished by too many inconsistencies and contradictions, or too obvious ones. Within this group the sacred fire of propaganda is kept burning even after the first author of the doctrine has vanished; and to this nucleus, which is recruited automatically by a process of selection and segregation, the future of the new doctrine is entrusted. However exceptional the master's originality of vision, his strength of feeling, his aptitude for propaganda, those qualities are without avail if he does not succeed in founding a school before his material or spiritual death; whereas, when the breath that animates the school is healthy and vigorous, all the inadequacies and flaws which may later be detected in the work of the founder can be overlooked or corrected little by little, and the propaganda will continue active and influential.

Outside the directing nucleus comes the throng of proselytes. While this group constitutes the stronger element numerically, and supplies the church or party with its material strength and its economic basis, it is the most negligible factor intellectually and morally. A number of modern sociologists declare that the masses are conservative and "misonaistic"—chary of novelties. That means that the masses are hard to win to a new faith. However, once they are won to it, they abandon it with the greatest reluctance, and when they do drop away, the fault lies almost always with the promoting nucleus. This latter group is always the first to be affected by indifference and skepticism. The best way to make others believe is to be profoundly convinced oneself—the art of arousing passion lies in one's own

capacity for being intensely aroused. When the priest does not feel his faith, the congregation becomes indifferent and is ripe for conversion to some other doctrine that finds a more zealous minister. If the officer is not imbued with the military spirit, if he is not ready to give his life for the dignity of his flag, the soldier will not die at his post. If the sectarian is not a fanatic, he will never sweep the crowds into rebellion.

In the case of ancient doctrines, or beliefs that have been established for some length of time and so have acquired traditions and fixed and circumscribed fields of activity, birth generally determines the individual's acceptance of them and his membership in the organizations that have formed around them. In Germany or the United States, one is almost always Catholic, Protestant or Jew, depending on the religion of the family into which one is born. In Spain and Italy, anyone who has any religion left is almost always a Catholic. But if a number of different doctrines are still in process of formation in a country, have active propagandas and are competing for adherents back and forth, then the personal choice of the individual of average intelligence depends upon a mass of circumstances, partly accidental and partly resulting from the skill with which the propaganda is carried on. In France a young man becomes a conservative or a radical according as the ideas of his father, his teacher at school or his schoolmates chance to exercise the greater influence over him at the moment when his ideas begin to form. At an age when a boy's general ideas are still plastic and he is conscious mainly of a need to be aroused emotionally, to love or to hate something or someone, a book that comes into his hands, a newspaper to which he has daily access, may determine the whole trend of his after life. For many people, political, religious or philosophical opinions are, at bottom, very secondary matters, especially when the first flush of youth has passed and the age of practical occupations, of "business," comes. So, to some extent through indolence, to some extent through habit, partly again through mistaken pride and respect for so-called consistency of character, a man often ends, when no strong conflict with his interests is involved, by keeping all his life long a doctrine that he embraced in a moment of youthful impulse, devoting to it such little energy and activity as the practical man is wont to set apart for what is called "the ideal."

However, from the fact that the individual's choice of a belief or a political party may largely be determined by chance, it does not follow that chance is the main factor in the success of any given school or church. Some doctrines are well suited to making proselytes, others are less so. Whether a political or religious teaching is to win wide acceptance depends almost exclusively on three factors. In the first place it must be adapted to the given historical moment. In the second place, it must satisfy the greatest possible number of human passions, sentiments and inclinations, particularly such as are most widely diffused and most firmly rooted in the public. In the third place, it must have a well-organized directing nucleus, or "executive committee," made up of individuals who consecrate their lives to the maintenance and propagation of the spirit that animates the faith.

5. For a doctrine to be adapted to a given historical moment in a given society, it must above all correspond to the degree of maturity which the human mind has attained at that moment in that society. A monotheistic religion will easily triumph when minds have progressed sufficiently to comprehend that all natural phenomena may be ascribed to one cause, and that the force that rules the universe is one. Rationalism can be taken as the basis of successful doctrines when free inquiry and the results of the natural and historical sciences have undermined belief in revealed religions, and the conception of a God created in the image and likeness of man and intervening arbitrarily in human events has come to seem absurd to the ruling classes.

In the centuries when Christianity was spreading through the Roman Empire, almost everyone, pagans and Christians alike, believed in the supernatural and in miracles; but the pagan supernatural had become too gross and incoherent, while the Christian supernatural, besides better answering certain needs of the human spirit, was more systematic and less childish, and so was destined to triumph. Lucian was an utter skeptic, laughing at everyone—now at the pagans, now at the Christians. But he was an exception in the second century of our era. The mean intelligence of the educated public of that time was better represented by Celsus, who was a deist and believed in the supernatural and in miracles but nevertheless ridiculed the Old

and the New Testaments. But since Celsus had started out on the path which is so satisfactory to rationalists and which, in fact, sixteen centuries later and under far different conditions, was to turn out so well for Voltaire, he should have seen that it would have been much easier to provoke ridicule and disgust for the disgraceful license and childish squabbings of the gods of Olympus than for the Christian histories. It is evident enough to us in our day that classical paganism had for some time been incapable of satisfying either the emotions or the intelligence of the people of that period. As Renan well observes,¹ if the Greco-Roman world had not become Christian, it would have been converted to Mithraism, or to some other Asiatic religion that was at once more mystical than classical paganism and less incoherent.

So it was with Rousseau. He emerged and prospered at a time when first humanism and the Reformation, then the progress of the exact and natural sciences, then finally Voltaire and the Encyclopaedia, had discredited the whole Christian and medieval world, so that a new rational—we do not say reasonable—explanation of political institutions was in a position to win acceptance. If we analyze the lives of Luther and Mohammed it is easy to see that at the time when they appeared Germany and Arabia were ready to welcome their doctrines.

When the human being has a certain culture and is not under any engrossing pressure of material needs, he generally manifests a tendency to rise above the ordinary preoccupations of life and interest himself in something higher than himself, something that concerns the interests of the society to which he belongs. It is much easier for a new doctrine to prosper, accordingly, in places and situations where this idealistic tendency is not able to find satisfaction in the political system in its prevailing forms, and where, therefore, a man's enthusiasms and ambitions, his love of combat, his instincts for leadership, do not find a ready outlet. Christianity would certainly not have spread so rapidly in Rome in the days of the republic, when the state could offer its citizens the excitements of election campaigns, or when it was waging its terrible duel with Carthage. But the empire brought peace. It quieted conflicts between the nations and entrusted all public functions to salaried employees. That

¹ More particularly in *Marc Aurèle*.

prepared the ground for a long period of security and political repose that rendered the new religion the best possible service. In the age just past, the consolidation of the bureaucratic state, the ending of religious wars, the growth of a cultured, well-to-do class that had no part in political functions, supplied the basis first for the liberal and then for the radical socialist movements. Nations sometimes have periods of, so to say, psychological exhaustion, when they seem to need repose. That is what we mean when we say, with less aptness of phrase, perhaps, that a people has grown old. At any rate, if a society has had no revolutions and undergone no serious political changes for some centuries, when it begins at last to emerge from its long torpor it is much more easily persuaded that the triumph of a new doctrine, the establishment of a new form of government, will mark the beginning of a new era, a new golden age, and that on its advent all men will become good and happy in a new land of Cathay. That was the characteristic illusion in France around 1789. It was to an extent the illusion in Italy in 1848.

On the other hand, after a series of disturbances and changes, the enthusiasm and faith that political innovators and political novelties have inspired tends to fall off considerably, and a vague feeling of skepticism and fatigue spreads through the masses. However, capacity for faith and enthusiasm is exhausted far less readily than might appear at first sight. Disillusionment has little effect, on the whole, upon religious doctrines that are based on the supernatural, that solve problems relating to the prime cause of the universe or that postpone realization of the ideals of happiness and justice to another life.

But strangely enough, even doctrines that are apparently more realistic and should yield their fruits in this life succeed very well in surviving the refutations of them that are supplied by experience and the facts of everyday living. After all, illusions endure because illusion is a need for almost all men, a need that they feel no less strongly than their material needs. A system of illusions, therefore, is not easily discredited until it can be replaced with a new system. As we often see, when that is not possible, not even a sequence of sufferings, of terrible trials born of experiences more terrible still, is enough to disenchant a people; or, more exactly, discouragement rather than disillusionment settles upon that people and endures as long as the generation that has per-

sonally suffered still lives. But after that, if there has been no change in the trend of ideas and in the education of sentiments, the moment social energies have somewhat revived, the same illusions produce new conflicts and new misfortunes over again. Moreover it is in the nature of men to retain favorable memories of the days during which they suffered, and of the individuals who caused their sufferings. That is the case especially when a certain length of time has elapsed. The masses always end by admiring and draping in poetic legend leaders like Napoleon, who have brought untold pain and misfortune upon them but who at the same time have satisfied their need for ennobling emotions and their fantastic craving for novelties and great things.

6. The capacity of a doctrine to satisfy the needs of the human spirit depends not only upon requirements of time and place but also upon conditions that are independent of time and place—upon basic psychological laws that must not be disregarded. In fact, this second element in the success of ambitious political and religious doctrines is an exceedingly important one.

As a general rule, if a system of ideas, beliefs, feelings, is to be accepted by great masses of human beings, it must address the loftier sentiments of the human spirit: it must promise that justice and equality will reign in this world, or in some other, or it must proclaim that the good will be rewarded and the wicked punished. At the same time it will not go far wrong if it yields some small satisfaction to the envy and rancor that are generally felt toward the powerful and the fortunate and intimates that, in this life or in some other, there will come a time when the last shall be first and the first last. It will help if some phase of the doctrine can manage to offer a refuge for good souls, gentle souls, who seek in meditation and resignation some solace from the conflicts and disappointments of life. It will be useful, also—one might even say indispensable—for the doctrine to have some means of utilizing the spirit of abnegation and sacrifice that predominates in certain individuals and of guiding it into proper channels, though the same doctrine must also leave some little elbowroom for pride and vanity.

It follows, therefore, that believers must always be "the people" or "the better people," or "progressive spirits," who speak for the vanguard of real progress. So the Christian

must be enabled to think with complacency that everybody not of the Christian faith will be damned. The Brahman must be given grounds for rejoicing that he alone is descended from the head of Brahma and has the exalted honor of reading the sacred books. The Buddhist must be taught highly to prize the privilege he has of attaining Nirvana soonest. The Mohammedan must recall with satisfaction that he alone is the true believer, and that all others are infidel dogs in this life and tormented dogs in the next. The radical socialist must be convinced that all who do not think as he does are either selfish, money-spoiled bourgeois or ignorant and servile simpletons. These are all examples of arguments that provide for one's need of esteeming one's self and one's own religion or convictions and at the same time for the need of despising and hating others.

From hatred to conflict is only a step. In fact there is no political party or religious sect that does not envisage war—bloody or not, as the case may turn out—upon those who do not accept its dogmas. If it eschews conflict altogether and preaches compassion and submission in all cases, that is just a sign that it is conscious of weakness and thinks it would be risking too much in undertaking a war. In struggle, besides, all the less noble but nonetheless widespread appetites of the human heart are taken account of—love of luxury, lust for blood and women, ambition to command and to tyrannize.

Certainly no recipe can be given for founding an enduring political party or religious doctrine that will contain the exact dosages required for satisfying every human sentiment. But one may declare with all assurance that to realize the purpose mentioned there must be a fusion, in certain amounts, of lofty sentiments and low passions, of precious metal and base metal—otherwise the alloy will not stand the wear and tear. A doctrine that does not take sufficient account of the differing and contradictory qualities that human nature shows has little power of appeal, and it will have to be revamped in that respect if it is to gain a permanent following. The mingling of good and evil is so inborn in human nature that a certain amount of fine metal must be present even in the alloys of which criminal gangs, secret societies and murderous sects are compounded; and a little of the base metal must enter into the complex of sentiments that inspires companies of heroes and ascetic communities that make a

fetish of self-sacrifice. Too great a deficiency, therefore, of either the good or the bad elements always has the same results: it prevents any wide dissemination of the doctrine, or the special discipline, that the given sect enforces upon its members.

There have been, as there still are, organized groups of bandits that preach theft, murder and the destruction of property. But in such cases the perpetration of the criminal act is almost always colored with some specious political or religious doctrine that serves to decoy into the company some misguided person who is not wholly contemptible, whose crumb of respectability renders common turpitude more bearable to the public and introduces into the association a modicum of moral sense that is indispensable if a villainy is to succeed. Bismarck is credited with the apothegm that a man needs a little honesty to be a perfect rascal. The Sicilian Mafia, among other criminal associations, had its rules of ethics, and its members a certain sense of honor. The Maffusi sometimes kept their word with nonmembers, and they rarely betrayed each other. It is mainly to the limitations they set to their wrongdoing that certain criminal associations owe their extraordinarily long lives. Macaulay observes that murder plots almost never succeed in England proper because English murderers lack the grain of moral sense that is essential to mutual trust. He may have been right or wrong as to the fact; the corollary he derives from it is certainly sound.

We have an example of societies of the type mentioned in the Assassins, who ravaged Syria and Iraq 'Arabi in the Middle Ages. The Assassins were a degenerate wing of the Ismailians, a relatively innocuous sect that had a wide following in the Mohammedan world about the year 1100. The doctrine and discipline of the sect had many points in common with present-day Freemasonry in the Latin countries.¹ The Thugs, or Stranglers, were famous in India down to the middle of the last century. Almost all travelers who have written about China speak of secret societies. Some of them are country-wide and have, or pretend to have, strictly political objectives. To the list might be added the "underground" political movements that are common today in Europe and America.

¹ Clavel, *Geschiedenis der vrijmetselarij*; Amari, *Storia dei Musulmani in Sicilia*, vol. II, pp. 119 f.; Hammer-Furgstall, *History of the Assassins*.

On the other hand, certain associations of human beings are founded upon the renunciation of every worldly vanity and pleasure, on the complete sacrifice of the member's personality, either to the advantage of the association or to the advantage of all humanity. The bonze convents in the Buddhist world and the Catholic religious orders in the West are familiar examples of this type of institution. These associations are in general recruited from among individuals who are specially fitted for their calling, either through peculiar circumstances in their personal lives or through a natural inclination toward self-sacrifice and resignation. We cannot say, however, that they are wholly exempt from worldly passions. A desire to win the admiration of the devout, the ambition of many individuals to excel within the order, and an even stronger ambition that the order shall surpass rival orders—these are all powerful motives that have contributed to the long and prosperous lives of such associations.

But in all these cases, though we see that a bit of good is always found mixed in with the evil, and that a bit of evil always sours the good, we are still confronted by the fact that such associations are still none too large. They have never embraced all the members of a great human society. In spite of all the specious justifications of crime that have been devised, sects of murderers and thieves have never been more than diseased social excrescences. They may have succeeded for a time in terrorizing, or even influencing, wide areas. They have never converted a great people to their principles. The monastery too has always been an exception, and wherever the monastic life has spread and become the habitual occupation of any considerable part of a population, the order has rapidly strayed from its original principles. The Ebionite churches of early Christian days required all the faithful to pool their earnings, and they sought to extend the monastic type over all Christian society. However, the sect led a hand-to-mouth existence and soon disappeared, for if any amount of abnegation may be obtained from a small number of chosen individuals who are trained by an apposite discipline, the same thing is not possible with a whole human mass, in which the good is necessarily mingled with the bad and needs and passions of all sorts have to be reckoned with. For that reason, if an experi-

ment in social regeneration is to prove anything it has to be applied to an entire people, granted that one can be found to lend itself to such an experiment or can be forced to do so.

7. For all these reasons a religion with too lofty a moral system produces at the most those good, and indeed far from disparageable, results that come from a man's making an effort to attain an ideal that lies beyond his powers of attainment. But in practice such a religion must end by being observed with scant scrupulousness. The continuous conflict between religious belief and human necessity, between the thing recognized as holy and conforming with divine law and the thing that is done, and indeed has to be done, constitutes the eternal contradiction, the inevitable hypocrisy, that appears in the lives of many peoples, and by no means of Christian peoples only. A short time before Christianity became, thanks to Constantine, the official religion of the Roman Empire, the good Lactantius exclaimed:

If only the true God were honored [that is, if all men were converted to Christianity], there would be no more dissensions or wars. Men would all be united by the ties of an indissoluble love, for they would all look upon each other as brothers. No one would contrive further snares to be rid of his neighbor. Each would be content with little, and there would be no more frauds and thefts. How blessed then would be man's estate! What a golden age would dawn upon the world!

Such, in fact, had to be the opinion of a Christian, for he was convinced that every believer should put the precepts and spirit of his religion integrally into practice and thought it quite possible for a whole society to observe them as they were observed by those chosen spirits who, at the cost of their lives, refused to deny their faith in the face of Diocletian's persecution. But if Lactantius had lived only fifty years longer he might have perceived that no religion can of itself raise the moral level of an entire people very rapidly or to any great extent. Had he been reborn in the Middle Ages, he could have satisfied himself that by adapting itself more and more to shifting historical circumstances and to the perennial demands of the human spirit, the same religion that had supplied the martyr and was supplying

¹ Quoted by Boissier, "Le Christianisme et l'invasion des barbares," p. 351.

the missionary could just as readily supply the crusader and the inquisitor.

Mohammedans in general observe the Koran far more scrupulously than Christians observe the Gospel, but that is due not only to a blinder faith (which in turn is due to a lower scientific level) but also to the fact that the prescriptions of Mohammed are morally less lofty, and so are humanly more realizable, than the prescriptions of Jesus. Those who practice Islamism in general abstain very strictly from wine and pork, but an individual who has never tasted wine or pork feels no appreciable discomfort if he is deprived of them. For that matter, it seems that when Mussulmans have lived with Christians in countries that produce wine extensively, they have observed the precepts of the Prophet on the subject of intoxicating liquors less scrupulously. The history of the Saracens in Sicily shows not a few cases of drunkenness among Mohammedans. Ebn-El Theman, emir of Catania, was in a state of complete intoxication when he ordered the veins of his wife, a sister of the emir of Palermo, to be opened. An Arab poet, Ibn-Hamdis, sang the praises of the good wine of Syracuse, its amber color and its musklike fragrance.¹

Adultery, again, is much rarer among adherents of Islam than among Christians, but divorce is much easier among the former and Mohammed allows a man several wives and does not prohibit relations with slaves. Believers in Islam are strongly advised to give alms to members of their faith and to be lavish with them in every sort of assistance, but they are also taught that to exterminate infidels in war and to levy tribute on them in peace are meritorious acts. At bottom, therefore, the Koran serves prescriptions to suit all tastes and, if one remains faithful to it in the letter and the spirit, one can get to paradise by any number of broad highways. Not a few Islamic doctrines, meantime, chance to conflict with some of the stronger and more deeply rooted instincts of human nature. They are the ones that least influence the conduct of Mussulmans. Mohammed, for instance, promises paradise to all who fall in a holy war. Now if every believer were to guide his conduct by that assurance in the Koran, every time a Mohammedan army found itself faced by unbelievers it ought either to conquer or to

¹ Amari, *Storia dei Musulmani in Sicilia*, vol. II, p. 531.

fall to the last man. It cannot be denied that a certain number of individuals do live up to the letter of the Prophet's word, but as between defeat and death followed by eternal bliss, the majority of Mohammedans normally elect defeat.

Buddhists, in general, are strict in observing the outward precepts of their religion, yet in putting the spirit of the precepts into practice they are as deft as the Christians at avoiding embarrassment by making, to use Molière's phrase, their arrangements with Heaven. The next to the last king of Burma was the wise and canny Meudoume-Men. Besides governing his subjects well, he had an enthusiastic interest in religious and philosophical discussion and regularly summoned to his presence all Englishmen and Europeans of distinction who passed through Mandalay, the capital of his dominions. In his discourses with them he always upheld the superiority of Buddhist ethics to the morals preached by other religions and never failed to call the attention of his guests to the fact that the conduct of Christians did not always conform to the precepts of Christian doctrine. Certainly it could have cost him no great effort to show that the behavior of the English in wresting a portion of Burmese territory from his predecessor was in no way consistent with the Gospel. He, on his side, had been brought up in a bonze monastery. He conscientiously observed the prescriptions of Buddha. At his court no animal was ever slaughtered, and Europeans who stayed there for any length of time found the vegetable diet irksome and were obliged secretly to fill out by hunting birds' eggs in the woods. Not only that. Meudoume-Men would never, for any reason in the world, order a capital execution. In fact, when anybody's presence inconvenienced him too seriously, the wily monarch would merely ask of his prime minister whether So-and-so were still of this world. And when, after many repetitions of the question, the prime minister would finally answer no, Meudoume-Men would smile contentedly. He had violated no precept of his religion but still had made his point: which was that a certain human soul should begin somewhat earlier than might normally have been expected the series of transmigrations that leads at last, as the Buddhist faith assures, to fusion with the universal soul.¹

¹ Planchut, "Un Royaume disparu."

The doctrine of the ancient Stoics was essentially virile and—except, perhaps, as regards "pose" and vanity, which were common frailties among them—made little, if any, concession to the passions, weaknesses or sentiments of men. But for that very reason the influence of Stoicism was limited to a section of the cultured classes. The pagan masses remained wholly alien to its propaganda. The Stoic school may have helped, at certain periods, to form the character of a part of the ruling class in the Roman Empire. To it, undoubtedly, a number of good emperors owed their training. But from the moment that its members no longer cluttered the steps of a throne it was completely ineffectual. Powerless to change, because its intellectual and strictly philosophical side quite overshadowed its dogmatic and emotional sides, it could not compete with Christianity for control of the Roman world, and it would have succeeded no better in competition with Judaism, Islam or Buddhism.

One could not maintain that it makes no difference whether a people embraces one religion or political doctrine or another. It would be difficult to show that the practical effects of Christianity are not different from those of Mohammedanism or socialism. In the long run a belief does give a certain bent to human sentiments, and such bents may have far-reaching consequences. But it seems certain that no belief will ever succeed in making the human being anything essentially different from what he is. To state the situation in other words, no belief will ever make men wholly good or wholly bad, wholly altruistic or wholly selfish. Some adaptation to the lower moral and emotional level that corresponds to the human average is indispensable in all religions. Those who refuse to recognize that fact make it easier, it seems to us, for people who use the relative inefficacy of religious sentiments and political doctrines as an argument to prove their absolute inefficacy. There comes to mind in this connection an opinion that has often been expressed. The bandits of southern Italy usually went about in true South Italian style, laden with scapulars and images of saints and madonnas. At the same time they were often guilty of murders and other crimes—whence the conclusion that religious beliefs had no practical influence upon them. Now, before such an inference could with justice be drawn, one would have to show that if the bandits had not

comrades and superiors who are all imbued with the same sort of convictions, will think it his first and all-embracing duty to obey the orders of his sovereign all his life long and, if need be, to get himself killed for his king. Another, finally, who is born into an environment of veteran conspirators and revolutionaries, who has thrilled and shuddered from his earliest days at tales of political persecutions and riots at the barricades, and whose mind has been fed largely on the writings of Rousseau, Mazzini or Marx, will deem it his sacred duty to struggle tirelessly against oppression by organized government and will be ready to face prison and the gallows in the name of revolution. All that occurs because once the individual's environment is formed—Catholic, ecclesiastical, bureaucratic, military, revolutionary, as it may be—that individual, especially if he is a normal young man not altogether superior in intellect nor yet utterly vulgar and commonplace, will give to his sentimental and affective faculties the bent that the environment suggests to him, so that certain sentiments rather than others will develop in him—the spirit of rebellion and struggle, say, rather than the spirit of passive obedience and self-sacrifice. This training, this *dressage*, as the French call it, succeeds better with the young than with adults, with enthusiastic and impassioned temperaments better than with cold, deliberate, calculating temperaments, with docile souls better than with rebellious spirits, unless the doctrine, whether in essence or because of special historical circumstances, makes a point of cultivating and intensifying the rebellious instincts.

One condition especially is favorable, not to say indispensable, to this mimetic process—the process by which the individual is assimilated to the environment. The environment must be closed to all influences from outside, so that no sentiments, and especially no ideas, will ever get into it except such as bear the trade-mark of the environment. No book that is on the Index must ever enter the seminary. Philosophy must begin and end with St. Thomas Aquinas. When one reads one must read theology and the works of the Fathers. The tales that are offered to the child's curiosity and hunger for romance will be tales of martyrs and heroic confessors. In the military academy one will read and talk of the exploits of great captains, of the glories of one's own army and one's own dynasty. Education and training will be such as are strictly required for learning the

carried scapulars and madonnas they would not have committed additional murders or acts of ferocity. If the images saved a single human life, a single pang of sorrow, a single tear, there would be adequate grounds for crediting them with some influence.

8. As we have seen (§4, above), a third factor figures in the spread and survival of any system of religious or political ideas—namely, the organization of the directing nucleus and the means it employs for converting the masses or holding them loyal to a given belief or doctrine. As we also have seen, the nucleus originates in the first instance in a spontaneous process of selection and segregation. Thereafter its cohesion is based in the main on a phenomenon of the human spirit which we have called “mimetism,” or imitation—the tendency of an individual's passions, sentiments and beliefs to develop in accord with the currents that prevail in the environment in which he is morally formed and educated. It is altogether natural that in a country that has attained some degree of culture a certain number of young people should have a capacity for developing enthusiasms about what they hold to be true and ethical, about ideas which, in semblance at least, are generous and lofty and concern the destiny of a nation or of humanity at large.

These sentiments and the spirit of abnegation and self-sacrifice that result from them may remain in a state of potentiality and become atrophied, or they may enjoy a luxuriant blossoming, according as they are cultivated or not; and the fruits they yield differ widely according to the differing ways in which they are cultivated.

In the son of a shopkeeper who comes into contact with no one except the customers and clerks in his father's place of business, the sentiments mentioned will probably never amount to very much or even manifest themselves at all, unless the boy be one of those rare individuals of superior type who succeed in developing all by themselves. A young man who receives a religious training from his earliest childhood and then goes on to a Catholic seminary may become a missionary and consecrate his whole life to the triumph of his faith. Another, who is born into a family that has a coat of arms, is educated in a military academy and then becomes a lieutenant in a regiment, where he finds

soldier's profession and for coming to prize highly the honor of being an officer, a gentleman, a loyal champion of king and country. In the revolutionary "study hour" the talk will be all on the victories and glories of the sinless masses, on the nefarious doings of tyrants and their hirelings, on the greed and baseness of the bourgeoisie; and any book which is not written in accordance with the word and spirit of the masters will be mercifully proscribed. Any glimmer of mental balance, any ray of light from other moral and intellectual worlds, that strays into one of these closed environments produces doubts, falterings and desertions. Real history, that earnest, objective search for facts, the discipline which teaches us to know men and appraise them independently of caste, religion or political party, which takes account of their weaknesses and virtues for what they really are, which trains and exercises the faculties of observation and the sense of reality, must be completely banned.

Now all that, at bottom, means nothing more or less than a real unbalancing of the spirit, and every environment inflicts that unbalancing upon the recruit who is drawn into its orbit. He is offered only a partial picture of life. That picture has been carefully revised, circumscribed and corrected, and the neophyte must take it as the whole and real picture of life. Certain sentiments are overstressed, certain others are minimized, and an idea of justice, honesty, duty, is presented which, if not fundamentally wrong, is certainly grossly incomplete. This thoroughgoing identification of the concept of justice and right with the given religious or political doctrine—even a morally lofty one—sometimes drives upright but violent souls to extreme fanaticism and political crimes, and may even succeed in extinguishing all gracious sentiment in a chivalrous people. According to an anecdote relating to Mohammed, a battle was being fought at Onein between the Prophet's followers and his opponents during his lifetime. In the ranks of the dissidents was one Doreid-Ben-Sana, the Bayard of his age and people. Though ninety years old, he had had himself carried to the battlefield on a litter. A young Islamite, one Rebiaa-ben-Rafi, managed to reach the spot where Doreid was and struck him with a well-aimed blow of his sword. But the weapon fell to pieces. "What a wretched sword your father gave you, boy," said the old hero. "My scimitar has a real temper. Take it,

and then go and tell your mother that you have slain Doreid with the weapon with which he so many times defended the liberty and good right of the Arabs, and the honor of their women." Rebiaa took Doreid's scimitar and slew him, and then went so far in his cynical rage as in fact to carry the message to his mother. Less fanatical than her son about the new religion, perhaps because she was a woman of the old school, she seems to have received him with the contempt he deserved.¹

And yet as we have seen (§3, above), perfectly balanced individuals, who know and appreciate all their duties and give to each the importance that it really has, are not likely to devote all their lives and energies to achieving one particular and definite thing. Mass exaggerations, or if one prefer, mass illusions, are the things that produce great events in history and make the world move. If a Christian could grant that a person could be just as virtuous without baptism, or that one could be without the faith and still save one's soul, the Christian missionaries and martyrs would have lost their enthusiasm and Christianity would not have become the factor that it became in human history. If the promoters of a revolution were convinced that the status of society would not be very much bettered the morning after their victory, if they even suspected that there might be a chance of their making things worse, it would be hard to sweep them in droves to the barricades. Nations in which the critical spirit is strong, and which are skeptical—very properly skeptical—as to the practical benefits that any new doctrine can bring, never take the lead in great social movements and end by being dragged along by others whose enthusiasms are more readily aroused. The same is true of the individuals within a nation. The more sensible end very frequently by being swept off their feet by the more impulsive. Not always is it the sane who lead the mad. Often the mad force the sane to keep them company.

9. But once the heroic period of a movement is over, once the stage of initial propaganda comes to an end, then reflection and self-interest claim their rights again. Enthusiasm, the spirit of sacrifice, the one-sided view, are enough to found religious and political parties. They are not enough to spread them very

¹ Hammer-Purgstall, *Gemäldeaal*.

far abroad and assure them of a permanent existence. So the method of recruiting the directing nucleus is modified or, better, completed. Membership among the individuals who make up the nucleus may still be won on purely idealistic grounds, but the age when idealism is everything soon passes in the great majority of human beings. They must then find something to satisfy ambition, vanity and the craving for material pleasures. In a word, along with a center of ideas and sentiments, one must have a center of interests.

Here again we come upon the theory of the alloy of pure metal with base that we formulated previously. A ruling nucleus that is really well organized must find a place within itself for all sorts of characters—for the man who yearns to sacrifice himself for others and the man who wants to exploit his neighbor for his own profit; for the man who wants to look powerful, and the man who wants to be powerful without regard to looks; for the man who enjoys suffering and privations and the man who likes to enjoy the good things of life. When all these elements are fused and disciplined into a strongly knit system, within which every individual knows that as long as he remains loyal to the purposes and policy of the institution his inclinations will be gratified, and that if he rebels against it he may be morally and even materially destroyed, we get one of those social organisms that defy the most varied historical vicissitudes and endure for thousands of years.

One thinks at once of the Catholic Church, which has been and still is the most robust and typical of all such organisms. We can only stand in rapt admiration before the complexity and the shrewdness of its organization. The seminary student, the novice, the sister of charity, the missionary, the preacher, the mendicant friar, the opulent abbot, the aristocratic prior, the rural priest, the wealthy archbishop, sometimes also the sovereign prince, the cardinal, who takes precedence over prime ministers, the pope, who was one of the most powerful of temporal rulers down to a few centuries ago—all have their place, all have their *raison d'être*, in the Church. Macaulay has pointed to a great advantage that Catholicism has over Protestantism. When an enthusiastic, unbalanced spirit arises inside the Protestant fold, he always ends by discovering some new interpretation of the Bible and founding one more of the many sects into which

the Reformation has split. That same individual would be utilized to perfection by Catholicism and become an element of strength rather than of dispersion. He would don a friar's robe, he would become a famous preacher, and, if he had a really original character, a truly warm heart, and if historical circumstances favored, he would become a St. Francis of Assisi or a St. Ignatius Loyola. Cogent as this example is, however, it shows only one of the countless ways in which the Catholic hierarchy manages to profit by all human aptitudes.

It is said that the celibacy rule for the clergy goes contrary to nature, and certainly for some men to be deprived of a legal family would be a very great sacrifice. But it must be remembered that only at that price can a militia that is free of all private affections and stands apart from the rest of society be obtained; and, meantime, for characters that have an inclination toward celibacy, that institution itself does not preclude certain material satisfactions. In the same way, many people believe that the Church has degenerated and lost strength and influence because it has deviated from its origins and ceased to be exclusively a handmaiden to the poor. But that too is a superficial and therefore erroneous judgment.

Perhaps nowadays, in this age of ours, when everybody is talking about the disinherited classes and is interested, or pretends to be interested, in them, it might be becoming in the Supreme Pontiff to remember a little oftener that he is the servant of the servants of God. But except for certain fleeting periods in history, the Catholic Church would not have been what it has been, and it would not have endured so long in glory and prosperity, if it had always confined itself to being an institution for the sole benefit of the poor and had been popular only among beggars. Instead, it has shrewdly found ways to enjoy the approval of both the poor and the rich. To the poor it has offered alms and consolation. The rich it has won with its splendor and with the satisfactions it has been able to provide for their vanity and pride. So well chosen has this policy proved that if the enemies of the Church have always reproached it for its luxury and worldliness, they have always, if they have been shrewd, taken care to derive as much influence and wealth from it as possible. Of late, in a number of European countries, another institution has been devoting all its energies to combating

the Catholic Church. But for its own part, it does not fail to procure for its adherents as many personal satisfactions and material advantages as possible.

10. Once the ruling nucleus is organized, the methods that it uses to win the masses and keep them loyal to its doctrine may be widely various. When no serious external obstacles, or obstacles arising from the nature of the political or religious system itself, are encountered, both methods of propaganda that are based upon the gradual persuasion and education of the masses and methods that involve the resort to force yield good results. Force, in fact, is perhaps the quickest means of establishing a conviction or an idea, though naturally only the stronger can use it.

In the nineteenth century it became a widespread belief that force and persecution were powerless against doctrines that were founded upon truth, since the future belonged to such doctrines. They were regarded as equally useless against mistaken beliefs, since popular good sense would attend to them on its own account. Now, to be quite frank, it is hard to find a notion that involves a greater superficiality of observation and a greater inexperience of historical fact. That surely will be one of the ideas of our time that will give posterity the heartiest laughs at our expense. That such a theory should be preached by parties and sects which do not as yet hold power in their hands is easily understandable—their instincts of self-interest and self-preservation might lead them to profess such views. Stupidity begins when it is accepted by others. "*Quid est veritas?*" asked Pilate, and we can begin by asking what a true doctrine is and what a false doctrine is. Scientifically speaking, all religious doctrines are false, regardless of the number of believers they may have or may have had. No one, certainly, will maintain that Mohammedanism, for instance, which has conquered so large a portion of the world, is founded upon scientific truth. It is much more accurate to say that there are doctrines that satisfy sentiments which are widespread and very deeply rooted in the human heart and, accordingly, have greater powers of self-propagation; and that there are doctrines that possess the quality mentioned to a lesser degree and therefore, though they may be more acceptable on the intellectual side, have a far more limited appeal. If

one will, a distinction can be drawn between doctrines which it is to the interest of civilization and justice to have widely accepted, and which produce a greater sum of peace, morality and human welfare, and doctrines which have the opposite effects and which, unfortunately, are not always the ones that show the least capacity for self-propagation. We believe that social democracy threatens the future of modern civilization, yet we are obliged to recognize that it is based on the sentiment of justice, on envy and on the craving for pleasures; and those qualities are so widespread among men, especially in our day, that it would be a great mistake to deny that socialist doctrines have very great powers of self-propagation.

People always point to the case of Christianity, which triumphed in spite of persecutions, and to modern liberalism, which overcame the tyrants who tried to repress it. But these cases merely show that when persecution is badly managed it cannot do everything, and that there may be cases where pure force does not suffice to arrest a current of ideas. The exception, however, cannot serve as a basis for a general principle. If a persecution is badly managed, tardily undertaken, laxly and falteringly applied, it almost always helps to further the triumph of a doctrine; whereas a pitiless and energetic persecution, which strikes at the opposing doctrine the moment it shows its head, is the very best tool for combatting it.

Christianity was not always persecuted energetically in the Roman Empire. It had long periods of toleration, and often times the persecutions themselves were only partial—they were confined, that is, to a few provinces. It did not definitely triumph, however, until an emperor who held constituted authority in his hands began to favor it. So too, liberal propaganda was not only hampered, it was also furthered, by governments from the middle of the eighteenth century down to the French Revolution. Later on it was fought intermittently and never simultaneously through all the European world. It triumphed when the governments themselves were converted to it, or else were overthrown by force, internal or from abroad.

As compared with those two doubtful examples, how many others there are to the precise contrary! Christianity itself in its early days hardly spread beyond the boundaries of the Roman Empire. It was not accepted in Persia, not only because it

met an obstacle in the Persian national religion but because it was energetically persecuted. Charlemagne planted Christianity among the Saxons by fire and sword and within the space of a generation. The evangelization of the Roman Empire took centuries. A few years sufficed to carry the Gospel to many barbarian countries, because once a king and his nobles were converted, the people bent their necks to baptism en masse. The cross was set up in that very summary manner in the various Anglo-Saxon dominions, in Poland, in Russia, in the Scandinavian countries and in Lithuania. In the seventeenth century, the Christian religion was almost wiped out in Japan by a pitiless and therefore effective persecution. Buddhism was eradicated by persecution from India, its motherland; Mazdaism from the Persia of the Sassanids; Babism from modern Persia and the new religion of the Taipings from China. Thanks to persecution, the Albigenes disappeared from southern France, and Mohammedanism and Judaism from Spain and Sicily. The Reformation triumphed, after all, only in countries where it was supported by governments and, in some cases, by a victorious revolution. The rapid rise of Christianity itself, which is ascribed to a miracle, is nothing as compared with the far more rapid rise of Mohammedanism. The former spread over the territory of the Roman Empire in three centuries. The latter in just eighty years expanded from Samarkand to the Pyrenees. Christianity, however, worked only by preaching and persuasion. The other showed a decided preference for the scimitar.

The fact that all political parties and religious creeds tend to exert an influence upon those in power and, whenever they can, to monopolize power itself, is the best proof that even if they do not openly confess it they are convinced that to control all the more effective forces in a social organism, and especially in a bureaucratic state, is the best way to spread and maintain a doctrine.

11. As regards the other means, apart from physical force, which the various religions and political parties use to attract the masses, maintain ascendancy over them and exploit their credulity, we may say very largely what we said of the obligation that founders of doctrines, and doctrines themselves, are under to adapt themselves to a fairly low moral level. The followers

of every political or religious system are wont carefully to list the faults of their adversaries in respect of moral practices, while claiming to be free of any reproach themselves. As a matter of fact all of them, with differences in degree to be sure, are tarr'd with the same brush. It is our privilege to be perfectly moral so long as we do not come into contact with other men, and especially so long as we make no pretensions to guiding them. But once we set out to direct their conduct, we are obliged to play upon all the sensitive springs of conduct that we can touch in them. We have to take advantage of all their weaknesses, and anyone who would appeal only to their generous sentiments would be easily beaten by someone else who was less scrupulous. States are not run with prayer books, said Cosimo dei Medici, the father of his country. And indeed it is very hard to lead the masses in a given direction when one is not able as need requires to flatter passions, satisfy whims and appetites and inspire fear. Of course, if a man, however wicked he might be, tried to rule a state strictly on blasphemy, that is to say by relying exclusively upon material interests and the baser sentiments, he would be just as ingenuous as the man who tried to govern with prayer books alone. If old Cosimo were alive he would not hesitate to call such a man a fool. By a sufficient display of energy, self-sacrifice, restless activity, patience and, where necessary, superior technical skill, the man at the helm of a state may feel less in need of exploiting the baser sentiments, and may place great dependence upon the generous and virtuous instincts of his subjects. But the head of a state is only a man, and so does not always possess the qualities mentioned in any eminent degree.

One notes, on close inspection, that the artifices that are used to wheedle crowds are more or less alike at all times and in all places, since the problem is always to take advantage of the same human weaknesses. All religions, even those that deny the supernatural, have their special declamatory style, and their sermons, lectures or speeches are delivered in it. All of them have their rituals and their displays of pomp to strike the fancy. Some parade with lighted candles and chant litanies. Others march behind red banners to the tune of the "Marseillaise" or the "International."

Religions and political parties alike take advantage of the vain and create ranks, offices and distinctions for them. Alike they

exploit the simple, the ingenuous and those eager for self-sacrifice or for publicity, in order to create the martyr. Once the martyr has been found, they take care to keep his cult alive, since that serves very effectively to strengthen faith. Once upon a time it was a practice in monasteries to choose the silliest of the friars and accredit him as a saint, even ascribing miracles to him, all with a view to enhancing the renown of the brotherhood and hence its wealth and influence, which were straightway turned to good account by those who had directed the staging of the farce. In our day sects and political parties are highly skilled at creating the superman, the legendary hero, the "man of unquestioned honesty," who serves, in his turn, to maintain the luster of the gang and brings in wealth and power for the sly ones to use. When "my uncle the Count" reminded the Capuchin Father Provincial of the scalawag tricks that Father Christopher had played in his youth, the Father Provincial promptly replied that it was to the glory of the cloth that one who had caused scandal in the world should become quite a different person on taking the cloth.¹ A typically monkish reply, without doubt! But worse than monks are political parties and sects which conceal and excuse the worst rascalities of their adherents so long as they are loyal to the colors. For them, whoever takes the cloth becomes on the spot a quite different person.

The complex of dissimulation, artifice and stratagem that commonly goes by the name of Jesuitism is not peculiar to the followers of Loyola. Perhaps the Jesuits had the honor of lending it their name because they systematized the thing, perfected it and in a way made an art of it; but, after all, the Jesuitical spirit is just a form of the sectarian spirit carried to its ultimate implications. All religions and all parties which have set out with more or less sincere enthusiasms to lead men toward specified goals have, with more or less moderation, used methods similar to the methods of the Jesuits, and sometimes worse ones. The principle that the end justifies the means has been adopted for the triumph of all causes and all social and political systems. All parties, all cults, make it a rule to judge only that man great who fights in the party ranks—all other men are idiots or rogues. When they can do nothing more positive, they maintain obstinate silence on the merits of outsiders. All sectarians practice the

¹ Manzoni, *I promessi sposi*, chap. XIX.

art of holding to the form and letter of their word while violating it in substance. All of them know how to distort a recital of facts to their advantage. All of them know how to find simple, timid souls and how to capture their loyalty and win their assistance and their contributions for "the cause"—and for the persons who represent it and are its apostles. Unfortunately, therefore, even if the Jesuits were to disappear, Jesuitism would remain, and we have only to look about us to be convinced of that truth.

The more blatantly unscrupulous means are oftener used in associations that are in conflict with constituted authorities and are more or less secret in character. Among the instructions that Bakunin sent out to his followers, we find this one:

To reach the gloomy city of Pandestruction, the first requisite is a series of assassinations, a series of bold and perhaps crazy enterprises which will strike terror to the hearts of the powerful and dazzle the populace into believing in the triumph of the revolution.

Couched in cruder language, Bakunin's maxims remind one of the "Be agitated and agitate" of another great revolutionist. In the same pamphlet, *Principles of Revolution*, Bakunin goes on:

Without recognizing any activity other than destruction, we declare that the forms in which that activity should manifest itself are variety itself: poison, dagger, knout. Revolution sanctifies everything without distinction.

Another Russian, who came to hold principles very different from Bakunin's, describes in a novel the methods by which the wily attract the ingenuous into revolutionary societies. Says Dostoevski:

First of all the bureaucratic bait is necessary. There have to be titles—presidents, secretaries, and so on. Then comes sentimentality, which is a most effective agent, and then regard for what people may think. Fear of being alone in one's opinion and fear of passing for an antiliberal are things that have tremendous power.

Then [adds another interlocutor in the dialogue] there is the trick of embroiling unsuspecting neophytes in a crime. Five comrades murder a sixth on the pretext that he is a spy. . . . Murder cements everything. There is no escape even for the most reluctant.¹

¹ *The Possessed*, part II, chap. VI (pp. 392-393).

12. The day can hardly come when conflicts and rivalries among different religions and parties will end. That would be possible only if all the civilized world were to belong to a single social type, to a single religion, and if there were to be an end to disagreements as to the ways in which social betterment can be attained. Now a number of German writers believe that political parties are necessary as corresponding to the various tendencies that manifest themselves at different ages in the human being. Without accepting that theory we can readily observe that any new religion, any new political dogma that chances to win some measure of success, straightway breaks up into sects, under pressure of the instinct for disputing and quarreling; and these sects fight one another with the same zest and the same bitterness that the parent faith formerly displayed against rival religions and parties. The numerous schisms and heresies that are forever sprouting in Christianity, Mohammedanism and the many other religions, the divisions that keep emerging in our day within social democracy, which is still far from a triumph that it may never attain, prove how extraordinarily hard it is to achieve that unified and universal moral and intellectual world to which so many people aspire.

Even granting that such a world could be realized, it does not seem to us a desirable sort of world. So far in history, freedom to think, to observe, to judge men and things serenely and dispassionately, has been possible—always be it understood, for a few individuals—only in those societies in which numbers of different religious and political currents have been struggling for dominion. That same condition, as we have already seen (chap. V, §9), is almost indispensable for the attainment of what is commonly called "political liberty"—in other words, the highest possible degree of justice in the relations between governors and governed that is compatible with our imperfect human nature. In fact, in societies where choice among a number of religious and political currents has ceased to be possible because one such current has succeeded in gaining exclusive control, the isolated and original thinker has to be silent, and moral and intellectual monopoly is infallibly associated with political monopoly, to the advantage of a caste or of a very few social forces.

The modern Masonic doctrine in Europe is based on the belief that man tends to become physically, intellectually and morally saner and nobler, and that only ignorance and superstition, which have generated the dogmatic religions, have prevented him from following that road, which is his natural road, and driven him to persecutions, massacres and fratricidal strife. Such a view does not seem to us tenable. The revealed religions, which many people are now calling superstitious, were not taught to man by an extrahuman being. They were created by men themselves, and they have always found their nourishment and their raison d'être in human nature. They are only in part, and sometimes in very small part, responsible for struggles, massacres and persecutions. These are due more often to the passions of men than to the dogmas that religions teach. In fact, in the light of impartial history, the excuse of "the times," and of religious and political fanaticism, takes away only a small fraction of individual responsibility for outrages of every sort. Whatever the times may be, in every religion, in every doctrine, each of us can find and does find the tendency that best suits his character and temperament. Mohammedanism did not prevent Saladin from being a humane and generous soul even in dealing with infidels, any more than Christianity mitigated the ferocity of Richard the Lionhearted. That king, so celebrated for his chivalry, was responsible for the massacre of three thousand Mohammedan prisoners, taken after the strenuous defense at Acre, and it was due to the generosity of Saladin that that terrible example was not followed on a large scale by the Mohammedan army. The same religion that gave the world Simon de Monfort and Torquemada also gave the world St. Francis of Assisi and St. Theresa. The year 1793 saw the lives and feats of Marat, Robespierre and Carrier (the Conventioneer Carrier, who had the children of the Vendéans drowned by the thousand at Nantes). But that same year knew Bonchamps, the leader of the loyalists in the Vendée, who, as he lay wounded on his deathbed, pleaded for the lives of four thousand republican prisoners whom his fellow soldiers were intending to shoot down—and won their release. As a matter of fact, in the course of the past century the bitterest struggles have been fought, the worst persecutions and massacres have been perpetrated, in the name of doctrines which have no

basis at all in the supernatural, and which proclaim the liberty, equality and fraternity of all men.

The feeling that springs spontaneously from an unprejudiced judgment of the history of humanity is compassion for the contradictory qualities of this poor human race of ours, so rich in abnegation, so ready at times for personal sacrifice, yet whose every attempt, whether more or less successful or not at all successful, to attain moral and material betterment, is coupled with an unleashing of hates, rancors and the basest passions. A tragic destiny is that of men! Aspiring ever to pursue and achieve what they think is the good, they ever find pretexts for slaughtering and persecuting each other. Once they slaughtered and persecuted over the interpretation of a dogma, or of a passage in the Bible. Then they slaughtered and persecuted in order to inaugurate the kingdom of liberty, equality and fraternity. Today they are slaughtering and persecuting and fiendishly torturing each other in the name of other creeds. Perhaps tomorrow they will slaughter and torment each other in an effort to banish the last trace of violence and injustice from the earth!

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Freedom in
Constitutional Contract
Perspectives of a Political Economist

By

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//



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Before Public Choice

Contractarian Explanation

A contract theory of the state is relatively easy to derive, and careful use of this theory can yield major explanatory results. To an extent, at least, a "science" exists for the purpose of providing psychologically satisfying explanations of what men can commonly observe about them. Presumably we "feel better" when we possess some explanatory framework or model that allows us to classify and interpret disparate sense perceptions. This imposition of order on the universe is a "good" in the strict economic sense of this term; men will invest money, time, and effort in acquiring it. The contract theory of the state, in all of its manifestations, can be defended on such grounds. It is important for sociopolitical order and tranquility that ordinary men explain to themselves the working of governmental process in models that conceptually take their bases in cooperative instead of noncooperative behavior. Admittedly and unabashedly, the contract theory serves, in this sense, a purpose or objective of rationalization. We need a "logic of law," a "calculus of consent," a "logic of collective action," to use the titles of three books that embody modern-day contract theory foundations.¹

Can the contract theory of the state serve other objectives, whether these be normative or positive in character? Can institutions which find no conceivable logical derivation in contract among cooperating parties be condemned on other than strictly personal grounds? Can alleged improvements in social arrangements be evaluated on anything other than contractarian precepts, or, to lapse into economists'

¹ See Gordon Tullock, *The Logic of Law*; James M. Buchanan and Gordon Tullock, *The Calculus of Consent: Logical Foundations of Constitutional Democracy*; and Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action*.

jargon, on anything other than Paretian criteria? But even here, are these criteria any more legitimate than any others?

In earlier works I have tended to go past these fundamental questions. I have been content to work out, at varying levels of sophistication, the contractarian bases for governmental action, either that which we can commonly observe or that which might be suggested as reforms. To me this effort seemed relevant and significant. "Political economy" or "public choice"—these seemed to be labels assignable to honorable work that required little or no methodological justification. It was only when I tried to outline a summary treatment of my whole approach to sociopolitical structure that I was stopped short. I came to realize that the very basis of the contractarian position must be examined more thoroughly.

We know, factually and historically, that the "social contract" is mythological, at least in many of its particulars. Individuals did not come together in some original position and mutually agree on the rules of social intercourse. And even had they done so at some time in history, their decisions could hardly be considered to be contractually binding on all of us who have come behind. We cannot start anew. We can either accept the political universe or we can try to change it. The question reduces to one of determining the criteria for change.

When and if we fully recognize that the contract is a myth designed in part to rationalize existing institutional structures of society, can we simultaneously use the contractual derivations to develop criteria for evaluating changes or modifications in these structures? I have previously answered this question affirmatively, but without proper argument. The intellectual quality as well as the passionate conviction of those who answer the question negatively suggest that more careful consideration is required.

How can we derive a criterion for determining whether or not a change in law, or, if you will, a change in the assignment of rights, is or is not justified? To most social scientists change becomes desirable if "I like it," even though many prefer to dress this reason up in fanciful "social welfare function" or "public interest" semantics. To me, this stance seems to be pure escapism; it represents retreat into empty arguments about personal values which spells the end of ra-

tional discourse. Perhaps some of our colleagues do possess godlike qualities, or at least think that they do, but until and unless their godliness is accepted we are left with no basis for discourse. My purpose is to see how far we can rationally discuss criteria for social change on the presumption that no man's values are better than any other man's. Is agreement the only test? Is the Wicksellian-contractarian-Paretian answer the only legitimate one here? If so, are we willing to accept its corollaries? Its full implications? Are we willing to forestall all social change that does not command unanimous or quasi-unanimous consent?

Provisionally, let us say that we do so. We can move a step beyond, while at the same time rationalizing much of what we see, by resorting to "constitutionalism," the science of rules. We can say that particular proposals for social change need not command universal assent provided only that such assent holds for the legal structure within which particular proposals are enacted or chosen. This reasoning seems to advance the argument; we seem to be part of the way out of the dilemma. But note that this argument provides us with no means at all for evaluating particular proposals as "good" or "bad." We can generate many outcomes or results under nonunanimity rules. This explains my initial response to the Arrow impossibility theorem and to the subsequent discussion. My response was, and is, one of no surprise at the alleged inconsistency in a social decision process that embodies in itself no criteria for consistency. This also explains my unwillingness to be trapped, save on rare and regretted occasions, into positions of commitment on particular measures of policy on the familiar efficiency grounds. We can offer no policy advice on particular legislative proposals. As political economists we examine public choices; we can make institutional predictions. We can analyze alternative political-social-economic structures.

The Notion of Fair Rules

But what about constitutional change itself? Can we say nothing, or must we say that at this level the contractarian (Wicksellian, Paretian) norm must apply? Once again, observation hardly supports us here. Changes are made, changes that would be acknowledged to

be genuinely "constitutional," without anything remotely approaching unanimous consent. Must we reject all such changes out of hand, or can we begin to adduce criteria on some other basis?

Resort to the choice of rules for ordinary parlor games may seem to offer assistance. Influenced greatly by the emphasis on such choices by Rutledge Vining, I once considered this analogy to be the key to genuinely innovative application of the contractarian criteria. If we could, somehow, think of individual participants in a setting of complete uncertainty about their own positions over subsequent rounds of play, we might think of their reaching genuine agreement on a set of rules. The idea of a "fair game" does have real meaning, and this idea can be transferred to sociopolitical institutions. But how far can we go with it? We may, in this process, begin to rationalize certain institutions that cannot readily be brought within the standard Wickseilian framework. But can we do more? Can we, as John Rawls seems to want to do in his monumental *A Theory of Justice*, think ourselves into a position of original contract and then idealize our thought processes into norms that "should" be imposed as criteria for institutional change? Note that this is, to me, quite different from saying that we derive a possible rationalization. To rationalize, to explain, is not to propose, and Rawls does not emphasize this quite critical distinction. It is one thing to say that, conceptually, men in some genuinely constitutional stage of deliberation, operating behind the veil of ignorance, might have agreed to rules something akin to those that we actually observe, but it is quite another thing to say that men in the here and now should be forced to abide by specific rules that we imagine by transporting ourselves into some mental-moral equivalent of an original contract setting where men are genuine "moral equals."

Unless we do so, however, we must always accept whatever structure of rules that exists and seek constitutional changes only through agreement, through consensus. It is this inability to say anything about rules changes, this inability to play God, this inability to raise himself above the masses, that the social philosopher cannot abide. He has an ingrained prejudice against the status quo, however it may be defined—understandably so, since his very role, as he interprets it, is one that finds itself only in social reform. (Perhaps this role conception reflects the moral inversion that Michael Polanyi and Craig

Roberts note: the shift of moral precepts away from personal behavior aimed at personal salvation and toward moral evaluation of social institutions.)

Escape from the Hobbesian Jungle

Just what are men saying when they propose nonagreed changes in the basic structure of rights? Are they saying anything more than "this is what I want and since I think the state has the power to impose it, I support the state as the agency to enforce the change"? We may be able to get some handles on this very messy subject by going back to Hobbes. We need to examine the initial leap out of the Hobbesian jungle. How can agreement emerge? And what are the problems of enforcement?

We may represent the reaction equilibrium in the Hobbesian jungle at the origin in the diagrammatics of Fig. 1. If we measure "B's law-abiding behavior" on the ordinate and "A's law-abiding behavior" on the abscissa, it is evident that neither man secures advantage from "lawful" behavior individually and independently of the other man's behavior. (Think of "law-abiding" here as "not-stealing.") Note that the situation here is quite different from the usual public goods model in which at least some of the "good" will tend to be produced by one or all of the common or joint consumers even under wholly independent adjustment. With law abiding as the "good," however, the individual cannot, through his own behavior, produce to increase his own utility. He can do nothing except provide a "pure" external economy; all benefits accrue to the other parties. Hence, the independent adjustment position involves a corner solution at the origin in our two-person diagram. But gains from trade clearly exist in this Hobbesian jungle, despite the absence of unilateral action.

It is easy enough to depict the Pareto region that bounds potential positions of mutual gains by drawing the appropriate indifference contours through the origin as is done in Fig. 1. These contours indicate the internal or subjective rates of trade-off between *own* and *other* law abiding. It seems plausible to suggest that the standard convexity properties would apply. The analysis remains largely empty, however, until we know something, or at least postu-

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LAW AS A PUBLIC GOOD

The Economics of Anarchy

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1. INTRODUCTION

Various writers in the Western liberal and libertarian tradition have challenged the argument that enforcement of law and protection of property rights are public goods that must be provided by governments. Many of these writers argue explicitly for the provision of law enforcement services through private market relations.¹

When protection services are purchased through markets, I refer to this situation as anarchy, or libertarian anarchy. Libertarian anarchy is

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1. Arguments for provision of law enforcement through private markets originate with Tucker (1893/1972), de Molinari (1849/1977), and the Anglo-American "Voluntaryist" movement [e.g., Francis Tandy (1896)]. Today, anarchism is most commonly associated with segments of the libertarian movement. Libertarian economists such as Rothbard (1978), Friedman (1989), and Benson (1990), and libertarian legal theorist Barnett (1986) have endorsed the private provision of law enforcement services. Other writers sympathetic to the market provision of protection and law enforcement services include Morris and Linda Tannehill (1972), Wollstein (1972), Taylor (1982), Osterfeld (1983), de Jasay (1989), Hummel (1990), Christiansen (1990), and Suttter (1991). The *Journal of Libertarian Studies* contains many articles arguing in favor of anarchy, some of which are cited throughout the text. Landes and Posner (1979) provide a law and economics perspective on private courts. The profit-maximizing punishment strategies of private protection agencies are considered in Becker and Stigler (1974) and Friedman (1984).

I do not consider many varieties of anarchism: "Left-wing" anarchists such as Proudhon, Kropotkin, and Bakunin consider anarchist societies in which law enforcement institutions are not necessary, usually because of changes in human nature. These writers devote little attention to whether their proposed reforms lead to incentive-compatible outcomes.

to be contrasted with the "crude anarchy" of Hobbes's state of nature. Unlike crude anarchy, libertarian anarchy has organized institutions responsible for the provision of public order and prevention of crime. By examining institutions that attempt to provide governmental services without actually being governments, we may learn what, if anything, makes government necessary, special, or important.²

I do not offer a single, all-purpose definition of government. However, I treat finance through taxation, claim of sovereignty, ultimate decision-making authority, and prohibitions on competitive entry as features that characterize government. In contrast, libertarian private protection agencies allow the right of secession, finance themselves through sale of product, and compete with other agencies within a given geographical area.

I argue that libertarian anarchy is not a stable equilibrium. For the purposes of this paper, I accept the premise that the absence of government will not lead to crude anarchy. The same factors that create the potential for orderly anarchy, however, also imply that anarchy will reevolve into government.

The claims of libertarian anarchists have received critical scrutiny from several quarters. Robert Nozick focuses upon whether a state could arise from a state of nature ("anarchy") without violating individual rights. He examines how private protection agencies *could* behave to give rise to a state in a just manner. In contrast, my focus is upon incentives and how private protection agencies actually *would* behave. Nonetheless, both Nozick and I focus upon the possibility that anarchy would evolve into government because individuals prefer to participate in a common legal system.³

The "Virginia School" of political economy considers the incentive to engage in predation when governmental rule of law is not present. These writers, however, do not examine systematically the provision of law enforcement through markets. Instead, they focus upon whether markets will come into existence in the first place. The focus of the Virginia School literature is logically prior to my analysis; it considers whether a feasible transition is possible from a state of nature to markets

2. Posner (1979, p. 323) explains a similar motivation: "What we ask in Part I is what would the world look like, in terms of judicial services, if there were no state? We don't ask this question because we are interested in privatizing judicial services. Our piece is not normative in its thrust. But it is frequently a useful approach to positive analysis to ask: what would be the problems if a service which has traditionally been regarded as governmental were to be provided exclusively on a private basis?"

3. See Nozick (1974). In addition to the authors mentioned in the text, critics of anarchy include French (1973), Hospers (1973), Kelley (1974), Rand (1961), Sampson (1984, chap. 8), Newman (1984), and Kavka (1986).

without government protection of property rights. In contrast, I focus upon the stability of an anarchist equilibrium.⁴

The literature on libertarianism considers several kinds or varieties of anarchism. First, private defense agencies may offer competing law codes (Friedman, 1989). Slander and libel, for instance, could be legal under some codes but illegal under others. Secondly, private defense agencies may offer the same law code and punishment standards, but compete across other quality dimensions, such as means of protection (Rothbard, 1978). Some agencies would place a patrolman on every block, whereas others would supply their clients with locks and burglar alarms. Different agencies need not offer exactly the same law codes, but could agree upon a common adjudication mechanism, or network, in case of interagency conflict.⁵ A third scenario, following Nozick (1974), posits a dominant protection agency. Protection services are a natural monopoly, and market competition gives rise to one large agency. Conflicts among different law codes or agencies do not arise.

2. ASSUMPTIONS

I treat individuals as rational, utility-maximizing agents. I do not defend this assumption on the grounds of realism, but rather as a simplifying maneuver, which highlights the role that incentives would play in anarchy. Behavior in accordance with rational self-interest and marketplace incentives is presumably an assumption that ought to favor the libertarian anarchist case.⁶

I combine the rationality assumption with three substantive restrictions upon individual preferences. First, individuals aggress against others only when they benefit directly by doing so. Persons do not enjoy aggression for its own sake. Second, once a well-functioning social order is in place, persons expect that others obey the law to some basic degree. When breaking the law, a person sees the remainder of society as siding with the established legal system, and not with himself. Without this

4. Some representative Virginia School writings on anarchy are Tullock (1972, 1974), Buchanan (1975), and Bush (1976). Gregory Kavka and I consider the prior issue of how markets could arise in Cowen and Kavka (1991). Kavka and I argue that monopoly power in law enforcement increases the likelihood that the public good of markets will evolve, just as this paper argues that monopoly power is associated with the sustenance of a stable law-and-order equilibrium.

5. I read the proposals of Rothbard (1978) as consistent with this approach. Hospers (1973) calls for a system where government enforces a single law code but private agencies compete to enforce this code. If enforcement power is in the hands of private agencies this system is difficult to distinguish from anarchy.

6. Historical experience illustrates that stable anarchy is at the very least possible. Medieval Ireland and medieval Ireland are two examples of relatively stable anarchist societies. On Iceland, see Friedman (1979) and Solvason (1991). On Ireland, see Peden (1977)

assumption, it is difficult to explain why government edicts are obeyed in today's world, or why any set of political institutions has a stable core.

Third, libertarian ideology does not provide a safeguard against the emergence of government, if incentives based on self-interest dictate that government emerge. Reliance upon libertarian ideology alone to defend the continued survival of anarchy involves a *deus ex machina*. It is inconsistent to rely upon self-interest to motivate the basic workings of markets and then have a model in which supporting the underlying institutional structure behind markets is contrary to self-interest.⁷

More practically, if the stability of an anarchist society requires libertarian values of its citizens, it is likely to be short-lived. Anarchy might arise through evolutionary means or through the purposive behavior of individuals with nonlibertarian motives. Ideologies also change over time. Anarchy might come about through libertarian ideology, but later be accompanied by other ideologies.⁸

The analysis of this paper focuses upon incentives, but in doing so, I ignore many issues in political philosophy necessary for a complete evaluation of anarchism. For instance, I treat power relations in society as transitive. If A has jurisdiction over B and B has jurisdiction over C, then A has jurisdiction over C. An alternative approach to political philosophy treats nontransitivity as the distinguishing feature of law and compares different systems of nontransitivity. I abstract from these complications.⁹

My arguments proceed as follows. I first consider the conditions under which the private provision of law enforcement services can over-

7. The role that I allow ideology to play can be expressed in the language of game theory. Ideology may be a factor in selecting among multiple equilibria. For instance, if each individual believes that others will cooperate with the established legal order, crude anarchy will be less likely; ideology may be responsible for such expectations. Given an equilibrium and set of mutual expectations, however, I do not invoke ideology to produce cooperation when aggression would serve self-interest.

8. Rothbard (1973) and Hummel (1990) assign a central role to ideology in preventing the reemergence of government.

9. Neither anarchy nor government is likely to have fully transitive power relations. Various social institutions, such as churches, terrorist groups, and families, have their own spheres of jurisdiction that are not directly subject to political rule. The government or anarchist adjudication mechanism does not have a strict monopoly on the use of retaliatory violence or the initiation of violence. Even within a government, transitivity of power relations does not generally hold. Under a system with federalism and the separation of powers, different parts of government exist in a state of anarchy with respect to each other. There is no clearly defined transitive ordering of who has jurisdiction over whom. Similarly, the adjudication mechanisms in anarchy may not develop a clearly defined power ordering to cover all possible relationships and conflicts. Just as in the American system of government, the adjudication may consist of a coalition of forces, none of which has ultimate authority. The importance of nontransitivity for political philosophy is stressed by Cuzan (1979).

come public goods and "free-rider" problems. In some cases, consumers can be induced to contribute funds toward the provision of property protection and law enforcement, once a stable system of private protection agencies is in place. I next examine whether a system of private protection agencies would evolve into government. The same conditions that allow private agencies potentially to overcome public goods problems also imply that these agencies will collude successfully.

I consider the different scenarios for anarchism discussed above. The first anarchist scenario, competing legal systems, is not stable unless private defense agencies develop a common means of mediating disputes, which will evolve into a single legal system. Stable versions of competing agencies thus resemble the second arbitration scenario with a single legal system. Once a single legal system is in place, the difference is small between cooperating agencies enforcing uniform laws and a single dominant protection agency. In each case, a single arbitration network possesses monopoly power, whether this network is composed of "separate" cooperating firms or a single firm.

I then analyze the behavior of private protection agencies when a single firm or dominant adjudication network is present. An anarchist dominant protection agency or network can produce public goods but will also have the incentive and ability to start behaving like a government. The same factors that allow anarchy to be stable may also allow the protection agencies to exercise monopoly power and collude. I present some reasons why a cartel of private protection agencies is likely to prove more stable than most private cartels, which have historically demonstrated instability.¹⁰

3. ANARCHIST SCENARIOS

The different possibilities for libertarian anarchy examined below share the common feature of offering protection services through private markets. In these scenarios, individuals find it in their self-interest to purchase protection services. Although protection has a public good component (the security of my property may enhance the security of property in general), the purchase of protection services also yields significant private benefits. Victims of criminal aggression incur psychic

10. Of the critics of anarchy, only Kelley (1974, pp. 247-48) raises the issue of collusion.

Some writers, such as Kavka (1986, p. 172), raise the distinct issue of natural monopoly. While natural monopoly will give rise to a dominant agency or network, collusion will produce a dominant network without requiring the cost structure traditionally associated with natural monopoly. Friedman (1989, pp. 169-70) argues that the protection industry is not characterized by natural monopoly. I discuss this issue in further detail later.

and pecuniary losses, and individuals are presumably willing to purchase protection to decrease or avoid these costs.¹¹

The private-good component of protection services is demonstrated by expenditures in today's world. Private security, police, and protection services are commonplace. There are now twice as many private-sector police as public-sector police in the United States, despite the fact that public police are supplied free of charge to users (Benson, 1990, pp. 3-4). Not all protection services need be purchased by individuals on a subscription basis. Owners of condominiums, housing developments, and proprietary communities hire private security forces to protect their property and preserve property values. Shopping malls, museums, businesses, and universities all provide their own protection services.¹²

In anarchy, protection services can also be supplied by insurance agencies. Persons purchase home, property, and automobile insurance to protect their belongings against damage. Insurance companies might then find it profitable to form a consortium of security forces to protect the property they have insured (Tandy, 1896, p. 66). Similarly, private road owners are another possible source of protection services. Just as shopping mall owners provide protection and security for the "streets" and parking lots they offer, so could the owners of outdoor roads and streets.¹³

Funding the protection of property is not the most difficult problem in anarchy. The most difficult problems arise when disputes must be adjudicated between two or more institutions that claim to be protecting property. Adjudication and resolution of disputes involve at least two parties, and create a potential externalities problem. How individuals would resolve disputes over property rights is the issue to which I now turn.¹⁴

11. General arguments that markets can produce public goods, or that many supposed public goods are actually private goods, can be found in Cowen (1988), de Jasay (1989) and Schmidt (1991) examine the market provision of law enforcement services.

12. McCallum (1970) emphasizes proprietary communities as a means of public goods provision through private markets.

13. I assume a closed economy by considering only protection services in general, and not protection against foreign aggressors. Protection against foreign aggressors presents a problem different in scope, but not different in kind from protection against domestic aggressors. Relatively small territories, whether governmental or anarchistic, may not be able to protect themselves against their more powerful neighbors. Anarchy may increase the significance of this problem at the margin, but government does not ensure its elimination. In any case, consideration of foreign conquest would only strengthen my argument that government is to be expected.

14. On adjudication, see Landes and Posner (1979). The purchase of private adjudication services through markets is widespread in the United States and other countries. On the punishment incentives of private law enforcement agencies, see Becker and Stigler (1974) and Friedman (1984).

3.1. Competing Legal Systems

Under the anarchist scenario envisioned by David Friedman, consumers of protection services subscribe to the law code that best suits their preferences. Competing agencies offer different punishments, definitions of crime, and legal procedures. Friedman's scenario does not present particular problems when both plaintiff and defendant belong to the same agency. The agency enforces laws to which both parties have agreed. Difficulties arise when disputing parties subscribe to different agencies with conflicting law codes. What happens if the plaintiff's agency promises capital punishment for murder but the defendant's agency promises protection against capital punishment?

Agencies may go to war each time a dispute arises. This is the least favorable case for anarchy, as private protection agencies generate a war of all against all. Competing law codes do not prove feasible, as libertarian anarchy collapses into Hobbesian anarchy.¹⁵

Warfare, however, is not a certain outcome of competing law codes. Private protection agencies may find interagency warfare unprofitable and dangerous, and subscribe to a common arbitration mechanism for settling disputes. Economic forces may also encourage the consolidation of competing agencies, either through conquest or simply because citizens of a territorial area join the strongest agency in that area. Each geographical area would possess a dominant protection agency. (Agencies, however, might skirmish at their borders, much like many governments.)

I am not suggesting that such mechanisms of consolidation and adjudication would triumph necessarily over Hobbesian anarchy. Instead, the argument is that Friedman's scenario is not an independent alternative. Competing law codes are stable only if they evolve into a dominant agency or arbitration network, possibilities to which I now turn.

3.2. Interagency Cooperation and Arbitration

Agencies might eschew warfare in favor of arbitration and interagency cooperation. Agencies would agree in advance how interagency conflicts

15. We cannot rely upon the Coase theorem to prevent violent outcomes. First, individuals have an incentive to engage in threats and strategic behavior in small-numbers problems. Second, the Coase theorem takes the distribution of property rights as given and examines a small change in rights at the margin, such as the assignment of rights to a water stream, piece of land, or natural resource. The Coase theorem does not apply when the entire distribution of property is potentially up for grabs. We cannot argue that those who value rights the most will bid the highest for them; the distribution of property and thus bidding power itself is precisely what is being determined. Enforceable contracts are no longer present. Kuwait, for instance, could not bribe Iraq not to invade; Iraq could simply pocket the bribe and invade anyway. Cowen (1990) discusses these problems in further detail.

will be settled. Common standards would be applied for criminality, punishment, and criminal procedures when disputes occur. Even when no specific resolution to a case has been agreed upon in advance, agencies could take disputes to an impartial, third-party arbitrator. Agencies could also apply the law of the party on whose territory the crime was committed. Today's governments use a similar procedure when citizens of one country aggress against citizens of another.¹⁶

A systematic arbitration network would arise to encourage the orderly application of law. Although intra-agency conflicts might be settled differently from interagency conflicts, society would possess effectively a single legal code. For any action committed by one person against another, agencies agree upon the principles to be applied. At the very least, agencies abide by higher-order arbitration. The arbitration literature stresses the importance of preexisting contractual relationships between disputing parties; such relationships would be instituted through subscription to agency policies.¹⁷

The arbitration network internalizes adjudication externalities by providing for systematic contractual relationships among disputing parties. Like governments, however, anarchist private protection agencies need not enforce a libertarian legal code. If a sufficient number of persons demand illiberal policies and are willing to pay for them, the legal code implemented by the network may be quite interventionist.

The arbitration network would punish defectors, or "outlaw" agencies. Member agencies who did not respect the decisions of the arbitration network would be ostracized, and their rulings, requests for extradition, and so on, would not be heeded. In extreme cases, the network could use force to rein in outlaws. Outlaws could also be excluded from interagency cooperative ventures, such as the use of data bases to track down criminals or the negotiation of treaties with foreign countries. The ability of agency consumers to discontinue their subscriptions serves as a further check on outlaws. Organizing a revolt against an arbitration network is not necessarily easier than organizing a revolt against a government.

Outlaws would meet with success only if they could command a high degree of support from their fellow agencies. Perhaps half of the

16. Agencies may agree not to punish too harshly convicted criminals who belong to other agencies. Furthermore, agencies might also agree to restrictions upon conflict resolution procedures among their own clients. Selling a law code that offers very harsh punishments for minor crimes, for instance, might offend members of other agencies with more lenient values. Or imposing lenient punishments for serious crimes, even within a single agency's members, may decrease the strength of other agencies' attempts at deterrence (criminals do not always know to which agency their potential victims belong). For these reasons, agencies may collectively abide by common standards, even for intra-agency disputes.

17. On the prerequisites of arbitration, see Landes and Posner (1979, p. 246). The problem of individuals who do not join any agency is dealt with further below.

agencies would band together and attempt to conquer the other half. Such outcomes, however, are also possible under government. A large enough group of individuals and institutions, acting in concert, can impose their will upon any political system.

Revolutions do not continually occur, because they are prevented by such factors as free-rider problems, coordination difficulties, and fear of failure and retaliation. These forces would continue to operate under anarchy, just as they do in today's world of governments. The arbitration equilibrium is not necessarily less stable than a government or less stable than international relations between different governments. If the existing order is well-functioning and perceived as legitimate, I assumed (above) that individuals take the basic loyalty of others to the system as parametrically given.

Agency attempts to lead a revolution would be further discouraged by interagency collusion (discussed later). The presence of monopoly profits gives agencies a stake in the existing order and discourages radical actions that might endanger these profits. In contrast, a perfectly competitive protection industry with zero economic profit would imply that agencies have little to lose by risking their position in the industry.¹⁸

The motivating forces behind cooperative relations among agencies are well summarized by Tandy (1896, p. 69):

Many people seem to fear that with the existence of several different protective associations in the same city, there will be incessant conflict between them. But as each will be endeavoring to get the largest possible number of patrons, each will endeavor to follow the policy that is most universally approved. The ordinary business man does not lie awake in the small hours of the morning pining for civil war. So the probabilities are that protective associations will not attempt to place such an expensive commodity upon the market when there is no demand for it.

3.3. Dominant Protection Agency

Nozick (1974) develops a model for an "ultramiminal" state, which supplies only protection services and law enforcement. Property rights are enforced by a dominant protection agency, which Nozick considers a state because it does not admit competitors. Competing agencies are forbidden to operate by the dominant agency because their procedures are considered too risky. Nozick's ultramiminal state does not resort to taxation. Individuals have the option of not paying "fees" and taking their chances with criminals. These individuals, however, are subject to

18. The effect of monopoly profits on firm behavior is considered in Klein and Leffler (1981).

the dominant legal code if they commit a crime against agency members.¹⁹

Nozick's ultraminimal state differs from the network by degree only. Unlike Nozick's ultraminimal state, the network consists of more than one firm. These firms have separate shareholders and seek to maximize their own profit, rather than the profit of the entire network (nonprofits and mutuals are considered later). The importance of separate shareholders, however, is limited by the presence of network relations. The presence of a network gives rise to contractual relations that induce firms to behave cooperatively, as if they were one large firm. Whether the common arbitration network is "one big firm," or "many cooperating smaller firms" is primarily a matter of semantics. The network can just as well be considered a single firm with separate divisions that compete to some degree. Each division has its own set of residual claimants, but the behavior of divisions is constrained to favor the interests of the entire network.²⁰

Nor can we use restrictions on competitors to differentiate Nozick's minimal state and the network. Nozick's ultraminimal state does not allow competitors to exist, but law enforcement entrants who subordinate their will to the state are allowed. Nozick's ultraminimal state does not rule out taking in new citizens through immigration or birth, government subcontracting to private agencies for certain tasks, or the absorption of new territories through annexation, discovery or liberation, for instance.

The common arbitration network deals with potential competitors in similar fashion. Entrants who are willing to subordinate their will to the network are allowed to enter the market and "compete" with other network members for customers, just as states in a federal republic may compete for citizens. Challenges to the network itself, however, are not allowed. Entrant agencies who do not recognize the network as the ultimate decision-making authority are treated as outlaws and driven out of business.

4. COLLUSIVE ARBITRATION NETWORKS WITH MONOPOLY POWER

The presence of a common arbitration network is responsible for the orderly relations among private protection agencies. Rather than using

19. Much of Nozick's argument is geared toward establishing that this monopolization of the market does not violate individual rights. I am discussing Nozick's "ultraminimal" state. Nozick's slightly larger "minimal" state provides protection services to non-contributors for free. These services are compensation for forbidding noncontributors from taking the law into their own hands.

20. Competing divisions are common in entities that are traditionally considered "single firms." The corporate structure of General Motors is one well-known example. Most economists agree that the difference between "firm" and "market" is one of degree rather than of kind. See Richardson (1972), Fama (1980), and Cheung (1983).

force to settle disputes, agencies settle claims through mutual agreement and cooperation. This same arbitration network, however, allows agencies to exert private monopoly power collectively or perhaps even to become a government.

The existence of a common arbitration network creates a vehicle for protection agency collusion. Members of the network find it profitable to write a contract agreeing not to compete with each other. The agencies restrict output and raise prices, thus reaping monopoly profits. Network membership requires contractual acceptance of jointly determined prices and outputs, as well as legal procedures. The collusive contract can also include other monopolizing devices, such as exclusive territories. Finally, network shareholders can agree to impose taxation upon the populace.

The ability to collude successfully is inherent in the nature of the network. The network can internalize the externalities problem behind peaceful adjudication only by suspending quality competition — that is, by offering a uniform set of laws or higher-order adjudication procedures. The ability to engage successfully in quality collusion, however, implies that other kinds of collusion are possible also.²¹

Collusion is enforced when network members agree not to cooperate with potential entrants. We saw above that anarchy is orderly only under the condition that the network can act collectively to prevent outlaw firms from gaining sizeable market share. If the network can implement successful sanctions against outlaws, however, the network can also implement successful sanctions against potential competitors. The network decides which agencies are outlaws, and profit maximization dictates labeling potential competitors as outlaws, even if these competitors do not threaten societal order. If punishing potential competitors is too costly, punishing outlaws is also too costly, and anarchy will collapse into the scenario where different agencies have conflicting law codes. Competing legal systems are either unstable or collapse into a monopoly agency or network.

Neither free entry nor defection from the cartel provides the usual protection against collusion that we find in most other markets. First, network members will retaliate against defectors, through sanctions, the use of force, or simply ignoring judgments rendered by defectors. This retaliation need not be costly for the network; the network can simply render systematically biased judgments against nonmembers. Such biased judgments will favor network interests. Second, membership in the common arbitration network is one of the most important services an agency can offer its members. Network membership implies that interagency disputes are settled without risk of force or radical uncer-

21. In the context of other markets, economists have argued that the presence of common relations between firms allows for incentive-compatible collusion even without an explicit collusive contract. See Bernheim and Whinston (1985).

tainty about the final outcome. Agency members will be loathe to defect and sacrifice both these privileges and their monopoly profits.

Although private cartels usually collapse of their own accord, most historical examples of cartel instability do not involve the benefits of joining a common network. The food that I buy from one supermarket is just as valuable to me regardless of whether this supermarket has friendly relations with its competitors; this independence does not hold with private protection agencies.

In response to the collusion argument, Friedman (1989, pp. 169-70) argues that the profitability of collusion requires small numbers of protection agencies:

In addition to the temperament [and incentives] of potential conspirators, there is another relevant factor: the number of protection agencies. If there are only two or three agencies in the entire area now covered by the United States, a conspiracy among them may be practical. If there are 10,000, then when any group of them start acting like a government, their customers will hire someone else to protect them against their protectors.

How many agencies there are depends on what size agency does the most efficient job protecting its clients. My own guess is that there will be nearer 10,000 agencies than 3. If the performance of present-day police forces is any indication, a protection agency protecting as many as one million people is far above optimum size.

Several replies can be made to Friedman's argument. First, it illustrates the danger of making inferences about industry structure under anarchy from observed industry structures today. The number of private protection and detective agencies today is very large, but this does not imply that the number of independent firms would be very large in anarchy. Current private agencies and arbiters are not required to serve as *ultimate* arbitrators and enforcers in disputes. Government is available to settle disputes that might arise between different firms. In anarchy, the incentives that generate a monopoly firm or network arise from absence of this external final arbiter.

Second, Friedman's argument does not consider that even large numbers of protection agencies can collude through the network. The network itself overcomes the coordination problem of implementing and enforcing collusion. There are no legal obstacles to enforcing the collusive contract, and the network has a strong profit incentive to prevent shirking on the collusive agreement. Some forms of shirking on collusion, such as price shading, may survive, but the network will take great pains to ensure that the cartel does not break down altogether. A large number of potential competitors increases the benefits of successful

collusion. We can even imagine the network implementing a perverse form of "antitrust" law, which would enforce collusion rather than prevent it.

Private-sector experience demonstrates the feasibility of enforcing cooperative relationships across many firms that might otherwise be tempted to compete. Different franchises of McDonald's, for instance, enter into common relations through the parent company and agree not to compete with each other. The franchises abide by common quality standards and marketing practices and receive territorial rights to a market area. Franchises that deviate from their contract with the parent company are reprimanded and ultimately cut off, if disobedience persists. While different McDonald's franchises undoubtedly do compete across some margins in violation of their instructions, parent company attempts to discipline franchises are frequently successful in this regard.

It may still be possible that detecting and punishing competitive behavior is too costly for the network. If the network cannot monitor and control the behavior of member agencies, however, anarchy will not remain orderly. Agencies will favor the interests of their own customers, enforce their own preferred law codes, and treat the customers of other agencies poorly. We are effectively back to the case of competing outlaw agencies, even though these agencies belong nominally to the network. Orderly anarchy again implies collusive anarchy.

If collusion is successful, the protection network now holds the power to initiate coercion against customers. Like a government, the network's revenue is raised through taxation and becomes independent of consumer demand through markets. Taxpayers can exit only through death or emigration. Furthermore, consumers lose the influence over product mix that they have under normal market arrangements. The network is well on its way to becoming a full-fledged state.

The state that evolved through anarchy would still be privately held through shareholders, unlike today's governments. In this respect, a residual difference would remain between modern states and the states that might evolve through anarchy. The decision-making apparatus in a shareholder-held state, for instance, differs from that of a constitutional democracy.²² If the network does become a state, however, public trading of the network's shares may eventually cease. Trading the right to enforce and define contracts involves problems if network shares are traded

22. This difference should not be overdrawn. Some monarchies, for instance, can be interpreted as privately held states. Furthermore, a new state arising from anarchy, need not remain shareholder-owned. It is possible that managers could turn against shareholders and seize control of the network. Or some shareholders could stage a coup d'état and control the network exclusively. Under another scenario, the new state could offer democratic constraints upon its leaders. Fear of immigration, lower tax revenues, and popular revolt might encourage the new government to be democratic.

in large, controlling blocks. After a person or consortium has purchased a controlling interest in the network, for instance, how do sellers require them to settle, or prevent them from seizing the funds received from sale of the network?

4.1. Extending Monopoly Power

Once the network obtains monopoly power over society's apparatus of adjudication and punishment, it can use this power to achieve monopolistic positions elsewhere in the economy. The network, for instance, could threaten to withhold protection from private entrepreneurs unless they sell out to the network. Even more baldly, the network might simply seize the desired resources and proclaim itself the rightful owner. The network can thus take control of communications and transportation systems or other industries in order to support its bid to maintain power. More generally, the network could implement policies at variance with free-market and libertarian principles.²³

Nonetheless, a profit-maximizing network would not seize all of society's productive economic resources. A network that owned the entire economy would find itself in a position similar to that of a central planner. In the complete absence of competition, efficient resource allocation would be difficult, national product would fall, and the network's profits would decline. A rational network will preserve a significant amount of competition in the private sector of industries other than the adjudication industry.²⁴

4.2. Anarchy and International Anarchy

The possibility of interagency collusion points to a disanalogy between competing defense agencies and the international "anarchy" that exists between different governments in today's world. Collusion among private protection agencies is more likely than collusion between governments for several reasons. First, protection agencies are owned by shareholders who wish to maximize profits; these shareholders favor successful collusion. The incentives and motives of governments are less clear. It is not obvious, for instance, that intergovernmental collusion significantly increases incumbents' chances of reelection.

23. The dominant agency or collusive network can attempt to extend its monopoly power through several means. A dominant protection agency or agency network would find it profitable to offer tied sales of public goods, for instance. A protection agency with monopoly power can spread its monopoly successfully across goods that are produced at declining average cost (e.g., excludable public goods). For a demonstration of this proposition, see Mummy (1987). Whinston (1990) reaches similar conclusions.

24. On the consequences of centralized private ownership of all the means of production, see Cowen and Glazer (1991).

Second, immigration and trade restrictions limit competition between nation-states for citizens and economic resources. Because competition is limited to begin with, the motivation to collude is weaker. Private protection agencies, in contrast, cannot prevent their clients from switching allegiance to other firms in the absence of collusion; the cost of changing one's subscription may be quite low. Since agencies do not have a natural lock on their market, the value of collusion is high.²⁵

Third, international criminal and legal relations are a very small part of the activities of, say, the American and Canadian governments. The benefits of forming a world government to more profitably or efficiently deal with Americans who murder Canadians are relatively small. In the case of private protection agencies, interagency relations on issues of criminal law likely form a large part of their business. The benefits of forming a single, overarching, collusive arbitration network are correspondingly larger.

5. HOW MIGHT ANARCHY AVOID GOVERNMENT?

In the above scenarios, the network becomes a government because network shareholders are able to exploit successfully conflicts between network profit maximization and the interests of the network consumers. If consumers are sufficiently far-sighted, they may prefer dealing with agencies that precommit to never becoming collusive or coercive. Consumers may attempt to control the network by owning the member firms; under this scenario, the protection agencies would become mutuals or cooperatives. Protection agencies could then be bound by democratic procedures, according to customer vote. Collusion could not occur unless approved by agency customers (shareholders).²⁶

25. As resource mobility increases, we should expect to see increased regulatory collusion through international agencies. This is precisely the case in the European Community. Similarly, the U.S.-Canada free-trade agreement can be expected to increase collusion between these two governments. We should also expect states in a federal system to favor a larger role for the federal government as resource mobility increases.

26. In mutuals, the corporation's customers are also its owners. A mutual life insurance company, for instance, is owned by its policyholders, who serve as residual claimants. If the company makes money, the profits are refunded in the form of lower premiums; conversely, losses imply higher premiums. (Not all of the mutual's profits are rebated to customers, however, as managers retain perks for themselves.) Insolvent mutual shareholders succeed in controlling their company, their dual roles as owners and customers diminish conflicts of interest. Policies that deliberately defraud customers, for instance, would not be approved by mutual shareholders. Shareholders of traditional corporations, in contrast, will maximize profits at the expense of consumer interests, when possible. Cooperatives and nonprofit organizations are other possible organizational forms for protection agencies. Although these forms differ from mutuals with respect to many details, they also eschew direct profit-maximization and allow managers to maximize the flow of perks, although subject to different institutional constraints. See Rose-Ackerman (1986) on these alternative forms of organization.

more efficient, however, each consumer will contract with them and enjoy lower prices. No single consumer decision gives shareholder-held agencies enough power to become a state, but consumer decisions, taken collectively, still generate this outcome. By choosing a shareholder-held protection agency, each consumer imposes negative externalities upon others.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The arguments provided in this paper not only are applicable to the economics of anarchy, but also suggest a more general lesson about public goods theory. The protection of property rights contains both public and private good elements. The private-good elements allows markets to produce protection services, but the public-good element implies that a monopoly firm or network will arise because of externalities in the adjudication process. The provision of protection with mixed public and private features implies that some set of institutions or economic agents will enjoy monopoly power and reap economic rents.²⁸

The same contractual and cooperative relationships that overcome externalities problems in provision of the public element of protection also allow for successful interfirm collusion. Indeed, collusion itself can be thought of as a public good, if not for all of society, at least for the colluding firms. If we take an optimistic view of public-goods production, as libertarian anarchists do, we must also treat interagency collusion as a serious possibility. While complete free entry can break down collusion under certain assumptions, free entry into protection is incompatible with the presence of a public-goods-producing network that can discipline outlaw agencies successfully.

Rather than giving rents to governments, we could choose to give these rents to private firms. We could replace government with anarchy, which would likely lead to the network. Societal order may not collapse, but we would not avoid disadvantages similar to those that anarchists associate with government.

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28. This theme is analyzed further in Cowen, Glazer, and MacMillan (1991).

Even if we assume sufficient far-sightedness on the part of consumers, whether such agency precommitment is possible is open to question. Once agency customers give the network ultimate decision-making authority to resolve disputes, the network can rewrite any contract it has made with its customers.

Voting customers may not be able to control the managers of mutuals and cooperatives. Mutual managers may attempt to break the democratic charter imposed upon them by incorporation procedures and set up a dominant firm or network. Even if managers do not break the corporate charter completely, they may still succeed in colluding. Although mutuals do not engage in explicit profit maximization, collusion would likely increase managerial security and perks.

Managers are likely to have considerable power, because they are a relatively small group with well-defined interests, whereas voting customers are scattered, exist in large numbers, and are subject to traditional free-rider and ignorance problems. True, it may be possible to constrain mutual managers. But the problem of constraining mutual managers is similar to the problem of constraining politicians under a democracy. If large numbers of voters can constrain small numbers of agents with concentrated power, a democratic government ought to do no worse than an anarchy with mutual protection agencies. Anarchy then seems possible, but also unnecessary or superfluous.

Other problems exist with customer attempts to control protection agencies by supporting mutuals. Mutuals are not uniformly more efficient than shareholder-owned firms and thus may not survive in a competitive market. The ability of managers to extract and retain perks is greater under mutual forms of corporate governance; mutuals have fewer devices to control managerial waste than shareholder-held corporations do. Mutual "shareholders" can express their displeasure with managerial behavior only by ceasing their customer relations with the firm. Corporate takeovers are impossible, since there are no publicly traded shares. Furthermore, concentrated blocks of shareholdings are not available to encourage a small number of shareholders to monitor managers.²⁷

The possible desire of consumers to prevent the reemergence of a state does not suffice to give mutuals a competitive advantage. A free-rider problem is present with consumer attempts to prevent shareholder-owned protection agencies from gaining ascendancy through the network. Consumers as a whole might prefer that few or no protection agencies are owned by shareholders. If shareholder-held agencies are

27. Proxy fights without purchase of shares are possible, although management usually has enough influence to prevent hostile proxy fights from succeeding. On the economics of different forms of corporate organization, see Fama and Jensen (1983a, 1983b) and Rasmusen (1988).

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