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Therapeutic Discourse and the American Public Philosophy: On American Liberalism's Troubled Relationship with Psychology

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Therapeutic Discourse and the American Public Philosophy:
On American Liberalism's Troubled Relationship with Psychology

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Honors Thesis
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Preface

Long forgotten, languishing inside a filthy basement filing cabinet, could lie dormant the spark that ignites our next great American scandal. *Coursework from Columbia proving that Barack Obama is a doctrinaire Marxist-Leninist: Matt Drudge is on the story.* Perhaps fate has similar plans for this document. It may well become a historical curiosity, the Rosetta stone by which people understand my future celebrity self. Maybe *this* is what denies me tenure!

But except for such exceedingly unlikely eventualities, I probably know who you are. Odds are you are a member of the Colby College Government Department. And odds, only slightly longer, are you are one of two members of this aforementioned department: my readers. (I know that friends and family say they will read this, but you and I both know better).

A hundred and fifty pages. Hundreds of man hours of intellectual labor. *For four eyes.* What a ratio! But it was still worth the effort. I put my best into every page of the project—this syrupy preface being a sole exception, but nobody's perfect—, and am proud to present it before two of my best professors at Colby. Your boundless energy, heartening encouragement and goading criticism pushed me to be the student of politics I am today. I now know that an academic career can be much more than career advancement in a rent-seeking bureaucracy. As a classroom teacher I hope to help students immerse themselves in the rich tradition of Western thought and come away with clear, unexpected and valuable insights about America; you have persuaded me that this is possible. So it is to you whom I dedicate this project.

I wish to acknowledge Jacob Roundtree, whose informed expositions of neoclassical economics made ten hour sessions in the library more than tolerable. I wish also to acknowledge my parents, whose support deserves more than two holidays out of the year.

I chose the topic because of my fascination with the variant of liberalism associated with the end of ideology school. I call this variant "sociological liberalism," and attraction rather than disgust motivates my engagement with it. Its principled skepticism, distrust of populism, emphasis on scientific management and "back to basics" approach—maximizing stability and prosperity, not "social justice"—overlapped completely with my political philosophy upon entering college. Having consumed unhealthy amounts of Voltaire and H.L. Mencken I sympathized completely with sociological liberalism's urbane criticism of the "people." But my professors have taught me to be critical; in political life, lurking beneath every bed of roses lies a bed of thorns. It is in this critical spirit that I examine the dark side one of the greatest intellectual currents in modern America, a current resurging phoenix-like with Obama's election.

My paper has many vices. It is often maddeningly eclectic, engages in inordinate time hopping and at times indulges in sarcasm. Please forgive them. And if you happen to be Daniel Bell or Robert E. Lane: please forgive *me*! If at times I come across as abusive, rest assured that this is unintentional.

1. Introduction

> *"The question we ask today is not how big or small our government is, but whether it works."*
>
> -Barack Obama, 20 January 2009[1]

> *"I would like to say a word about the difference between myth and reality. Most of us are conditioned for many years to have a political viewpoint, Republican or Democrat—liberal, conservative, moderate. The fact of the matter is that most of the problems, or at least many of them that we now face, are technical problems, are administrative problems. They are very sophisticated judgments which do not lend themselves to the great sort of "passionate movements" which have stirred this country so often in the past. Now they deal with questions which are beyond the comprehension of most men."*
>
> -John F. Kennedy, 21 May 1962[2]

1.1. Back to the Future?

Put away your placards, disperse the demonstrations, banish those bumper stickers and—if nothing else—stop reading bilious political blogs. The end of political ideology in America is upon us! The pundits have spoken.

Barack Obama's seven point margin of victory in last fall's presidential elections encouraged a pious hope in the emergence of a liberal public philosophy, capable of healing America's deep cultural and political divisions. On Inauguration Day, the astute social commentator David Brooks suggested that our decades-long national nightmare—the Culture Wars in which a "pulverizing style" infected both political parties—could be over. He gushed:

> Obama aims to realize the end-of-ideology politics that Daniel Bell and others glimpsed in the early 1960s. He sees himself as a pragmatist, an empiricist. Politics is not personal with him. He does not turn political disagreements into a

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[1] "Obama's inaugural speech," 20 Jan. 2009, *CNN*, 9 Oct. 2009 <http://www.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/01/20/obama.politics/index.html>.

[2] Stephen W. Rousseas and James Farganis, "American Politics and the End of Ideology," *The British Journal of Sociology* 14.4 (1963): 347-362, 358-9.

status contest between one kind of person and another. He is convinced that most

Americans practice their politics in the center. Part will be accomplished with his

aggressive outreach efforts. Already he has cooperated with Republicans. He has

rejected the counsel of the old liberal warriors who want retribution and

insularity.[3]

The passage looks to bygone decades following World War II, a consensual period when a

shared commitment to New Deal institutions and anti-communism blurred partisan divisions, for

a prototype of a reborn public philosophy. Conservative historian Sam Tanenhaus, in *The Death

of Conservatism* (2009), similarly hopes that his like-minded brethren will follow the precedent

of many postwar Republicans and make common cause with Obama's centrism. If it worked in

the past, reason Brooks and Tanenhaus, it may work in the future. And the New Deal public

philosophy—the idea of a "procedural republic" emphasizing individual autonomy, government

neutrality and the welfare state—*did* for a time work, as even critic Michael Sandel, a Harvard

political theorist, admits in *Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy*

(1996).

Perhaps the most passionate and convincing defenders of the New Deal public

philosophy in this period were political sociologists. It is no mistake that Brooks' article, "The

Politics of Cohesion," makes frequent reference to sociologist Daniel Bell. A student radical in

the "red" nineteen-thirties, Bell made peace with the postwar American establishment. His *The

End of Ideology* (1960), a collection of older essays that with lively prose touch topics as diverse

as music, labor unions, organized crime and Russians, argued that ideologies of all stripes—

liberal and conservative, socialist and free market capitalist—reached dead ends in the nineteen-

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[3] David Brooks, "The Politics of Cohesion," *The New York Times*, 20 Jan. 2009, 9 Oct. 2009 <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/20/opinion/20iht-edbrooks.1.19525345.html>.

fifties. Whereas such ideologies emerged in and describe nineteenth-century Europe, the American political economy, aided by a new generation of rational planners in public and private bureaucracies, proved innovative enough to solve all the basic problems of governance and meet the demands of business, labor and agriculture. Intellectuals and voters alike have therefore achieved a "rough consensus" on: "the acceptance of a Welfare State; the desirability of decentralized power; a system of mixed economy and of political pluralism."[4] *Any* conception of politics other than as the orderly competition between legitimate economic actors over legitimate economic interests is romantic at best and dangerous at worst. The experience of totalitarian mass movements loomed large. No wonder, then, that Bell liberally sprinkled his social criticism with on attacks on "romantics," "populists," "chiliasts," "moralists," "small town minds" and disaffected intellectuals of all stripes.

We suddenly find ourselves in a morass. *If politics merely settles the "allocation of goods," in Brooks' words, and not explosive divisions over those values near and dear to people, how are we to accommodate those who think differently?*[5] Bell relied on contemporary psychological literature—for instance, Theodor W. Adorno's *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950) and Erich Fromm's *Escape from Freedom* (1941), both of which ascribed sadistic and proto-totalitarian traits to the modern middle class—to diagnose those individuals who could not see the obvious beneficence of America's new politico-economic order. Those small businessmen pressing for small government really suffer from a self-loathing "status anxiety," because they subconsciously *know* that they are less deserving of society's favors than the new class of technocratic managers. Those concerned about the unwarranted influence of the military industrial complex are merely self-hating intellectuals, frustrated because they have not been of

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[4] Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1960), 373.

[5] Brooks, "Cohesion."

much use to government since the early Roosevelt Administration.[6] Fellow sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset shared Bell's assessments. Political scientist Herbert McClosky and "consensus" historian Richard Hofstadter were still less charitable, citing clinical evidence in attacking American conservatives and leftists alike as "true believers," "fanatics" and "paranoiacs."

Accounting for reasonable disagreement without rancor is as problematic now as it was when Dwight Eisenhower was president. A moment during the Democratic primaries threw into sharp relief that the politics of cohesion can come perilously close to what Brooks elsewhere calls "coastal condescension."[7] When asked on 6 April 2008 why he was losing to Hilary Clinton in predominately white rural areas, Obama replied that

> Jobs have been gone now for twenty-five years and nothing's replaced them. And it's not surprising, then, they get bitter, they cling to guns or religion or antipathy to people not like them or anti-immigrant sentiment or anti-trade sentiment as a way to explain their frustrations.

The greasy wheels of America's well oiled outrage machine turned immediately. Protestant evangelical and former George W. Bush speechwriter Michael Gerson accused Obama of a "crude academic Marxism" that reduces the heavenly ecstasies of religious fervor to materialist alienation. Hillary Clinton was blunter still in labeling Obama as "elitist and out of touch" with the "values and beliefs" of rural Pennsylvanians. The more historically literate, such as American intellectual historian Leo P. Bibuffo, made the fascinating connection to "Richard Hofstadter, Daniel Bell, Seymour Martin Lipset, Nathan Glazer and (following their lead) many less well-known scholars [who] attributed middle American anger to anomie, alienation, cultural lag,

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[6] Bell found the above explanation for the persistence of laissez-faire ideology more satisfying than John Kenneth Galbraith's ascription of it to "neurosis," *End of Ideology*, 81-82.

[7] Brooks, "Surprise Me Most," *The New York Times*, 8 Sept. 2008, 12 Oct. 2009 <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/09/opinion/09brooks.html>.

status anxiety, and/or a psychological 'paranoid style'" during the postwar period. Personal pathology, Bibuffo continued, was the "default explanation of anyone who shunned pragmatic wheeling-and-dealing in favor of allegedly pointless symbolic politics."[8] Conservative columnist George Will, too, compared Obama to Hofstadter.[9]

Populist outrage continues unabated, and we have predictably seen more glimmers of postwar psychologizing. Almost a year later, Brooks' talk of an imminent consensus has proven as premature as Bell's dirge for ideology. Recent months have instead seen nationwide demonstrations against Congress' and the President's attempts at healthcare reform. Mobs disrupt meetings, websites disseminate conspiracy theories, fistfights break out, bizarre allusions to Nazi Germany crowd the airwaves, a governor talks of secession and a congressman shouts down the President—while the latter lectures Congress on the evils of a "coarsened" public discourse! The well intentioned defenders of civility and public institutions in the popular media are blowing the dust off such postwar phrases as "the paranoid style."[10]

1.2. Therapeutic Discourse and its Discontents

Before discussing the specifics of the paper's purposes and structure, I should first spell out my inquiry in the broadest possible terms. The tendency to discuss politics in psychological categories is something I call "therapeutic discourse." *I intend to analyze the connection between past liberal public philosophies and therapeutic discourse, suggest why this connection should be severed and propose how this severing can take place in the future.*

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[8] Leo P Ribuffo, "What Underlies Obama's Analysis of 'The People,'" *History News Network*, 14 Apr. 2008, George Mason University, 9 Oct. 2009. <http://hnn.us/articles/49348.html>.

[9] George Will, "Candidate on a High Horse," *The Washington Post*, 15 Apr. 2008, 9 Oct. 2009 <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/04/14/AR2008041402450.html>.

[10] See, for instance, Louis Cannon, "Obama and His Enemies: The Once and Constant Opposition," *Politics Daily*, 7 Oct. 2009, 13 Oct 2009 <http://www.politicsdaily.com/2009/10/07/obama-and-his-enemies-the-once-and-constant-opposition/>, and David von Drehle, "Mad Man: Is Glenn Beck Bad for America?" *Time*, 17 Sept. 2009, 13 Oct. 2009 <http://www.time.com/time/politics/article/0,8599,1924348,00.html>.

As the examples above suggest, therapeutic discourse is an explanatory style that makes the following five assumptions:

1) That an interaction between personality and the social habitat often or always "produces" opinions articulated in the public space.

2) That there is a bright line division between rational and irrational political interests, to be delineated by political sociology.

3) That there is therefore a "correct" spectrum of political behavior and outlooks, whereby citizens act reasonably and sensibly.

4) That personal and social pathology best explains behaviors and outlooks that deviate from this spectrum.

5) That a public philosophy consists in the shared dispositions and cultural outlooks that tend towards the "correct" spectrum.

Therapeutic discourse served as a line of defense, manned by "tough-minded" Cold War liberals, against perceived threats to the postwar consensus. Its importance as an object of study nevertheless transcends mere historical interest. It deserves the political theorist's attention for two reasons. First, despite the violent variance between therapeutic discourse and what I imagine most people would pre-theoretically consider deliberative norms (it certainly is not very nice), it is embedded in a normative account of politics that persuades many brilliant students of American government. I hope to challenge these students and, even if in the smallest possible way, stimulate self-correcting political reflection. Second, latter day public philosophers who preach the virtues of cohesion and reasonableness should recognize that their noble project may potentially exclude and insult millions—all in the name of "democratic pluralism." Public

institutions, were they to embody principles prone to this tendency, risk reaction on the part of the diagnosed. Poet Friedrich Schiller's "bent twig" metaphor comes to mind.[11]

It may be justly asked, *are the writings of public intellectuals—sociologists, political scientists, historians, philosophers and journalists—of such import? Does the analysis of political thought contribute anything to the analysis of political life?* The question of whether ideas, or even the more measurable quantity of intellectuals as a social type, exert a causal influence on political outcomes is vexed. (Though I should here note a clear intersection between ideas and politicians: in the early sixties, members of Congress—Barry Goldwater Republicans—publicly rebuked Hofstadter, whose joke about the sanity of the New Right they interpreted as a call to forcibly commit twenty-five million conservatives!).[12] I nonetheless think that postwar thinkers articulated a public philosophy that was more or less extant in concrete political institutions. David Ciepley's *Liberalism in the Shadow of Totalitarianism* (2006) traces the imprint of social science orthodoxy on all three branches of modern American government and reaches a similar conclusion. I also think that therapeutic discourse has undermined previous efforts of sustaining a liberal consensus and will undermine future efforts. Intellectual historian T.J. Jackson Lears speaks of the "hubris at the heart of midcentury liberalism—the tendency to transform pragmatism from a method into a metaphysic and an unassailable truth backed by experts."[13] Sandel notes that the elite-public divide had widened to dangerous degrees by the late sixties, engendering a "growing sense of disempowerment" among citizens that culminated in

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[11] In hindsight I realize that this is an obscure reference. For an explanation, see Isaiah Berlin, "The Bent Twig: Notes on Nationalism" *Foreign Affairs* 51.1 (1972): 11-30.

[12] David S. Brown, *Richard Hofstadter: An Intellectual Biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 152-3.

[13] T.J. Jackson Lears, "Books of the Times: The Waxing and Waning of America's Political Right," *The New York Times*, 29 Sept. 2009, 9 Oct. 2009 <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/29/books/29lears.html?_r=1&hpw=&pagewanted=print>.

the candidacy of George Wallace.[14] Will gloats that, as a result, "conservatism rose [in the nineteen-seventies] on a tide of votes cast by people irritated by the liberalism of condescension."[15] In the nineteen-eighties, as liberalism in the American political science Academy fought a losing battle against ascendant neoconservative and communitarian dogmas, moral philosopher Alistair MacIntyre spoke for many when he personified liberalism with the characters of the rich Aesthete, the Manager and the Therapist;[16] the association of liberalism and technocratic social engineering still looms large in many minds. Following the lead of William F. Buckley, Jr.'s *Up from Liberalism* (1959)—which sarcastically advertises itself as a sociological study of sociologists[17]—neoconservative intellectuals delighted in turning liberals' own *ad hominem* weapons against them, shouting that "the authoritarian personality" and other tics had infected a "new class" of liberal managers and jurists, their boots firmly planted on the necks of sane and God fearing Americans.

The New Deal "cult of consensus," as critical historian John Higham once called it, was dead, and the therapeutic discourse it unleashed played no small role in its demise.[18] What, then, does the therapeutic discourse say about liberal public philosophy in general?

No public philosophy is immune to criticism, and perhaps all can arouse hostility. To the cynic and the populist, the public philosopher might invariably seem an elitist public scold: *Why can't the people decide for themselves the character of their own institutions?* The reaction is sometimes justified. Upset at the failure of the democratic states to conduct what he saw as a sound foreign policy, journalist Walter Lippmann conceived of the public philosophy as a

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[14] Michael J Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), 294, 299.

[15] Will, "High Horse."

[16] Thomas A. Spragens, Jr., "Review: How Flawed is Liberalism?," *The Review of Politics* 56.1 (1994): 161-163, 162.

[17] William F. Buckley Jr., *Up from Liberalism* (New York: McDowell, Oblensky, 1959), 3.

[18] Steven Weiland, "The Academic Attitude: Richard Hofstadter and the Anti-Intellectuals," *The Antioch Review* 46.4 (1988): 462-472, 466.

monistic set of ancient, unchanging, bullying principles to which citizens *must* assent lest society succumb to anarchy, majority tyranny or foreign aggression. Warning of an imminent collapse of Western democracy in *Essays in the Public Philosophy* (1955), he lamented:

> There is no reason to believe that this condition of mind can be changed until it can be proved to the modern skeptic that there are certain principles which, when they have been demonstrated, only the willfully irrational can deny, that there are certain obligations binding on all men who are committed to a free society, and that only the willfully subversive can reject them.[19]

He elsewhere states that universal suffrage is the root of the problem, and in José Ortega y Gasset fashion criticizes the "masses" for their betrayal of liberalism.[20] Even the strongest philosophical foundationalist, and the biggest friend of a stable democratic order, might cringe at the reactionary pessimism of such sentiments as Lippmann's. It is unrealistic to expect Americans to unanimously assent to a particular moral philosophy, even as we uphold standards of conduct and hold citizens responsible for their actions. And it is less realistic still to assume that government cannot survive *at all* without a flourishing public philosophy. In spite of the temper tantrums of democratic dissensus, a large portion of the world would love to have America's problems.

But even if formulating and enacting a public philosophy can neither cure all of our ills nor satisfy everyone, the present crisis of confidence in American government suggests that it is still a worthwhile endeavor. And I believe that, by probing modern American political thought, we can find better ways of thinking about and defending liberalism than the triumphalist

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[19] Walter Lippmann, *Essays in the Public Philosophy* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1955), 114.
[20] "The enfranchised people did not establish the rule that all powers are under the law, that laws must be made, amended and administered by due process, that a legitimate government must have the consent of the governed"—rather, according to Lippmann, they revolted against such principles, *id.*, 40.

insistence that ideology is dead, and that centrist bargaining is the only game left in town. There is a better solution and it is right under our noses.

1.3. A Way Out? A Tale of Two Liberalisms

Bell, Lipset, Hofstadter, political scientist Robert E. Lane and McClosky—the intellectual biographies of whom I will present in the next chapter—were all articulators of a certain liberal public philosophy. This first articulation I call *sociological liberalism.* Sociological liberalism aims to use empirical data for the design of permanent institutions capable of containing and excluding extra-consensual *enragés*, a project stated with manifesto-like explicitness in Lipset's seminal tome of political sociology, *Political Man* (1960). These institutions are bare procedures that govern the contest between competing economic interests. In ways not unlike Friedrich Hayek's free market liberalism, sociological liberalism eschews any procedure-independent notions of "social justice" being the rationale for policy. Going even further than Hayek, it scorns the very notion of "political morality." Liberalism analytically means "[separating] law from morality," Bell wrote in an article scolding the "radical right" during Joseph McCarthy's reign of terror.[21] Avowedly descriptive and "value free," sociological liberalism is nonetheless embedded in powerful normative assumptions. These assumptions amount to a conscious effort to shape the political landscape so as to transform divisive values into negotiable preferences. The influence of Czech economist Joseph Schumpeter, whose "public choice" theory described ideal democratic politics as the optimal aggregation of market preferences, here looms large.

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[21] Bell, "Interpretations of American Politics," *The New American Right*, ed. Bell (New York: Criterion Books, 1955): 3-32, 27.

But without "morality," how could the radical pluralism sociological liberalism prescribes hang together? Would we not be left with a war of all against all? These public philosophers answer that consensus is actually one of their core principles. They suggest that citizens not take politics too seriously—a counter-example would be those French dreamers who spend too much time in the Parisian salons—, instead participating in only formally prescribed ways (voting, almost exclusively) and letting things in Washington go of their own momentum. Institutions should be insulated from public opinion such that only responsible elites, whose political horizons are limited to sensibly compromising on behalf of their constituents, shape policy. The "true believers" will then either cry themselves into harmless apathy or pull themselves together and conform. When institutions reward the logrolling conception of politics to the exclusion of all others, they will absorb a healthy moral relativism into society, encouraging what Bertrand Russell called "the democratic personality."—agnostic, tentative and *nice*.[22] The faith in the impending relativist millennium explains why forests gave their lives to explain the puzzling persistence of "bad guys" during America's postwar age of affluence. Therapeutic discourse was born.

Another articulation of the liberal public philosophy in postwar America is philosophical. We will call this second articulation *philosophical liberalism*. Following the example of the very first liberal theorists, modern philosophical liberals do not rely exclusively on supposedly "positive" knowledge in developing their ideas, and their ideas themselves are not behavioral catechisms to which all reasonable and sensible people *must* adhere for the sake of the largely undefended good of stability. They see that philosophy must answer the stubborn problems of the spirit and not merely problems of management. This is for no other reason than because societies tragically face such problems. (Bell's insistence that American managers have already

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[22] Spragens, *The Irony of Liberal Reason* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 282.

solved the problem of ending poverty, and resolved the longstanding tension between liberty and equality, would have made even Dr. Pangloss blush). In formulating answers philosophical liberals therefore make use of reflection and argumentation *in addition to* evidence. Without understanding the potentials and limits of reason, the potentials and limits of human nature, and the potentials and limits of collective action, the liberal public philosophy severs itself from its deep historical roots and potentially enlists itself in *illiberal* thought and action. The number of sociological liberals who became embittered at American liberalism suggests that this literally happened. Because of its tenuous tethering to liberal norms, sociological liberalism schizophrenically alternates between authoritarian dreams of Comtean social control and a debilitating, self-loathing skepticism; it loses the support of humane and intelligent people, convinced that "liberalism" is irredeemably spoiled and eager to take up conservative and communitarian cudgels against it. Philosophical liberalism instead tries its best to keep its facts close, but its norms closer.

Harvard's John Rawls, whose most influential books *A Theory of Justice* (1971) and *Political Liberalism* (1993) will be the focus of my analysis, makes for the best case study in American philosophical liberalism for four reasons. The first is personal: whatever his writings' aesthetic merits, his clear and rigorous philosophy convinced my younger self of the superiority of a humane liberalism vis-à-vis the angry, seductive and illiberal bombast of Friedrich Nietzsche, Carl Schmitt, Ayn Rand, Christopher Lasch, and other latter-day Jeremiahs whose way with words does violence to truth and entrances the minds of our precocious youth. The second is because Rawlsian liberalism is, to borrow and modify a term from C.S. Lewis, "mere" liberalism. That is, it is sufficiently general so as to embrace several species of liberalism, including a classical republicanism emphasizing civic friendship and participation, so long as

they adhere to certain tenets central to liberal legitimacy. We are here relatively free from the intellectual idiosyncrasies and prejudices of *one* thinker. The third is because Rawls wrote in the midst of the post-sixties war on liberalism and earnestly reformulated his beliefs in response. His civil interlocutors included radical libertarians (most famously Harvard's Robert Nozick), communitarians (most famously Harvard's Sandel) and Burkean conservatives (most famously the British philosopher Michael Oakeshott). Thus, his philosophy addresses many of the concerns raised by opponents to therapeutic discourse that sociological liberalism missed. If we are mining the past for the strongest articulation of liberalism, we have several good *prima facie* reasons to prefer Rawls's.

The fourth, and most to the point of this paper, is that Rawls wrote in response not only to counterrevolutionaries but also to the sociological public philosophers within the house of liberalism. I will explain why I think it makes sense Rawls not as a *post hoc* ratifier of Democratic Party rule, as some mainstream secondary literature has it, but rather as someone who in many ways broke with his liberal academic forbears.[23] The break is profound not only in form (in the seventies, political theory emerged from years of irrelevancy vis-à-vis the positive sciences and experienced a renaissance, of which Rawls was only one master) but in content as well.

Sociological liberals, as noted above, were Cold warriors. The persistence of dissent despite the obvious superiority of the United States to the Soviet Union—the most relevant comparison—shocked them. *How could these romantic students scorn the democratic stability to which we have devoted our lives?* The rancor inspired by the Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War raised the specter of totalitarian mass movements and introduced new forms of

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[23] For the orthodox interpretation of Rawls, see, for instance, Michael P. Zuckert, "Constitutional Welfare Liberalism," *Liberalism: Old and New*, eds. Ellen Frankel Paul et al. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 273.

social pathology. Minorities and long-haired leftists joined the McCarthyists and Goldwaterites in the clinic. Daniel Patrick Moynihan's 1965 report for the Department of Labor, *The Negro Family: A Case for National Action*, accused urban blacks of an enmeshment in a "tangle of pathology" that included sexual deviancy, in a tone implying that no believer in the scientific method could disagree with him.[24] Lipset, driven away from the University of California, Berkeley after a relatively mild instance of "student unrest" in 1964, later testified before the Senate that civil disobedience tactics "have the effect of weakening the structure of democratic legitimacy" and so should be strictly discouraged.[25]

The government of the "best and the brightest"—the technocratic and realistic liberalism to which Brooks and other Baby Boomers look for America's twenty-first century salvation—gave us Vietnam, and the sociological liberals expressed only muted dissent.[26] One need not sympathize with Noam Chomsky's cries of the "intellectual treason" of "mandarins" to note the contrast between their treatment of middle Americans and their treatment of Lyndon Johnson. In one example, Hofstadter balked at applying the paranoid style to the Johnson Administration because he saw social pathology as an "out-power" and not an "in-power" phenomenon, an elitist move that certainly oversimplified psychology.[27] Rawls, a WWII veteran and witness to the destruction at Hiroshima, reacted more forcefully than they, and not only to the war. The Selective Service system, in granting deferments to academic achievers, gave Rawls a literal life

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[24] Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Dept. of Labor. Office of Policy Planning and Research, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1965).

[25] "Even the relatively well-mannered Berkeley protests of 1964 appeared to professors Nathan Glazer and [Lipset] as the work of coercive extremists." Howard Brick, *The Age of Contradiction: American Thought and Culture in the 1960s* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1998); Thomas J. Foley, "Hoffer Sees Campus Unrest Getting Worse," *Los Angeles Times*, 10 May 1969: 3.

[26] In my research, most of the Cold War liberals I encountered supported a withdrawal from Vietnam, but were so quiet that some critics misinterpreted them as supporters. Bell had to clarify this matter; see Bell, "Ends and Means," *The New York Times*, 11 May 1969: BR38. The biggest exception was the brilliant polemicist and pragmatist philosopher Sidney Hook, whose later life would not have pleased his one-time teacher.

[27] Brown, 160.

and death power over his students: any student he failed would be eligible for conscription. The government had decided that the lives of some of its citizens were more valuable than others.[28] Whatever their individual antiwar credentials, the sociological liberals' project of pressing the American Academy into the service of "democratic stability"—*let's make these students productive members of our free society and reward them accordingly*—had betrayed liberty, equality and fraternity.

How, Rawls asked, could an individual oppose unjust laws without committing to the selfish and divisive nihilism of much campus sentiment at the time? (Sentiment that in the form of a bomb almost destroyed the manuscript to A Theory of Justice before publication).[29] The dilemma has been with the Western philosophical tradition since Periclean Athens. The sociological liberals believed, as G.W.F. Hegel believed of the more inspiring ideal of Christianity, that the managerial state abolished political tragedy. Rawls's situation led him to differ. His answer to injustice was a public philosophy that, more than the insistence on stability, can orient the political action of the many in constructive dimensions and—even before the enactment of positive change—give more meaning to the life of the individual. Rawls's theological orientation as a young student clearly shaped his life's work.[30]

I hope have shown that it is possible and helpful to place the sociological and philosophical liberalisms in dialogue with each other. Before we can do so and assess the relative merits of each, I must first more clearly define the latter. This is no easy task: sociological liberalism, at once catechistic and plausible, easily lends itself to definition; the more expansive philosophical liberalism does not. Rawls himself did not arrive at his final views until his *Justice*

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[28] Thomas Pogge, *John Rawls: His Life and Theory of Justice*, trans. Michelle Kosch (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 20-21.
[29] *Id*., 27.
[30] *Id*.

as Fairness: A Restatement (2001), written after a series of strokes and published in the final year of his life. That is where I will start.

I have already mentioned that philosophical liberalism is the logical working out of norms relevant to society's practical problems. ("Practical" does not here mean soluble by competent management alone). Rawls is more specific, specifying four ways whereby a public philosophy can accomplish this. The first and most obvious is directly *practical*, as when it prescribes procedures for resolving political conflict. Liberalism got its start as just such a resolution during early modern Europe's wars of religion. As Rawls writes in Political Liberalism, liberalism would have made no sense to the ancient Greeks, whose city-states could command loyalties without the interference of "salvationist, creedal, and expansionist religions."[31] The second is *orientation*, enabling individuals to make intelligible otherwise unintelligible public affairs by reference to their identity, say, as "American citizens" and adherents of America's public philosophy. The third is *reconciliation*. An individual might rage against self-declaredly liberal institutions that condone monstrous injustices, such as the antebellum Constitution; but when that individual looks at the past to which he or she feels a personal connection, and finds that the Constitution nonetheless embodies the rational and emancipatory norms of the Declaration of Independence, it is no longer a "covenant with death and an agreement with hell." As Hegel long ago saw, a communion with the past can generate an attachment to the laws in ways unexplained by the cold abstractness of legal forms. Rawls is more forward-looking than the triumphalist Hegel, as his fourth purpose of the public philosophy, that it is *realistically utopian*, suggests. By this he means that it offers ways to improve institutions for greater societal and individual flourishing without transgressing the

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[31] John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), xxv.

limits of human knowledge and sociability.[32] In this formulation, political sociology loses its panacea status, but remains a vital tool in understanding how just institutions can be stable. It answers such questions as: will a society sustain institutions that demand high levels of personal sacrifice, such as utilitarian ones? Will inequalities of important goods engender envy? Will efforts to redress them engender grudgingness? Empirical evidence can inform the implementation and perhaps, in extreme cases, the reworking of liberal norms.

I confess that the above account is not evenhanded. No doubt I presented Rawls with greater depth and sympathy than his New Deal predecessors. My sympathy perhaps shortchanges the premium that most people place on stability, a concern to which sociological liberalism is well attuned. Not without reason can the reader convict this introduction of an indifference to the dangers of extremism: *is there not a spoiled brat quality to those who feel that divisive abstractions should occupy the public space—so, what, that politics should not be so boring to your urbane sensibilities?—when the fanaticism these abstractions wrought daily kill people in less fortunate parts of the world? Clearly you suffer from some sort of anxiety for which writing this paper is vocational therapy!* I do not doubt that the reader will nevertheless acquit the whole of the paper. I plan to argue the superiority of philosophical liberalism over sociological liberalism even using the normative, stability-centered criteria of the latter.

I will do so with the testimony of therapeutic discourse. The willingness of liberals to engage in it was so self-defeating as to be painful to a sympathetic observer. Insofar as it contributed to the stereotype of liberals as elite "managers" fearful of the "common man"— themselves burdened with the stereotype of Archie Bunker—it worsened the Culture Wars that destabilized our public institutions. We cannot save "liberal" from its low popular status as a

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[32] Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, ed. Erin Kelly (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 1-5.

term of abuse if our new public philosophy violates commonsense deliberative norms in outstanding fashion. We should instead look for a public philosophy that contains *liberal* correctives against an *illiberal* therapeutic discourse, yet still able to resist the enemies of the open society. Rawls's philosophy, as I will explain in detail, is an admirable attempt to do this.

1.4. Structure of this Paper

The paper's purpose is to define the parameters of a liberal public philosophy in light of the danger of therapeutic discourse. Chapter One ("The Life and Times of Sociological Liberalism") will narrate the origins of sociological liberalism and bring its advocates to life, hopefully demonstrating that they are a cohesive grouping. Chapter Two ("Sociological Liberalism: How It Adds Up") will examine sociological liberalism's normative assumptions and prescriptions for American politics. Chapter Three ("Therapeutic Discourse: Arrogance and Fall") will present a more detailed description of therapeutic discourse than found in this introduction, furnish its most influential examples and more fully establish its connection to a certain class of political norms. We will see why therapeutic discourse is dangerous and illiberal. Chapter Four ("Rawls: Moving Liberalism Onto Studier Ground") will place Rawls's philosophical liberalism in dialogue with the sociological liberalism of previous chapters. First, it will work out the lessons of therapeutic discourse, thereby arriving at correctives for any future public philosophy. Second, it will explain why it makes sense to read a philosopher in relation to sociologists and historians. Third, it explicate Rawls's project and method. Fourth, it will explain why his articulation is more closely tethered to liberalism's original roots than sociological liberalism, and why this constitutes a check against therapeutic discourse. This check allows philosophical liberalism to sustain a higher degree of rational criticism than its sociological foil,

and so better able to win the support of humane and intelligent people. My conclusion will discuss the relevance of my findings to the ongoing drama of American politics.

2. The Life and Times of Sociological Liberalism

> *"As in earlier apocalyptic and messianic moments, it was proclaimed intemperately that nothing but the sober truth was being told."*
>
> -Alasdair MacIntyre[1]

2.1. Introduction to Chapter

When adults impart the story of American politics to the young, what should they say? The possibilities are vast. They could tell of American history as the unfolding of the Declaration of Independence's high ideals of popular sovereignty and individual freedom: imperfectly realized at first, but slowly and surely achieved through the heroic efforts of ordinary men and women of all races and creeds. They could tell of the rewarding experience of democratic participation and the responsibility attendant to such a privilege. They could tell of an organic whole greater than the sum of its diverse individual members. Such tales they could transmit in a number of different idioms, ranging from stonily solemn to cloyingly sentimental.

The sociological liberals were publicly spirited men.[2] They spent their careers articulating what they believed to be prescriptions for America's stability and flourishing. But despite the possibilities inherent in political storytelling, they refused to infuse their story with philosophical imagination. Theirs was a politics of hard bargaining logrollers, managerial elites and stifled moral disagreement. Sociological liberalism not surprisingly failed to inspire. Its adherents became increasingly isolated as a result: abdicating their responsibility as public philosophers to converse and persuade, they saw themselves as a civilized minority that monopolized reasonableness and sensibleness. They responded in vicious *ad hominem* terms to disagreement,

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[1] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Against the Self-Images of the Age: Essays on Ideology and Philosophy* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 3.

[2] The term "liberal" is ambiguous both as a serious categorization and as an epithet. In this paper I take it to mean the notion that the state, whose institutions are limited and guarantee equal rights to individual members, is a rational framework for the resolution of disputes. Both the sociological and philosophical variants hold out the promise of a humane American politics but use very different conceptual means.

as when dissenters challenged their near-religious commitment to pragmatism. They betrayed their initial aspiration to humanize a politics whose inhumanity, as they rightly saw in opposing extremism, often reaches tragic dimensions.

But this is still in the future. Presently we need to analyze sociological liberalism from its very beginnings and in as sympathetic terms as possible. Because we are dealing with five thinkers whose writings span eight decades and many topics, this is not an easy task to discharge systematically. I have consequently broken my analysis in two chapters. The present chapter precedes in narrative form: first, I will first discuss the origins of sociological liberalism and contextualize its main concern; second, I will present detailed intellectual biographies of the individuals in question; third, I will explain why it makes sense to view these individuals as sharing a public philosophy. The next chapter will systematize their normative commitments, and Chapter Four will explain why they lead to a therapeutic discourse. I believe that combining historical and ahistorical expositions of their ideas will be the strongest, though perhaps not most economical, means of analysis. Having first provided a narrative, my later construction of sociological liberalism will be more credible to the reader than otherwise. I will cruelly deprive my reader of the fun spectacle of brutalizing a straw man.

2.2. The Origins of Sociological Liberalism

Ideas largely derive their power from the context in which they originate. That so many Germans considered Ludwig Feuerbach to possess profound theological insights is fathomless without first understanding the staleness of the then dominant brand of Hegelianism. That so many Britons wanted to bury Herbert Spencer in Westminster Abbey is baffling without first understanding the revolutionary novelty of Darwinism. Similarly, that so many Westerners and

Americans in particular jumped aboard the end of ideology bandwagon is unintelligible without first contextualizing intellectual life in the fifties. We should thus note three historical trends that frame the rise of sociological liberalism: first, positivism's eclipse of moral philosophy in American political science; second, the crisis of rationality in the West; and third, America's postwar age of affluence. Sociological liberalism emerged as an explanatory framework incorporating all three.

Positivism's eclipse of philosophical humanism. By 1915, political science had almost completely broken away from its traditional association with moral philosophy.[3] The university, once an insulated fortress of a theologically inclined genteel America, had by then integrated itself in the country's burgeoning industries; the largesse of such individuals as John D. Rockefeller revolutionized higher education. The newly specialized social sciences moved away from a normative understanding of politics and towards a scientifically descriptive one. They became *positivistic*.

"Positivism" generally refers to the intellectual tradition that models humanistic inquiry on the inquiry of the natural sciences to the greatest extent possible. While empirical skepticism of metaphysics has been with us since the sophists, positivism here refers to something more modern and specific: the notion, beginning especially with Auguste Comte's bureaucratic authoritarianism, that political science is at bottom the modeling and prediction of individual behavior in order to understand how societies best function. Positivism would only gain in influence after the Progressive Era's moral fervor fizzled. The "behavioral revolution" of the fifties and sixties signaled the hegemony of unalloyed positivism in American universities.[4]

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[3] R. Claire Snyder, "Should Political Science Have a Civic Mission? An Overview of the Historical Evidence" *PS: Political Science and Politics* 34:2 (2001): 301-305, 304.

[4] Robert Dahl said in 1961 that behavioralism was a revolt which had already proven successful, William C. Harvard, "Review: Beyond Behavioralism?" *The Massachusetts Review* 11.3 (1970): 608-613, 609.

"Behavioralism"—properly understood as a term of political science rather than psychology—combined a positivist orientation with the new survey methods of psychometrics, aiming to be being as quantitative as possible.[5] Political scientists Robert Dahl and David Truman insisted that behavioralism not only be a field of government but an orientation that subsumes *all* fields: comparative politics, international relations and political theory.[6] What other approach could compete with such a touted panacea? Though figures like Rawls and Leo Strauss waited in the wings, for a time non-naturalistic alternatives seemed dull, unscientific and conservative. After the end of ideology, what could the classics be but the domain of sobbing romantics?

The sociological liberals were thus a culmination of the positivist tendency in American thought. The next chapter will examine the implications of positivism for a liberal public philosophy.

The crisis of reason. It was the worst of times. Herbert Croly, Thorstein Veblen, John Dewey, Louis Brandeis and—in his less nihilistic moments—Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. had relatively optimistic opinions of public deliberation and the prospects for beneficial political change. Millions murdered by totalitarian regimes, most tragically in the service of high-minded ideals, led the next generation of public intellectuals—the sociological liberals—to be suspicious of the "mass man." *Perhaps the average person is* not *a rational political actor, and so should have only an attenuated relationship to the political process*. All ideologies and all variants of populism seemed discredited. The inadequacy and danger of rational thought systems led

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[5] Behavioralism should not be confused with behaviorism, a school of psychology in opposition to Freudian models and defined by such luminaries as John B. Watson, B.F. Skinner and George H. Mead. An example of the difference between the two is that the behavioralists frequently borrowed from both Freud and his Marxist interpreters. The literature I encountered defined behavioralism in rather vague terms—to be frank, the feature that especially struck me was its fascination with numbers—, whereas behaviorism had much clearer expositors.

[6] Seymour Martin Lipset, "Sociology and Political Science: A Bibliographical Note" *American Sociological Review* 29.5 (1964): 730-734, 730.

American thinkers to the subtle stoic-theological images of man found in Sigmund Freud, Paul Tillich and Karl Jaspers.[7]

A fascinating and important debate in Western political science before the wartime interruption was the issue of absolutism versus relativism. Does a humane politics require a robust moral realism that treats liberal Enlightenment norms as absolute, or does it require a healthy fallibilism and skepticism? Are totalitarian regimes morally relativistic in that they feel unconstrained by the most basic of human norms, or are they absolutistic in that they insist in "the one true way?" Whether we best understand liberalism as absolutistic or relativistic depends on our answers to these questions. But the crisis of reason—the crumbling faith in the existence of beneficent ideals—settled the debate in favor of the relativists, irrespective of their arguments. As Ciepley observes, "moral absolutists, it now appeared, were but totalitarians in waiting. Moral skeptics were the true democrats."[8] The task of liberals became, in historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.'s phrase, to hold the vital center. Psychology enlisted in the effort.

"One of the myths of the modern world," wrote MacIntyre, is "the belief that the explanation of what is puzzling on the public stage lies in the realm of private life."[9] It is therefore no accident that the scourge of the time, fanaticism, over night inspired an industry dedicated to diagnosing the fanatic's nervous tics. The book that best captures the spirit of the age is *The True Believer* (1951), by eccentric San Francisco autodidact Eric Hoffer. Arguing that "resentment dammed up in the souls of the frustrated" is the fount of mass movements—all interchangeable—, the book caught the attention of President Eisenhower, who handed out

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[7] Bell, *End of Ideology*, 373.
[8] Ciepley, 192.
[9] MacIntyre, *Self-Images*, 48.

copies to his subordinates.[10] Hoffer made a career out of baiting his adversaries with a pastiche of angrily *ad hominem* aphorisms, but in his defense he disavowed all pretensions to scholarly objectivity. The critical theorists of the Frankfurt Institute of Social Research, or Frankfurt School, made no such disavowal. Temporarily settled in the United States as part of the Weimar Diaspora, they introduced their unique synthesis of Karl Marx and Freud and promising sociological insights to the salons of New York. Among these insights were theories of the illiberal personality. To be sure, the Frankfurt School by no means spoke with one voice on the need for a behavioral catechism.[11] But Adorno's contribution to The Authoritarian Personality, a study declaredly about American anti-Semitism but really a scolding survey of sundry "social pathologies," especially proved influential in articulating liberal norms in psychiatric terms. Adorno's "true liberal" was on the scene to combat the true believer.

As we will see in this and the next chapter, the sociological liberals translated the crisis of reason into a public philosophy that exaggerated pluralism and undersold philosophy. Adorno et al. proved useful in addressing those who sought the resurrection of norms.

The age of affluence. But it was also the best of times. The golden goose of America's postwar economy made the persistence of pulverizing, moralistic approaches to politics all the more baffling. Popular economist John Kenneth Galbraith's *The Affluent Society* (1958) claimed

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[10] Eric Hoffer, *The True Believer: Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1989), 114; Herbert Elliston, "Ike's Reading: The True Believer," *The Washington Post and Times Herald*, 1 Jul. 1956: E4. And despite Hoffer's raging polemics against intellectuals, none other than intellectual icons Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. and Bertrand Russell praised him.

[11] Consider Max's Horkheimer's *Eclipse of Reason* (1947), originally published under a different name in 1941, which criticized the positivist tendency of American sociologists like Robert Lynd. Their "new social catechisms are even more futile than the revival of Christian movements." Positivism puts too much faith in that instrumental, "engineering" conception of knowledge, which causes the very public ails that sociologists seek to address. Such knowledge "cannot bring it about that … the humanistic outlook should prevail in the future;" there must instead be a revival of a constructive philosophy serving as mankind's memory and conscience, *Eclipse of Reason* (Alcester, Warwickshire, UK: Read Country Books, 2007), 184-187.

that only "insular" poverty remains in developed societies.[12] Whatever its merits—and my own amateur skepticism tells me of its shakiness—Galbraith's notion that an activist Federal Reserve Bank, Keynesian fiscal policies and an equilibrium between buyers and sellers could solve the problem of scarcity for good gained credence. Whether it be the end of ideology or the end of history, "endism" thrives in such times as these. There was now enough largesse, thought the sociological liberals, that all relevant political actors could get whatever they wanted out of government—*provided they rationally sought material interests and did not irrationally seek status*.

This was the soil out of which the sociological liberals grew to scholarly heights.

2.3. Who Were the Sociological Liberals?

2.3.1. Introduction to their Intellectual Biographies

In light of the events and conditions sketched above, the men sketched below emerged in response. They were at first outsiders. Most were poor inner-city Jews harassed by the racist admissions quotas of American universities. Severed from the political mainstream and suspicious of false gods, they had only reserved sympathy for even Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, advertised as the shimmering hope of American politics. As the young Hofstadter said, "There is absolutely *no one* you can trust."[13] They conceived themselves as tougher than past thinkers.[14] But they would nonetheless ascend to a status of America's leading intellectual lights

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[12] John K. Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1958), 246.

[13] Robert M Collins, "The Originality Trap: Richard Hofstadter on Populism" *The Journal of American History* 76.1 (1989): 150-167.

[14] So much so that one historian memorably used the label "the cult of the hard-boiled" in describing them, Christopher Lasch, *The New Radicalism in America (1889-1963): The Intellectual As a Social Type* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), 308.

and institutionalize their ideas in the American academy. Renouncing their radicalism after WWII, they promulgated what University of California, Berkeley Chancellor Clark Kerr called a "new Enlightenment:" social sciences based on positivism, committed to consensus and educational primacy and engaged but neutral in relation to public affairs.[15] Though holding different job descriptions—Bell and Lipset were political sociologists, Hofstadter was a historian, Lane and McClosky were political psychologists—they championed the modernist ethos denying essential divisions between their fields. The five gladly borrowed from each other and made common cause. They shared similar concerns, methods and conclusions, which is why I choose them as case studies.

With these words I introduce the lives of the sociological liberals: some colorful, some not so colorful, all important for understanding twentieth century liberalism.

2.3.2. Daniel Bell (1919—)

Bell grew up in the slums of New York. With a burning sense of justice he at thirteen joined the Young People's Socialist League. Breaking to his rabbi the news the day of his bar mitzvah, he heard the words, "Kid, you don't believe in God. Tell me, do you think God cares?"[16] Undiscouraged, he continued absorbing socialist thought and later attended City College of New York (CCNY), there joining a brilliant group of largely Jewish scholars that included Nathan Glazer, Irving Howe, Irving Kristol, Seymour Martin Lipset and later Daniel Patrick Moynihan. The stars of the documentary film *Arguing the World* (1999) and villains of *Leviathan on the Right* (2007), by the Cato Institute's Michael D. Tanner, these remarkable

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[15] Brick, *Age of Contradiction*, 33, 35.
[16] "Daniel Bell," *Arguing the World*, 1999, Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), 15 Nov. 2009 <http://www.pbs.org/arguing/nyintellectuals_bell.html>.

individuals were destined to profoundly shape American political and sociological thought. Francis Fukuyama credits them as the neoconservative movement's original core.[17]

Bell pursued a career in journalism after graduating in 1939. Contributing to *Partisan Review* and *Fortune*, he was the chief editor of the then socialist organ *The New Leader*, becoming the longest-serving contributor in the magazine's eighty-two year history.[18] Never a communist—though the movement tempted him during the red decade, his Russian relatives set him straight—, he also came to sour on the deterministic rationalism, soft-boiled optimism and "chiliastic" nature of the socialist movement. The events of "the most dreadful century in human history" and a belated acquaintance German sociologist Max Weber, especially his lecture "Politics as a Vocation" (1918), convinced him of the bankruptcy of all moralistic approaches to politics. In "First Love and Early Sorrows" (1981), a memoir published in Partisan Review, Bell likened his younger self to a lover spurned by the socialist seductress. He here admitted that he "came to fear the masses." He has nonetheless remained committed to economic socialism, redefined as providing everyone with a basic minimum.[19] In his essay *Marxian Socialism in the United States* (1952), he placed his remaining political trust in the pragmatic trade unionists who "accept the rules of the game." They alone among reformers embody Weber's "ethics [*sic*] of responsibility."[20]

Bell became a Cold War liberal. He made this official by joining the American branch of the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF). The CCF, based in Paris and infamously funded by the CIA, was a collaboration of prominent intellectuals keen to put aside their differences and

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[17] Francis Fukuyama, "After Neoconservatism," *The New York Times*, 19 Feb. 2006: E62.

[18] Charles McGrath, "A Liberal Beacon Burns Out," *The New York Times*, 23 Jan. 2006: E1, 7, 7. *The New Leader* became a beacon of the anti-Stalinist Left, the *samizdat* movement and the Civil Rights Movement. It was famous for publishing Martin Luther King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail" (1963) and introducing Milovan Djilas and Alexander Solzhenitsyn to American readers.

[19] *Arguing the World*, <http://www.pbs.org/arguing/nyintellectuals_bell_2.html>.

[20] Bell, *Marxian Socialism in the United States* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967), 6.

rally around the West. Though intellectuals are a querulous crowd—and the CCF was not without fun dramatic fodder for the historian—, CCF members nonetheless announced their near unanimous consensus around the "end of ideology thesis" at their 1955 Milan conference. (Only arch-libertarian Friedrich Hayek objected to this sellout of individual liberty).[21] Bell made advocating the end of ideology school his vocation. Receiving a doctorate in Sociology at Columbia University in 1959, he published his The End of Ideology essays the following year.

The End of Ideology heralded the coming of the managerial welfare state. But Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programs deepened it to a degree unsettling to even its intellectual votaries. The pejorative term "social engineering" thus entered the lexicon of the sociological liberals, motivating Bell, Glazer and Kristol to found the journal *The Public Interest* in 1965 for the main purpose of critiquing an overreaching Democratic domestic policy.[22] Browsing one issue to the next highlights a rightward shift of the New Dealers: the journal increasingly featured Milton Friedman and devoted an entire 1968 issue to the failure of twentieth century liberalism to come down hard on the New Left. Bell perceived in white liberals a repulsive "touchiness, fear, sensitivity, and guilt" in relation to blacks, and used recent events at Columbia as a microcosm for a "liberalism in crisis."[23]

Though Bell in 1972 resigned his Public Interest editorial position over Kristol's enthusiasm for Richard Nixon, he nonetheless wrote some of the opening intellectual salvos of the neoconservative movement. His *The Coming of the Post-Industrial Society* (1973), building a theme of his End of Ideology essays, hailed the displacement of America's agricultural and manufacturing sectors by the service economy. He defended service elites from the "illiberal"

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[21] Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1960), 404.

[22] "If there was a single overarching theme to the domestic social policy critiques issued by those who wrote for the neoconservative journal The Public Interest, founded by Irving Kristol, Nathan Glazer and Daniel Bell in 1965, it was the limits of social engineering," Fukuyama.

[23] Bell, "Columbia and the New Left" *The Public Interest* 13 (1968): 61-101, 72, 87-88.

charge that they are "meritocrats" whose apotheosis undermines equality and fairness. But is not liberalism concerned with efforts to at least address the unequal distribution of goods? Beyond assuring his "basic minimum" and vaguely defined "equality of opportunity," Bell answered in the negative. For instance, sociologist James Coleman's 1966 report *Equality of Educational Opportunity* "dismayed the educational bureaucracy" because, despite an alleged equality of white and black schools, white students still achieved more than blacks; this is as good a proof as any that the laws cannot abolish individual responsibility for failure. But what of the moving attacks on privilege found in the liberalisms of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and John Stuart Mill? Bell's flaming sword cast them out of the liberal Eden. They were not *really* liberals because the former betrayed individual rights by advocating slavery to the group (a misreading); the latter did so by prescribing the corporate representation of groups, as well as measures to limit population and economic growth. But Rawls was the most dangerous of his anti-liberal triumvirate, the ringleader of a twentieth century "populist reaction against meritocracy." Bell dismissed Rawls's Theory of Justice because his conception of a just contract as one advantageous to the "least advantaged"—which Bell noted are a *group* and not merely individuals—betrays the tenets of John Locke and Adam Smith, who conceived of a social contract as procedural guarantees for unencumbered individuals. Further, Rawls's original position violates Arrow's impossibility theorem, stating that it impossible to non-coercively aggregate individual preferences and arrive at something like "the common good;" his principles are realizable only at the price of "social disruption." Rawls is a "socialist" in liberal clothes whose popularity signaled that "we have come to the end of classic [*sic*] liberalism." The enemy of McCarthyism did not blush when he drew a straight line between Theory and the egalitarian experiments of Soviet Russia and China.[24]

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[24] Bell, *The Coming of the Post-Industrial Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 434-439, 460, 444, 452

Bell, with Freud and Weber, explicitly reduced egalitarianism to jealous *ressentiment*.[25] The psychological categories that sociological liberals once turned on the illiberal "mass man" now fired on liberal such comrades-in-arms as Rawls. Bell's *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (1976) intensified the attack. The book argued that capitalism can sustain itself only with a healthy Protestant work ethic, and is at war with itself because the hedonic "modernism" of capitalist-generated affluence undermines this very sustenance. Echoing the trendy seventies criticism of "new class" intellectuals seen in Kristol, Lewis Feuer, Hoffer and Charles Murray, Bell here fulminated against the "countercultural" Left. Rawls figured not only as an enemy of liberalism but as a prophet of a "what can you do for me" consumerism that abhors manly hard work and risk taking.[26] Quite a fascinating bourgeois spin on Friedrich Nietzsche's anti-bourgeois distaste of the "last man!" (He here borrowed from such snobbish enemies of vulgarity as Ortega y Gasset and Hannah Arendt, whose views he had in the End of Ideology attacked as "an ideology of protest against contemporary life").[27]

Bell became, in German sociologist Jürgen Habermas' words, "the most brilliant of the neoconservatives."[28] His works struck a chord with readers eager to understand the day's unprecedented and confusing sociological trends. Neoconservatism in general resonated during the "national malaise" leading up to the Reagan Revolution, because Bell and others persuasively identified and entertainingly denounced national scapegoats. Perhaps to Bell's discredit, Jimmy

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no. 106, 448. Kenneth Arrow is a classical economist whose contributions to game theory won him the Nobel Prize in Economics at the ripe old age of 51. His impossibility theorem proves little because of its undefended dependence of "fairness" on "Pareto optimality"—in my view, shared by David Ciepley, one of the worst buzzwords of postwar economic scholasticism.

[25] *Id*., 451.

[26] Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 135. Bell's solution to the problem of countercultural hedonism is a revival of religious observance—*for others!*

[27] Bell, *End of Ideology*, 36.

[28] Jürgen Habermas, "Modernity versus Postmodernity," trans. Seyla Benhabib *New German Critique* 22 (1981): 3-14, 6.

Carter endorsed his Cultural Contradictions and invited him to Camp David.[29] But Bell today expresses regret for not carefully distinguishing himself from thinkers like Kristol and Jeane Kirkpatrick. Chafing at the label as an intellectual progenitor of the Iraq War, he wrote in 2003, "I was not and never have been a 'neoconservative.'"[30]

2.3.3. Seymour Martin Lipset (1922-2006)

Political scientist Michael Rogin in 1987 said that Lipset "is perhaps the most eminent living American political sociologist."[31] Born in New York to Russian-Jewish immigrants, Lipset, like Bell, had a youthful fill of labor radicalism. He received a Sociology degree from CCNY and went on to Columbia as a graduate student, where he studied craftsmen's unions under the tutelage of such field heavyweights as Robert Merton and Robert Lynd. Initially a Trotskyite, he also absorbed the discursive-deliberative liberalism of John Dewey. The latter's influence, which by the mid-fifties had eclipsed his socialism, is visible in a repeated phrase of Lipset's: "democracy is not only or even primarily a means through which different groups can attain their ends or seek the good society; *it is the good society itself in operation*."[32] Lipset went into political sociology, rather than political science or philosophy, because:

> When I was starting political science was a very dull subject—just kind of
> descriptive, analytical and seriously [over-]generalized. It didn't have much

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[29] Allan J. Lichtman, "What the President Reads: Books About Crises of Modern Life Head List But Authors Aren't Sure They Help," *Los Angeles Times*, 8 Dec. 1979: C1, 8, 1.

[30] Bell, "Letter to the Editor," *The New York Times*, 26 Oct. 2003: WK10.

[31] Michael Rogin, Ronald Reagan*, the Movie: And Other Episodes in Political Demonology* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), 352.

[32] Lipset, *Political Man*, 403; cf. John Dewey's statement, democracy "is the idea of community life itself," *The Public and its Problems* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1954), 148.

theory. On the other hand, sociology had theories that allowed an explanation of broad political phenomena.[33]

We here get a sense of his intellectual project: the use of theoretical modeling to understand the preconditions of democracy and find ways to promote it.

As with Bell, the experience of totalitarianism—moments of great promise that degenerated into monstrous tyranny—loomed large in his thinking, as when he joined the CCF and witnessed the brutal suppression of the 1953 East Berlin uprising.[34] And as with Bell, the postwar surge of popularized anti-communism alarmed him. In 1954 he thus collaborated with Bell, Hofstadter and Talcott Parsons on a project analyzing opposition to the New Deal and the related McCarthyist terror. They published their findings in *The New American Right* (1955), republished in 1963 as *The Radical Right*. Lipset's contribution made heavy use of the Weberian category of the political "status group," and reduced both the Progressive Era *and* McCarthyist ideologies to "status anxiety:" a cry of pain emitted by those unsure of their future in society, and willing to blame others for their own failures.[35]

Lipset moved to UC Berkley in 1956. He continued to write about status groups, extremism and the preconditions of democracy. Despite his allegiance to Dewey, Lipset grew skeptical as to whether an irrational and populist America could realize the features of Dewey's Great Community: an equitable distribution of the means of civic engagement, for instance. It seemed inescapable that public political participation destabilizes rather than bolsters liberal regimes. Labor Historian Howard Brick writes of Lipset:

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[33] Jesus G. Velasco, "Seymour Martin Lipset: Life and Work" *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 29.4 (2004): 583-601, 597.
[34] *Id*., 589.
[35] Lipset, "The Sources of the Radical Right," *New American Right*: 166-233, 170, 198.

Lipset's concern after World War II to define the social conditions that rendered democracy stable and resistant to totalitarian movements led him to a position that echoed a large part of elitist democratic theory: democracy survived, it seemed, where there was a wide umbrella of consensus among leading political players, no astringent debate between political parties over fundamentals, lack of sharp divisions among elements of the population at large, and consequently a popular unwillingness, aside from electoral participation, to let politics go of its own momentum.[36]

Lipset thus became a key articulator of the sociological liberal public philosophy. He was with Bell the leader of the end of ideology school, which appeared in contemporary articles as the "Bell-Lipset hypothesis."[37] His "Democracy and Working Class Authoritarianism" (1959), though not nearly as influential as *The Authoritarian Personality*, reached many of the same conclusions about the political suspectness of non-elites. In addition to Political Man, a collection of essays that was the most comprehensive articulation of his views, he also contributed such award winning books as *The First New Nation* (1963) and *The Politics of Unreason* (1970). The former is a guarded celebration of American exceptionalism, a safeguard of democratic stability even if it at times produces bad outcomes. The latter, which conceptualized right-wing extremism, reiterated Lipset's earlier characterization of ideology as a "Sorelian myth" that "[establishes] a claim to truth, no matter how specious."[38]

The civil disobedience of the Civil Rights Era and the student movement it inspired appalled Lipset. Even the relatively tame 1964 demonstrations at Berkeley made him decry, with

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[36] Brick, *Contradiction*, 19.

[37] See, for instance, Rousseas and Farganis, 348.

[38] *Id*., 360.

Glazer, threats to "stability."[39] He thus "escaped" to Harvard, later testifying before the Senate on the destabilizing evils of civil disobedience and served as a consultant to President Nixon's Commission on Campus Unrest (1970). With Bell he joined the Coalition for a Democratic Majority (CDM), an early neoconservative grouping seeking a repudiation of George McGovern's movement. He later became a senior fellow of the Hoover Institute and member of the conservative Democratic Leadership Council (DLC), which engineered Bill Clinton's political ascendancy and defended his "New Democrat" approach.[40]

Credited with over fifty books, Lipset died in 2006.

2.3.4. Richard Hofstadter (1916-1970)

Bell called Hofstadter "*the* historian of [the postwar] generation."[41] Born into a working-class family in Buffalo, NY, he attended the State University of New York at Buffalo and, as a graduate student, Columbia. In 1938 he briefly joined the American Communist Party, an experience about which his autobiographical material says little. As a graduate student he stayed committed to historical materialism. But though he remained steadfast in his admiration for progressive historian Charles Beard—who believed, for instance, that the Constitution is intelligible only as an expression of the Founding Fathers' class interest[42]—, he nonetheless began to doubt economic determinism and class conflict as adequate explanatory frameworks. His senior undergraduate thesis had already attacked Beard's notion that that the Civil War was a "Second American Revolution" prosecuted by Northern industrialists. As a graduate student and part of New York's circle of Partisan Review sophisticates, he rapidly assimilated the main

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[39] Brick, *Contradiction*, 176.
[40] Velasco, 596.
[41] Brown, xx.
[42] See Charles A. Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (New York: MacMillan, 1935).

currents of psychoanalytic thought through the writings of Sigmund Freud, Harold Lasswell and John Dollard. These currents rejected the traditional liberal dualisms between man and animal, rational and irrational, good and bad; to the historian, they held out the promise of an alternative explanatory variable—psychological motives including personal pathology—to material interests. And with other members of the circle he turned to the urbane social criticism of H.L. Mencken as an antidote to the Progressive Era's kneejerk sentimentalism.[43]

Hofstadter's *The American Political Tradition* (1948) placed him on the map as America's "consensus historian." In contrast to the progressive historians' conflictual narratives—whether Beard's account of a bourgeois North versus a feudal South, or Frederick Jackson Turner's dynamic West versus a conservative East—Hofstadter had this to say about America:

> Societies that are in such good working order have a kind of mute organic consistency. They do not foster ideas that are hostile to their fundamental working arrangements. Such ideas may appear, but they are slowly and persistently insulated, as an oyster deposits nacre around an irritant. They are confined to small groups of dissenters and alienated intellectuals, and except in revolutionary times they do not circulate among practical politicians. The range of ideas, therefore, which practical politicians can conveniently believe in is normally limited by the climate of opinion that sustains their culture. They differ, sometimes bitterly, over current issues, but they also share a general framework of

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[43] Daniel Joseph Singal, "Beyond Consensus: Richard Hofstadter and American Historiography" *The American Historical Review* 89.4 (1984): 974-1004, 979-80, 986-7.

ideas which makes it possible for them to cooperate when the campaigns are over.[44]

Hofstadter argued that American capitalism is this general framework. But he did not mean this to flatter the stars and stripes. Hofstadter still hated capitalism at this stage of his career, and as seen above appealed to American exceptionalism in explaining the failure of organic political movements to combat it.

But like Bell, Lipset and everyone else, Hofstadter made peace with the establishment: first with a grudging truce, later with a robust and conservative appreciation of its merits. In one of his last finished works, *The Progressive Historians* (1968), he wrote that the emergence of the New Right inspired in himself and others "a new skepticism about the older populism of the left. While Daniel Bell was writing about the end of ideology in the West, historians were returning to the idea that in the United States it had hardly ever begun."[45] His Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *The Age of Reform* (1955), provided a revisionist account of the nineteenth-century Populist Party. Written out of an engagement with the present, it turned historians away from the movement's ideas and proposals and towards the psychological motives of its members. The Populists were now a declining petty bourgeois status group, their concrete agenda a cry of pain and xenophobic anger. The irrational, messianic sides of Populism and Progressivism therefore "seem to strongly foreshadow some aspects of the cranky pseudo-conservatism of our time."[46] (Dewey and his followers were thus no less than McCarthy culprits in America's cranky anti-intellectualism!) Further, the man who birthed the term "pseudo-conservatism" was none other

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[44] Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It* (New York: Knopf, 1973) *v*iii-ix.

[45] Hofstadter, *The Progressive Historians: Turner, Beard, Parrington* (New York: Knopf, 1968), 439.

[46] Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: from Bryan to F.D.R* (New York: Knopf, 1955), 20.

than our friend Adorno, whom Hofstadter cited approvingly in his essay contribution to *The New Right*, "The Pseudo-Conservative Revolt."

Because the bipartite American system insulated the political process from the irrationalities of the electorate, consensus for Hofstadter went from a term of abuse to a term of praise in a few short years. His *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (1963) expressed the self-pity typical of Cold War liberals faced with a "populist" revolt against their policies, but celebrated the post-Sputnik American consensus around the life of the mind. John F. Kennedy, supporter and perhaps embodiment of the end of ideology thesis, was a "combination of intellect and character" with the "alert and capacious, sophisticated and skeptical" mind of the modernist intellectual. "Productive" intellectuals had better abandon the posture of alienation and join Kennedy in "facing the world together."[47] Hofstadter's "The Paranoid Style in American Politics" (1964), an infamous essay later updated and published in an anthology of the same name, depicted the ascendant Sun Belt conservatives as a cabalist group, descended from the nineteenth-century anti-Masonic tradition and poised to betray democracy. More dangerous than McCarthy's hidebound curmudgeons was this new breed of "true believers" and "zealots." He later contra-posed the heroic Kennedy and the villainous Goldwater: the latter was a "small-town politician," ignorant of the "professional code" of party politics and hostile to "the basic American consensus."[48] Hofstadter's last finished work, *The Idea of a Party System* (1969), celebrated the pragmatism and pluralism encouraged by the seemingly irrational and meaningless rituals of America's two major parties. As a *modus vivendi* between Democrats and Republicans can solve "the pragmatic pressures of political conflict," the party—despite the repulsiveness of patronage, despite the Enlightenment distrust of factionalism—is actually an

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[47] Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Knopf, 1963), 227-8, 426.
[48] Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (New York: Knopf, 1966), 102-3.

"immensely sophisticated idea."[49] His work influenced conservative Democrats who opposed the erosion of pragmatic party elites and McGovern's overhaul of the presidential nominating process.[50]

Hofstadter, with Bell and Lipset, hated the student *enragés* and was disillusioned with liberalism's supposedly indifferent and unchallenging response to them. His "Paranoid Style" had already mocked blacks' and Progressives' "cabalism" even as he privately denied that psychiatric categories were applicable to Lyndon Johnson. His 1968 commencement address at Columbia defended his institution from the charge of its embeddedness in the military-industrial complex. He insisted that the university "does not have corporate views of public questions," agreeing with Sidney Hook that academic freedom meant a disinterestedness in public affairs.[51] In a subsequent *Newsweek* interview he labeled the nineteen-sixties a worthless "age of rubbish," later causing the neoconservatives to claim him as one of their own.[52] He died of leukemia in 1970, despairing for his country's future.

Hofstadter's impact on American scholarship is ambiguous. His notoriously unsupervised graduate students have borrowed Hofstadter's fresh insights while rejecting his hostility to ideals in history. His protégé Eric Foner, historian of Reconstruction and like Hofstadter a lightning rod of conservative criticism, understands ideologies not as necessarily specious and divisive: they have potential as analytically useful tools and sources of consensus as well.[53] Harvard historian of the New Right Lisa McGirr argues that while Hofstadter was right to focus on the attitudes of

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[49] Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System: The Rise of Legitimate Opposition in the United States, 1780-1840* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969), 8.

[50] See, for instance, James Ceaser, *Presidential Selection: Theory and Development* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979). Ceaser joined Hofstadter in lionizing Martin van Buren as a party organizing genius, and vilifying Woodrow Wilson as an enemy of party institutional codes.

[51] Brick, *Contradiction*, 171.

[52] "The Spirit of '70: Six Historians Reflect on What Ails the American Spirit," *Newsweek*, 6 July 1970, 20-23.

[53] Singal, 998-9

conservative individuals, his "excessively psychological orientation distorted our understanding of American conservatism."[54] Finally, historian Christopher Lasch in a deathbed interview credited Hofstadter as "the dominant figure on [his] intellectual horizon." But while praising his inimitable style and constructive engagement with Beard and Turner, he said:

> He invoked psychological language and psychological concepts—the "paranoid style" being a fine example—in a way that is very congenial to a class that aspires to be therapeutic caretakers of a country that is so deeply sick that it needs medical and psychiatric attention … Instead of arguing with opponents, [he] simply dismissed them on psychiatric grounds.[55]

Such procedures are of course not particularly conducive to an American consensus.

2.3.5. Robert E. Lane (1917—)

Lane grew up in the Midwest. Studying political psychology at Harvard, he in 1938 spearheaded a movement to pluck almost three-hundred European youths from Nazi tyranny and settle them in American universities. He served in WWII and returned to Harvard to receive his doctorate. He taught Political Psychology at Yale and was one of the leading lights of the "behavioral revolution" in the American Political Science Association (APSA). He recently retired to co-found the National Senior Conservation Corps, dedicated to organizing senior citizens to address environmental issues.[56]

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[54] Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 7.

[55] Casey Blake and Christopher Phelps, "History as Social Criticism: Conversations with Christopher Lasch" *The Journal of American History* 80.4 (1994): 1310-1332, 1318.

[56] "About Gray is Green," *Gray is Green*, 2008, National Senior Conservation Corps, 15 Nov. 2009 <http://www.grayisgreen.org/GIG_LATEST/About_Us.html>.

Lipset identified Lane as a leading specialist in understanding political socialization.[57] His lifelong conviction, seen in his contribution to the *Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology* (2003), was that psychology better than argumentation aids political scientists in the articulation of norms and the understanding of institutions.[58] Such a faith motivated his interest in the sociological liberal project. His "Political Personality and Electoral Choice" (1955) applied Adorno et al.'s theory of childrearing to American voting behavior. An "equalitarian" raised in a loving home votes out of a healthy sense of efficacy whereas his "authoritarian" foil votes in order to attain an "increment in prestige and power." The same candidate could therefore attract both healthy and deviant voters![59] His *Political Ideology: Why the American Common Man Believes What He Does* (1962) studied the attitudes of fifteen lower middle-class men in "Eastport," an anonymous city in Connecticut. As usual "liberalism" here meant a set of healthy dispositional traits. While concluding that few of the men met Adorno's standard of authoritarianism—after all, the postwar government was obviously their friend, and "people do not ask if a benefactor is just"—he noted that their support for democratic ideals is not unconditional. In light of this latent but real threat, he claimed that it is good that social mobility is eroding America's communities, because strong bonds of civic friendship lead to illiberal politics. "Those seeking 'intimacy,'" he wrote, "seek totalitarianism; nor is this a chance relationship."[60]

In stronger terms than even Bell, Lane believed that no problem is too great for the élan of rational and scientific management. Political Ideology spoke of a "new collectivism" that

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[57] Lipset, "Sociology and Political Science: A Bibliographical Note" *American Sociological Review* 29.5 (1964): 730-734, 733.

[58] Robert E. Lane, "Rescuing Political Science from Itself," *The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003): 755-794, 755-756.

[59] Lane, "Political Personality and Electoral Choice," *The American Political Science Review* 49.1 (1955): 173-190, 179, 177.

[60] Lane, *Political Ideology: Why the American Common Man Believes What He Does* (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1962), 474, 227.

supplants religious with civic devotion.[61] His "The Politics of Consensus in an Age of Affluence" (1965) and "The Decline of Politics and Ideology in a Knowledgeable Society" (1966) developed this theme. The first is as a statistical confirmation of the end of ideology thesis, taking as an article of faith the capacity of technocrats to solve both unemployment and institutional racism. He wrote on the latter problem, "the politics of consensus can go around this 'American dilemma,' within the sound of battle but relatively undisturbed by it."[62] "The Decline of Politics" argued American society was on the cusp of the "positive" stage of sociological development; the language seems lifted from Comte's *A General View of Positivism*. Though religious modes of thought remain absorbed into society, the managerial elite had now unanimously committed to an altruistic application of the social and natural sciences. Lane cheered as his elite were redefining American politics. They were purging administration of the frailties of politicians and the messianism of reform campaigns: "the knowledgeable society encourages and rewards the 'men of knowledge,' compared to the 'men of affairs.'" Criteria "within the professionalized domain of knowledge" and not the public at large constitute the new standard of democratic legitimacy.[63]

With Bell, he spent the following decades defending a strong variant of meritocracy. During Rawls's debates with libertarian Robert Nozick, Lane sided with the latter on the issue of self esteem: the former's philosophy argues that self esteem is a primary good that hinges on individuals' inherent worth as members of society, the latter's that self esteem ought to be self-chosen and contingent on individuals' merits. Lane's "Government and Self-Esteem" (1982) argued that an "achievement society" demands everyone's best and so eschews "the justice of

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[61] *Id.*, 197.

[62] Lane, "The Politics of Consensus in an Age of Affluence" *The American Political Science Review* 59.4 (1965): 874-895, 893.

[63] Lane, "The Decline of Politics and Ideology in a Knowledgeable Society" *American Sociological Review* 31.5 (1966): 649-662, 652, 657.

parity." It is unlikely, he continued, that political participation could ever discharge Rawls's task of embracing the undeserving because the latter evince an autistic "incompetence in relations with others," and so are too neurotic "to concern themselves with distant political matters." There must therefore be an "esteem-efficient" standard predicated on individuals' unequally successful exercise of their economic liberties. The "useless person must regard oneself with a degree of contempt," even though Lane's paternalistic state has an "authoritative concern" for even its lowliest subjects.[64]

Lane's later writings nonetheless eased up on his earlier Stakhanovite glorification of meritorious toil. Bucking the neoliberal trend at the end of the Cold War, his *The Market Experience* (1991) sanely called for a reevaluation of capitalism not on "economistic" grounds but rather the axes of happiness and development.[65] Finally, his *The Loss of Happiness in Market Democracies* (2001) suggested that above a reasonably low threshold income does not correlate to happiness and that as Westerners we had best learn to value things other than the almighty dollar.

2.3.6. Herbert McClosky (1916-2006)

McClosky, born to a working-class New Jersey family, graduated from the University of Newark in 1940 and University of Minnesota in 1946. Initially a student of political theory, the world famous cluster of social psychologists at Minnesota convinced him to reorient his research and supplement his degrees with post-graduate training in psychometrics and survey research.

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[64] Lane, "Government and Self-Esteem." *Political Theory* 10.1 (1982): 5-31, 13, 19, 13.
[65] Lane, *The Market Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 15.

His main concerns were intolerance, political alienation, conformity and ideological conflict.[66] Joining UC Berkeley in 1960 and later becoming APSA vice president, McClosky went further than even Adorno in waving the behavioralist flag. Whereas Adorno and fellow Frankfurt theorists ascribed to the social system the status of fundamental variable, and to personality the status of response,[67] McClosky flirted with a bolder claim: that personality variables *determine* politics. In a 1960 article calling for international relations students to turn away from Hans J. Morgenthau and towards Frankfurt theorists, who alone can "make sense" of statecraft, he wrote that personality is the salient political motive in "highly mobile, democratic, mass society of the modern type."[68]

McClosky believed that personalities incline towards neither freedom nor reason. He wrote in "Consensus and Ideology in American Politics" (1964):

> Compliance with democratic rules of the game often demands an extraordinary measure of forbearance and self-discipline, a willingness to place constraints upon the use of our collective power and to suffer opinions, actions and groups we regard as repugnant.

But the American electorate, "submerged in an ideological babble of poorly informed and discordant opinions," could comply with these rules only with restraints on political participation

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[66] "In Memoriam: Herbert McClosky," *University of California Systemwide – Academic Senate – Memorials*, 2006, University of California System, 15 July 2009 <http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/senate/inmemoriam/herbertmcclosky.html>.

[67] Bell distinguished the Frankfurt school from such characterological determinism, *End of Ideology*, 316.

[68] "One has great difficulty, for example, explaining present-day Soviet foreign policy on the purely political or economic grounds of rational self-interest, territorial integrity, imperialism, geopolitical necessity, or even, in fact, external military danger." Herbert McClosky, "Review: Perspectives on Personality and Foreign Policy" *World Politics* 13.1 (1960): 129-139, 135-6. Such a statement, typical of Cold War liberals who denied a possibility of rapprochement with the Soviet Union, ignored the cogent contemporary foreign policy analyses of Lippmann and George F. Kennan; *id*., 138.

and under the tutelage of vigorous elites.[69] He would reiterate this position in *Dimensions of Tolerance: What Americans Believe about Civil Liberties* (1983), favorably citing Ortega y Gasset's assessment of freedom as a delicate, unnatural ideal that the spoiled masses long to rid themselves of.[70] (That perhaps there are good *reasons* to censor hate speech or curtail civil liberties during times of distress did not much interest him). Could a common creed perhaps tame the public's illiberalism? McClosky thought not. He perceived intellectuals as too naïve to see that irrational and primordial motives motivate the political behavior of all but the country's socioeconomic upper crust. The real meaning of political ideologies lies in the personality traits that cause people to coalesce around them. His "Conservatism and Personality" (1958) proceeded in this vein, drawing from Hoffer's "brilliant and intuitive" characterization of conservatives as the maladapted victims of social change. Conservatism meant not the writings of Edmund Burke—too contradictory and fatuous to merit serious attention—but the symptoms of self-loathing, hostility, paranoia, contempt for weakness, need inviolacy, rigidity and obsessionality. After all, except for "a few intellectuals of unusual philosophical inclination," people do not arrive at their opinions logically. While one would think that McClosky would only make these claims if this conservative personality construct had evidential backing, he concluded by saying that the correlation between the conservative personality and political behavior is "fairly low."[71]

He died in 2006 of complications from Parkinson's disease.

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[69] McClosky, "Consensus and Ideology in American Politics" *The American Political Science Review* 58.2 (1964): 361-382, 375-6.

[70] McClosky and Alida Brill, *Dimensions of Tolerance: What Americans Believe about Civil Liberties* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1983) 8, 13.

[71] The findings were from a study of 1,200 subjects in Minnesota, asked such survey questions as whether it is ever wrong to break a law or whether individuals are born good or bad, McClosky, "Conservatism and Personality" *The American Political Science Review* 52.1 (1958): 27-45, 37-9, 44-5.

2.4. Sociological Liberalism: A Plausible Grouping

It is reasonable to conceive of the sociological liberals as a single grouping, whatever their different foci and whatever their inevitable differences. My exposition of relevant currents in postwar liberalism and its votaries' intellectual biographies hopefully brings them to life as similarly oriented individuals, similarly situated in time and space, arriving at similar conclusions about American politics. Their biographies for the most part had very similar trajectories: from radicalism, to liberalism and to neoconservatism. Their writings all tended towards a therapeutic discourse.

What I have offered is not an airtight "proof." Political theory admits of proofs only if we absorb the positivist social science ethos. But since I balk at doing so, how do I justify my claims about sociological liberalism? Political theory and intellectual history run the danger of divorcing itself from empirical realities, something Bell had in mind in rejecting the "ethic of ultimate ends." Non-naturalistic inquiries may give short shrift to "just the facts:" they could omit empirical data outright, refer to it obliquely and confusedly or refer to such a paucity that it undetermines the momentous conclusions that philosophy so often pronounces. Is the argumentation attendant to such inquiries therefore a scholastic game?

Not necessarily. Despite my slanderous reputation as a cloud dweller amongst my peers, in this instance I hope to have at least offered a plausible suggestion—which the reader can take or leave—consistently backed by textual and historical evidence. Experience with inquiries of this sort tells me I have, and this is often the best a writer of the humanities can do. I thus proceed on the assumption that sociological liberalism is an actual tradition, embodied in five thinkers, and with discrete and analyzable traits. What are these traits? In what ways do they contribute to a therapeutic discourse? And what concrete implications does this contribution

present for the nature and outcome of a liberal public philosophy? These are the questions for which the next two chapters will provide answers.

3. Sociological Liberalism: How It Adds Up

> *"What is rational is actual;*
> *and what is actual is rational"*
>
> <div align="right">-G.W.F. Hegel[1]</div>

> *"Men are not allowed to think freely about chemistry and*
> *biology: why should they be allowed to think freely about*
> *political philosophy?"*
>
> <div align="right">-Auguste Comte[2]</div>

3.1. Introduction to Chapter

Whereas the previous chapter placed sociological liberalism in a historical narrative to make intelligible its concerns, we will here analyze its theoretical commitments and the concrete ways in which they contributed to the midcentury therapeutic discourse. In the next chapter we will see the problems this discourse poses for a liberal public philosophy. We can then sift through the ruins of a once hegemonic variant liberalism, pick up the pieces, and articulate criteria for an improved liberal public philosophy.

3.2. The Normative Assumptions of Sociological Liberalism

3.2.1. Introduction to Section

We will start with sociological liberalism's implicit and explicit normative assumptions that are present in all the canonical texts. These shared assumptions include: positivism; an economistic conception of rationality; moral relativism; a belief in the imminent and beneficent end ideology; a premium placed on stability; and a belief in either the unlikelihood or impossibility of popular civic virtue.

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[1] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. Alan Wood (Cambridge, UK: University of Cambridge Press, 1991), 20.
[2] Alan Lindsay Mackay, *A Dictionary of Scientific Quotations* (London: Institute of Physics, 2001), 60.

3.2.2. Positivism

We discussed positivism, or the importation of the scientific mode of inquiry into the humanities, in the previous chapter. A few more points are appropriate.

In the realm of political theory, positivism is especially amenable to the epistemic claim that equates "truth" on even political matters with scientific findings, antecedent to wide deliberation. The sociological liberals thus borrowed from Lippmann's *Public Opinion* (1922), which Dewey justly called "perhaps the most effective indictment of democracy as currently conceived ever penned,"[3] in conceiving of managers and scientists as especially placed to understand and solve the electorate's problems. As the Dewey quote suggests, Lippmann and the many social scientists he influenced downsized "democracy" to be compatible with elites' privileged epistemic status. Public discourse in this downsized framework serves as a transmission belt that informs elites of events on the ground. For instance, Lane in 1966 celebrated the coming of the "knowledgeable society"—akin to Bell's "post-industrial society" and the "information age" of later futurologists—in which "consciousness of a problem may come *first* to the authorities, scientific and governmental."[4] The technical nature of modern problems means that modern citizens need be no more than deaf spectators.

Second, the positivism of the so-called "behavioral revolution" entailed a correlative devaluation of all non-naturalistic modes of thought. Looming large was the fear, expressed best in Karl Popper's *The Poverty of Historicism* (1947), that unscientific and especially pseudoscientific political thought had *caused* the fanaticism and totalitarianism of the age, and

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[3] Dewey, [Review of the book *Public Opinion*], *The New Republic*, 3 May 1922: 286-288, 286.
[4] Lane, "Knowledgeable Society," 659

that intellectuals had better clean up their act.[5] Sociologist George A. Lundberg's dramatically titled book, *Can Science Save Us?* (1947), called for an end to the "legalistic, moralistic, 'literary' orientation" which he ascribed to both classical philosophy and Dewey's Chicago School. Only the hegemony of positivism could lift humanity out of brutish animism and superstition.[6] The behavioralists could not but gloat during their brief ascendancy vis-à-vis dissenting sociologists and political theorists. Lipset thus contraposed a triumphant behavioralism with the defeated "crude empiricism" and "speculation."[7] Lane mocked the socialist humanism of Fromm and related thinkers: their writings were reducible to "their own discomfort with society" and frustration at having missed out on that "field of endeavor where there is a true élan, the field of science."[8]

And third, while the sociological liberals in their commitment to "value-free" analysis did not explicitly address the proper relation between "is" and "ought" in political science, they tended towards the belief that empirical realities, and not humans' moral imagination, are the proper source of norms. In this they resembled David Hume's "deflationary naturalism:" deflationary because it rules out abstractions, naturalistic because positive knowledge serves in their place.

3.2.3. The Rational and Reasonable as *Homo Economicus*

The influence of Czech economist Joseph Schumpeter's public choice theory made itself felt in sociological liberalism. Politics in this model ceased to be a forum and became a market

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[5] Popper here correctly argued that social thought with pretensions at finding history's iron laws and rhythms is pseudoscientific. He nonetheless underrated the differences between the natural and social sciences and—worse—sloppily included all non-naturalistic social thought in his attack on historicism. For a brief overview of the baleful effects of Popper's work, see John Passmore, "The Poverty of Historicism Revisited" *History and Theory* 14.4 (1975): 30-47.

[6] George A. Lundberg, *Can Science Save Us?* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1947), 5, 70.

[7] Lipset, "Bibliographical Note," 731.

[8] Lane, "Age of Affluence," 879-80.

whereby bare procedures tally individual preferences. This has two implications for our analysis. First, the public choice model made the sociological liberals methodologically individualistic in that they turned from assessing social wholes to analyzing individuals. Political sociologists like Lipset overlooked the contributions of Émile Durkheim, whose focus was on the possibility of a legitimately consensual social order, in favor of analyzing individual behavior.[9] Second, it made sociological liberals espouse a bright line division between rationality and irrationality. Rational man became *homo economicus* ("economic man"): able to maximize marginal utility in procedurally prescribed ways. Irrational man is he whose passionately held values do not lend themselves to neat quantification.

3.2.4. Moral relativism

"Absolutized thought," Bell said at the height of America's student unrest, "is the real crime of the intellectuals."[10] Sociological liberalism in this vein defined liberalism as philosophical skepticism that abhors the quest for certainty. This was a de-natured and even Machiavellian liberalism that shunned morality. As Bell wrote in The End of Ideology, "democratic politics means bargaining between legitimate groups and the search for consensus. This is so because the historic contribution of liberalism was to separate law from morality."[11] The philosophical rug pulled out from under liberalism, reason could no longer be the decisive factor in good political outcomes. A common culture or a shared set of dispositional traits took the place of a common liberal creed.

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[9] Philo C. Wasburn, *Political Sociology: Approaches, Concepts, Hypotheses* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1982), 111-115.

[10] "The Tortured Role of the Intellectual in America," *Time*, 9 May 1969, 28 Nov. 2009 <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,844814-2,00.html>.

[11] Bell, *End of Ideology*, 210.

3.2.5. The End of Ideology Thesis

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the end of ideology thesis had its origins in the CCF discussions of the mid-fifties. Less clear is what the sociological liberals and Western intelligencia in general meant by saying that ideology was "over." *Where* was it over? They seemed to confine the thesis to the affluent West and particularly the United States, where class conflict was the most attenuated. Africa, East Asia and the Middle East were still fertile ground for ideologies—anti-colonialism, populist nationalism, pan-Arabism, etc.—that, though exhausted of their humanistic appeal, were necessary to motivate the indolent pre-capitalist masses to build factories and skyscrapers. *For whom* was it over: intellectuals, *hoi polloi* or both? Bell and Lipset seemed to include both in the thesis, but according to secondary commentators especially and unfairly restricted their analysis to intellectuals.[12] And, finally, *what* ideologies were over?

The confusion surrounding the end of ideology school, at the time and retrospectively, stems largely from the fact that none of the thinkers systematically defined what they meant by "ideology." Their formulations ran high risks of question begging. That is, they often defined ideology as pernicious and all-encompassing life commitments, as when Bell defined it as religion without the fear of death and "the total annihilation of the self."[13] That may well describe communism, but what of the more modest commitments of liberalism and conservatism? (Observers like MacIntyre accused the sociological liberals of unwarrantedly extrapolating from the death of Marxism the death of all philosophy).[14] In general, however, what the sociological liberals had in mind were "forensic" ideologies, or coherent thought systems that offered pat answers to most political questions, and not "latent" ideologies, or the

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[12] Wasburn, 255.
[13] Bell, *End of Ideology*, 371.
[14] MacIntyre, *Self-Images*, 4-5.

tangle of loosely articulated and at times contradictory values found in everyone; Lane especially called attention to this distinction.[15]

The end of ideology theorists made two classes of claims, one descriptive and one normative. On the descriptive side, they, first, predicted that the limitless expansion of wealth, science, culture and leisure time would remove the social bases of conflict and thus ideology. "Increasing knowledge about man, nature, and society," wrote Lane, "can be said to reduce the target area for ideological thinking."[16] In this they agreed wholeheartedly with Mill's similar argument in *On Liberty*.[17] (Actually *proving* that ideology was on the way out was of course difficult even before the revolt on campus, especially when the sociological liberals believed features of postindustrial society to be vectors of fanaticism).[18] Second, they claimed that the managerial and militarized modern state is an irreversible *fait accompli*. Libertarianism and isolationism can thus be nothing but symbolic expressions of protest. As argued in The End of Ideology, "it's hard to see how any administration could cut the federal budget below the [twenty percent] floor which the permanent mobilization entails." Third, they claimed that ideology could no longer motivate political activity in the West, and that the impetus for social change in the future will merely be the acquisition of science and technology. Fourth, they claimed that because science can solve any problem to which people apply it, the only remaining political task for the state was to overcome society's "cultural lag," which made it suspicious of the rational bureaucratization of life. Fifth, they claimed that America, after New Deal institutions revolutionized existing property relations, had become a genuine "meritocracy" without a "ruling

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[15] Lane, *Political Ideology*, 16.

[16] Lane, "Knowledgeable Society," 660.

[17] "As mankind improve, the number of doctrines which are no longer disputed or doubted will constantly be on the increase; and the well-being of mankind may almost be measured by the number and gravity of the truths which have reached the point of being uncontested," John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1978), 42. So much for the argument for thoroughgoing fallibilism that dominates the first part of the book!

[18] "Mass communications have aroused the mass man," Hofstadter, "The Pseudo-Conservative Revolt," *The New American Right*, 52.

class."[19] And, finally, sixth, they claimed that the developed West provides the rest of the world a glimpse into its own future. Their globe was converging towards technocratic liberalism: a synthesis of Manchester capitalism and Marxian socialism.[20]

On the normative side, the end of ideology theorists naturally claimed that these six developments were positive. They conceived as the only alternative to the extant institutions of the "productivity economy" to be partisan rancor or worse. Intellectuals, they argued, primarily criticized the so-called "power elite" because of their own "status anxiety" and not the plausibility of their arguments, apparently too fatuous to merit attention. The End of Ideology made a distinction between "scholars" and the minority of disaffected "intellectuals." The latter, having climbed William James's faith ladder, threatened to ruin the soaring achievements of managerial capitalism.[21]

3.2.6. The Primacy of Stability

The sociological liberals believed stability to be the highest good of modern democracies, and the indicator by which to judge their health. Stability in this conception is independent of any higher epistemic standard and refers merely to the "smooth functioning" of procedural institutions over a certain period of time.[22]

3.2.7. Man: An Undemocratic Animal

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[19] Bell, *End of Ideology*, 84, 42, 49.
[20] Brick, *Daniel Bell and the Decline of Intellectual Radicalism: Social Theory and Political Reconciliation* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), 5. I should nonetheless note that unlike Fukuyama's later Hegelian endism, the end of ideology ideologists spent comparatively little time on metaphysics.
[21] Bell, *End of Ideology*, 372.
[22] Lipset, *Political Man*, 48-49.

The sociological liberals believed that adhering to even the most basic democratic norms is a psychologically strenuous task that only the sanest citizens can properly discharge. As McClosky put it, "compliance with democratic rules of the game often demands an extraordinary measure of forbearance and self-discipline, a willingness to place constraints upon the use of our collective power and to suffer opinions, actions and groups we regard as repugnant."[23] Lipset spoke of democracy requiring "a high level of sophistication and ego security."[24] Individuals are not naturally disposed to freedom and equality, and they mainly obey the law because it is the path of least resistance. This assumption tends towards a pessimistic outlook on whether moral learning can encourage widespread civic virtue in even the most well-ordered society.

3.3. How the Sociological Liberals Proposed to Defend Democracy

3.3.1. Introduction to Section

With these norms in place, how did the sociological liberal public philosophy set about solving the problems of modern democracy? The solutions constitute something that political theory literature calls "democratic realism" or, in Judith Shklar's more to-the-point term, "the liberalism of fear"—the fear being civil strife.[25] This variant of liberalism keeps its ideals and goals to a minimum. It conceives of politics as a skeletal but sturdy framework and eulogizes the temperate spirit of compromise instead of the dream of justice. It asks not whether a policy is just, but rather if it works. The public philosophy's prescriptions are as follows: positivist

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[23] McClosky, "Consensus and Ideology," 376.
[24] Lipset, "Democracy and Working-Class Authoritarianism" *American Sociological Review* 24.4 (1959): 482-501, 492.
[25] Judith N. Shklar, *Political Thought and Political Thinkers* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 3-20.

pluralism; a "negative" account of liberty; a celebration of the usefulness of anomy and apathy; an account of the "democratic personality;" and, finally, elitism.

3.3.2. Positivist Pluralism

The sociological liberals conceived of democratic politics as the clash of hard bargaining interest groups whose shared interest in stability produces good outcomes. Congress in this formulation is the seat of democracy, and the state uses whatever autonomy it has to act as a capitalist "broker"—a phrase of journalist John Chamberlain that Bell enthusiastically borrowed.[26] After all, centuries of disagreement over what the "common good" and "justice" had all led nowhere, and John Locke's motto of *salus populi suprema lex esto* ("let the good of the people be the supreme law") seemed a tad too quaint for our diverse modern world. In the fifties and sixties, positivist pluralism received a rich theoretical treatment as Dahl's "polyarchal democracy." America, according to Dahl, achieved the vision of James Madison's Federalist no. 10: it was now a beneficent "minorities rule" whereby all groups had access to the levers of government and so obviated majority tyranny.[27] Polyarchy, really a less pessimistic version of Schumpeter's public choice theory, became the centerpiece of sociological liberalism. Hofstadter's later writings discussed the vital role of parties in facilitating polyarchy and tranquilizing the claims of combative interest groups. That Dahl's and others' defense of American democracy hinged on the expanding largesse of the federal budget and so a skyrocketing national economy escaped the attention of most. (Dahl had by the late seventies backtracked on his earlier analyses and in the late seventies called for clearing the Academy of old idols and a renewal of "positive liberty." He saw that the insistence in "proceduralism" and

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[26] Bell, "Interpretations of American Politics," 12.
[27] Robert Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), 146.

"American exceptionalism" had failed to solve the substantive questions of life in the era of corporations and organizations: "Rhetorical assertions that seem to make procedural democracy the only proper method of making decisions have again and again been shown to be illusory and self-defeating").[28]

3.3.3. "Negative" Liberty and Non-Participation

Isaiah Berlin's lecture "Two Concepts of Liberty" (1958) described the history of political theory as the contest between two contrary notions of liberty: the first, "negative," meaning individuals' freedom to act without restraint; the second, "positive," meaning individuals' freedom to cultivate their own powers through political participation or other means. Berlin demanded that intellectuals use liberty in the former sense because the latter had proven so susceptible to totalitarian abuse. So strident was Berlin on this point that he scolded Locke for the rather innocent phrase, "where there is no law there is no freedom," because to the latter rational law serves individuals' "proper interests" or "general good."[29] As such sentiments could only give comfort to the neo-Hegelian supermen of what people then called the Second and Third Worlds, even Locke was an accidental architect of tyranny!

Under Berlin's influence, the sociological liberals came to deny that political participation has much to do with either freedom or democracy. Sociological liberalism did not conceive of participation as either an intrinsic or instrumental good and was under no illusions of promoting it. Lipset's Political Man depicted the West as the home of negative liberty and the totalitarian East as that of positive liberty. We must disabuse ourselves of the notion, he

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[28] Dahl, "On Removing Certain Impediments to Democracy in the United States" *Political Science Quarterly* 92.1 (1977): 1-20, 12.

[29] Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," *Four Essays on Liberty* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 147.

suggested, that a "high level of participation is always good for democracy."[30] (The ideology of the end of ideology distorted his analysis: whatever the regimes' pronouncements, did positive liberty actually obtain in the socialist camp, which restricted participation in decision making to only a very few?) Supporting Lipset's claims were studies in the character of nonroutine political participants. It seemed that some deviants were particularly politically active. Lane's Political Ideology noted that his study's two most active participants—each a "lower-middle-class Republican in a Democratic milieu"—were angry, anxious, dystopian "undemocrats."[31] McClosky, in his enormously influential "Consensus and Ideology in American Politics," praised Americans' apathy as a means of creating a "pseudo-consensus," or "an illusion of consensus which for many purposes can be as serviceable as the reality."[32] After all, perhaps a low voter turnout indicates a satisfaction with the underlying system.

3.3.4. The Good of Anomy

The sociological liberals cheered Americans' low social conscience. In a related cheer, they celebrated the decline of American communities. Dahl and Talcott Parsons had already shown that people pulled by all sorts of group affiliations—family, neighborhood, town, state, country, party, etc.—, with none of them predominating, tended to be more liberal.[33] Further, Bell had already cited the decline of the family and increasing social mobility as a precondition for America's new meritocracy. Lane and other sociological liberals took this to mean that strong personal or civic attachments are, far from inculcators of virtue, actually vectors of illiberalism. Because politics is a marketplace that requires cold and impersonal decision-making, affective

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[30] Lipset, *Political Man*, 32.
[31] Lane, *Political Ideology*, 445.
[32] McClosky, "Consensus and Ideology," 378.
[33] Lipset, *Political Man*, 89.

ties could only introduce into the system irrationalities. The "atomistic" and impersonal character of modern mass society encouraged in political actors an "effective tolerance of ambiguity." Borrowing the language of nineteenth century German sociologists, Lane claimed his most sane and rational subjects oriented their politics on a *Gesellschaft* ("society") axis: in simpler language, they focused on national issues and thought in terms of issues, not people. The "authoritarians" on the other hand were *Gemeinschaft* ("community") centered, participating locally and personalizing politics. Lane explained why this is pathological:

> Community personalizes issues and events and explanations because familiar names and characters inevitably become associated with everything that happens. The ties to the people involved, who are known not mere as "flat" actors on a stage but in their more rounded wholeness, make impersonal explanations necessary to democratic usage difficult.[34]

In sum, civic friendship is bad for democracy, tending towards authoritarianism and charismatic politics. Bell agreed in conceiving calls for "community" and "virtue" as calls for a latter-day Maximilien Robespierre.[35]

3.3.5. "The New Liberal Man"

The sociological liberals hoped that their prescribed institutions would engender in Americans a personality amenable to these very institutions. This personality, the "genuine liberal" in Adorno's phrase, became the true believer's foil. The ideal citizen became a secure individual with a proper sense of political efficacy—but not too much!—and self-esteem—but, again, not too much! (As we saw in the previous section, excessive or nonroutine political

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[34] Lane, *Political Ideology*, 227, 32, 226.
[35] MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (London: Duckworth, 1981), 221.

participation was suspect, but so was pure apathy. Moderation naturally became the suggested standard). In more detail, the genuine liberal is a secular optimist with a "sense of mastery over fate," which Lane contraposed to "the traditionalist orientation that one is the helpless object of forces beyond human control."[36] The genuine liberal thus lacks the pathological caution and defensiveness exhibited by traditionalists with their nagging superegos and is well adjusted to the meritocratic, socially mobile society of the modern type.[37]

3.3.6. The Civilized Minority

The American grouping most disposed to the democratic personality turned out to be the wealthy and politically engaged elites. Lipset noted that the education, general sophistication and "psychic security" of America's upper-middle-class tended towards a support of "non-economic liberalism." He then compared twentieth-century liberals to the nineteenth-century Northern abolitionists, shining like a jewel compared to the rest of society.[38] The impossibility of absorbing liberal ideals into a society submerged in irrationality thus pushed the sociological liberals into a twentieth-century Toryism. As behavioralist V.O. Key put it, a society's "aristocratic" strain made democracy either possible or impossible, and so "any assessment of the vitality of a democratic system should rest on an examination of the outlook, the sense of purpose, and the beliefs of this sector of society."[39] Removed of any pretensions that the lower and lower-middle classes—who supported fascism, communism, Peronism and racism at various times and places—were interested in beneficent "social justice," the sociological liberals felt that

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[36] Lane, "Age of Affluence," 878.
[37] Lane, *Political Ideology*, 434.
[38] Lipset, *Political Man*, 298.
[39] McClosky, "Consensus and Ideology," 361.

elites could now focus more intently on the scientific management of social problems. The largesse of the "broker state" could pacify the natives should they grow restless.

3.4. Conclusion: A Word of Praise and a Warning

Sociological liberalism passionately advanced a civic mission yet paradoxically did so with a Machiavellian detachment. Its pragmatism pointed to a way out of poisonous ideological confrontation. Its eclectic if at times haphazard defense of the welfare state provided an alternative message to those of the Manchester capitalists and state socialists, these latter messages each having a strong intellectual coherence but dubious moral credentials. That, fifty years after the End of Ideology's publication, governments around the world are still looking for a "third way"—think of the careers of Bill Clinton, Gerhard Schröder and Tony Blair—attests to the New Deal public philosophy's forcefulness. The twenty-first century observer cannot but marvel at the interesting blend of radical and conservative strains in sociological liberalism, and the brilliant ways in which it answers to critical problems. But though I share many of its realistic concerns about the viability of participatory democracy in the modern age, I nonetheless think that sociological liberalism betrayed many core tenets of liberalism and in the process disintegrated. Before our president dusts off a musty and poorly bound copy of The End of Ideology and peruses its pages for signposts, we had best examine sociological liberalism's relationship to therapeutic discourse.

4. Therapeutic Discourse: Arrogance and Fall

> *"What do you think you are, for Christ's sake, crazy or something? Well, you're not! You're not! You're no crazier than the average a--hole out walking around on the streets and that's it!"*
> -R.P. McMurphy, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1975)

4.1. Introduction to Chapter

Therapeutic discourse is the tendency to conduct political analysis in psychological categories, as when a sociological study pathologizes dissenters. This paper conceives of therapeutic discourse as a tool by which to judge the viability of prospective public philosophies. If adherents to a particular form of liberalism engage in this tendency, we can then, having worked out all of the form's normative characteristics, see in detail the relationship between the tendency and norms. And if therapeutic discourse is indeed a negative and self-defeating tendency, we can then think of constructive ways to build a better liberalism.

4.2. A Definition

As stated in the introduction, therapeutic discourse as an ideal type has five main characteristics.

First, that an interaction between personality and the social habitat often or always "produces" opinions articulated in the public space. We see here the influence of previous critiques of ideology. Marx and Friedrich Engels had causally linked material and institutional forces with ideas, as when the latter wrote in 1893 that "consciously, [ideology] is true, but with

a false consciousness."[1] Karl Mannheim, whom Hofstadter read with great interest, had also analyzed the wish dreams and fictions behind nations' ideologies and utopian visions.[2]

Second, that there is a bright line division between rational and irrational political interests, to be delineated by political sociology. Though an experienced political campaigner may doubt that economic and emotional appeals inhabit different ontological spheres, we have already analyzed the sociological liberal assumption that *homo economicus* is the image of rationality.

Third, that there is therefore a "correct" spectrum of political behavior and outlooks, whereby citizens act reasonably and sensibly. The "genuine liberal" is the model of the "correct" citizen. And the outward advocacy of liberal ideals does not by itself earn this label. McClosky wrote in 1985 that pathological critics of police brutality may talk a good game about human rights, but as "as a deviant and beleaguered minority" their talk is only self-flattering empty air.[3] There must also be an underlying basis of liberalism in the liberal's personality.

Fourth, that personal and social pathology best explains behaviors and outlooks that deviate from this spectrum. The sociological liberals were careful not to describe illiberal ideas as *eo ipso* pathological. When pathologizing dissenters, they claimed not to be reducing ideas to psychic states but rather describing how these ideas' adherents behaved. Bell anticipated the charge of reductionism in The End of Ideology, where he wrote:

> In what sense, one may ask, is the primitive impulse behind an idea more "real"
> than the idea itself? This is a difficulty one often encounters in connection with

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[1] Friedrich Engels, "Engels to Mehring," *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels: Selected Correspondence, 1846-1895*, trans. Dona Torr (New York: International Publishers, 1942), 511. Incidentally, Engels anticipated the end of ideology thesis and wholeheartedly endorsed it.

[2] Brown, 92.

[3] McClosky and Dennis Chong, "Similarities and Differences between Left-Wing and Right-Wing Radicals" *British Journal of Political Science* 15.3 (1985): 329-363, 336.

psychoanalytic thinking. It is obvious that the psychological impulse *behind* an idea is no test of its truth; the test of truth comes after the *idea* has originated. Yet we have learned not to scoff at these hidden mainsprings, *for we are dealing less with the ideas than with the way in which they are held and used.*[4]

The loud stubbornness of some individuals' political conduct just raises the presumption that they are using ideas to smother unwanted wishes and fears. Hofstadter's "The Paranoid Style" contains a similar proviso: "Style has more to do with the way in which ideas are advocated than with the truth or falsity of their content."[5] Of course, the juxtaposition of a class of disorders with a class of ideas has the rhetorical effect of undermining the latter.

Fifth, that a public philosophy consists in the shared dispositions and cultural outlooks that tend towards the "correct" spectrum. This public philosophy bases its content not on the ends of liberty, equality and fraternity, but rather what it interprets to be a good, sane character.

4.3. Examples of Therapeutic Discourse

4.3.1. Why These Examples?

This section does not aim at a comprehensive account of psychoanalysis in political theory. Rather, it aims at a survey sufficiently robust to demonstrate that sociological liberals indeed engaged in therapeutic discourse, and more importantly that they did so in connection to their philosophical premises, and still more importantly that the tendency poses grave danger to American liberalism. The choice of the survey's case studies makes sense for four reasons. First, obviously, is their influence. Second, they constitute some of the most outstanding violation of

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[4] Bell, *End of Ideology*, 315.
[5] Hofstadter, "The Paranoid Style in American Politics," *Harper's Magazine*, Nov. 1964: 77-86, 77.

argumentative norms I have seen—as when, contrary to Deweyan theory of truth to which Bell alluded above, they ignore individuals' stated positions and instead speculate about their motives in order to argue against *them*. Third, each of these examples illustrates subtly different uses for therapeutic discourse: Adorno uses it to identify potential fascist counterrevolutionaries; Lipset to justify political elitism; McClosky to reinterpret political theory in psychological categories; Hofstadter to thus reinterpret all of American history; and Lane to explore the motives of those insufficiently "allegiant" to New Deal political institutions. (Bell is absent from the therapeutic roster, but I hope to have established how influential he was in formulating the sociological liberal public philosophy. And needless to say, Bell did approvingly cite Adorno and himself conducted political criticism in psychological categories). And, fourth, they are notable because its rhetorical targets were those social categories at the vanguard of the populist revolt against liberalism.

4.3.2. The Authoritarian Personality and the Cult of Adorno

Based on a 2005 survey of fifteen friendly academics, the conservative—or should I say "pseudoconservative?"—weekly *Human Events* put out a list of the ten most harmful books of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. While not sufficiently offensive to make the top ten, *The Authoritarian Personality* edged out Mill, Charles Darwin and Simone de Beauvoir to earn thirteenth place.[6] Buckley's more contemporary analysis likened Adorno's academic following to a "cult," and found his thesis "marvelously convenient for those who refused to concede that

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[6] "Ten Most Harmful Books of the 19th and 20th Centuries," *Human Events*, 31 May 2005, 29 Nov. 2009 <http://www.humanevents.com/article.php?id=7591>.

there are rational grounds for conservative dissent from the Liberal orthodoxy, but were hard pressed, until relatively recently, to point to other grounds."[7]

The "other side" of which Buckley was member has many good reasons to find fault with TAP. Nonetheless, the study's backers and UC Berkeley authors had the best of intentions. TAP was part of Harper's larger "Studies in Prejudice" series, begun in 1944 as the full extent of Nazi barbarism became known and with the support of the American Jewish Committee. Misguided or not, TAP looked for the roots of fascism in the tangled web of the human personality, and was the first work of political psychology to combine both rich theoretical models and supposedly rigorous empirical methods.[8] The study's subjects included over two-thousand individuals—UC Berkeley students, middle-class professionals, merchant marine officers, San Quentin inmates and psychiatric patients—, several hundred of whom the authors selected for a more "qualitative," interview-based study. In determining the links between the personality and prejudiced social outlooks, the authors devised questionnaires for four scales: "ethnocentrism" (E) in general, "anti-Semitism" (A-S) in particular, "economic conservatism" (E-C) and "fascism" (F). This last F-scale, measuring not so much political attitudes as conventionalism and sexual preoccupation, was destined to become famous.[9]

After correlating high F-scorers ("highs") with ethnocentric and reactionary political views, the authors concluded:

> Thus a basically hierarchical, authoritarian, exploitive parent-child relationship is
> apt to carry over into a power-oriented, exploitively dependent attitude towards

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[7] Buckley, 59-60, 62.

[8] John Levi Martin, "'The Authoritarian Personality,' 50 Years Later: What Lessons Are There for Political Psychology?" *Political Psychology* 22.1 (2001): 1-26, 1-2.

[9] Having trouble keeping the lint off your black shirts? You can see where you fall on the F-scale for yourself at <http://www.anesi.com/fscale.htm>. And if you have still more time to waste, be sure to visit the G-scale at < http://www.anesi.com/gscale.htm>.

one's sex partner and one's God and may well culminate in a political philosophy and social outlook which has no room for anything but a desperate clinging to what appears to be strong and a disdainful rejection of whatever is relegated to the bottom.[10]

Maladaptive family and sexual relations cause one to disdain ambiguity and weakness and therefore crave paternalistic political institutions. These tendencies, they argued, are especially present in middle-class Americans. The conclusion has a degree of plausibility, made as it was in an America that endured abysmal race relations, and so influenced a whole generation of American thinkers convinced that the "bad guys" hid under every rock. But reading Adorno's contribution gives the twenty-first century reader ample reason to doubt the study's empirical backing.

Adorno was an ornery writer even by the impressive standards of German social theorists. Presaging the "pseudo" vocabulary he would use in TAP, his "On Jazz" (1936) argued that jazz's libertarian and egalitarian overtones are ersatz, as it is at bottom a fascistic institution of social control. His other analyses of mass culture made similar claims. But nothing matched the vituperation of his contribution to TAP. Focusing on the study's qualitative side—the interviews—he hurled *ad hominem* attacks at apparently all of his subjects, even those giving approved responses.

Adorno wrote at the outset that not anti-Semitism, but rather political pathology of all kinds was the object of his analysis. He justified the speculation of his subjects' primordial motives because even his liberals could be merely "pseudo-liberals." After all, fascism is conformist, and the American orthodoxy is democratic, so it makes sense that fascists will disguise themselves as liberals! But how do we tell the counterfeit liberal from the real thing?

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[10] Theodor W. Adorno et al., *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Harper, 1950), 971.

Adorno answered that it is the special province of the psychoanalytic philosopher king. "Sometimes high and low [F-scale] scorers are similar in what they say in political-economic terms, by different in some more subtle way," visible only to the trained eye.[11]

So, he argued, we can judge an individual's liberalism not by the "surface ideology" but by its "real basis within the personality." All other personality types merit the harshest essentializing and criticism. This does not betray liberalism's humanist ideals in the least, said a pious Adorno. Modern society is so obviously a house divided against itself—the equalitarians versus the authoritarians—that the failure to treat the latter with a persecutory scorn could only play into the enemies' hands. We liberals need to man up and stomach burning the village in order to save it.[12]

It was in this spirit that Adorno diagnosed the American electorate with a list of disorders. There was, obviously, the "authoritarian syndrome"—the umbrella of all relevant personal pathology—brought on by a fear of the father during the oedipal state. Authoritarianism manifests itself in external hostility brought on by internal sexual repression. When a subject thought that unions, while sometimes beneficent, "demanded too much," Adorno interpreted this as a fear of "arousing the father's anger—and hence the subject's castration anxiety." Because objective social forces have almost eradicated "genuine conservatism," the remaining avowed members of the tradition can only be "pseudo-conservatives," who stand in some rather undefined relationship with the authoritarian complex. Whereas the true conservative successfully identifies with the loving father, Adorno's pseudo-conservative failed at a young age in this identification and yet co-opted the father's authoritarian and disciplinarian pattern. [13]

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[11] *Id*., 605, 675.
[12] *Id*., 648, 747.
[13] *Id*., 759, 709, 683-4.

But the authoritarian and pseudo-conservative syndromes were only Adorno's broadest conceptualizations. Some other pathologies include:

- *The anti-utopia complex.* While pie-and-the-sky dreamers, too weak to defend liberalism from authoritarians, did not cut if for Adorno, he was much harder on so-called "realists." Avowed pragmatists exhibit a:

> Compulsive over-realism which treats everything and everyone as on object to be handled, manipulated, seized by the subject's own theoretical and practical patterns. The technical aspects of life, and things qua "tools," are fraught with libido.

This "sadomasochistic" attitude, found especially in engineers, presages a sympathy for manipulative leaders. And it is not enough for the anti-utopians to *say* they value ideals. When a woman called for an idealistic American foreign policy but with an excess of realist overtones, Adorno scoffed, "There is something pathetic about this statement," as it perverts idealism "into a lie."[14]

- *The bureaucratic complex.* If you blame pen-pushers indiscriminately for the problems of modern life, you are probably projecting your own unacceptable impulses on socially acceptable targets. This is part and parcel of the usurpation complex, discussed below.

- *The education complex.* Calling for more extensive and better education too loudly suggests underlying undemocratic sympathies. Such calls crowd out concrete proposals for social reform. To pseudo-liberals and pseudo-socialists, "the education idea serves as a subtle device by which the anti-utopian can act to prevent a change and yet appear progressive."[15]

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[14] *Id*., 767, 697.
[15] *Id*., 700-1.

- *"No pity for the poor."* "Tough guys" who think that the poor should dig themselves out of their own holes obviously project their own poor opinions of themselves on others, and so have obvious proto-fascist sympathies. But just as bad is the other extreme: the officious, hysterical, bourgeois bluestocking who "overcompensates" in her zeal for improving the lot of the poor and "humiliates him whom she pretends to help."[16]

- *The old age complex.* People who criticize elderly politicians and call for "young blood"—for instance, Thomas Dewey, who served as Adorno's subjects' "projection of the punitive superego"—exhibit a rather exotic political pathology. Adorno linked this undercurrent to the alleged latent homosexuality and hypochondria of the Nazi movement.[17]

- *Pseudo-progressivism or pseudo-socialism.* These dubious socialists correctly call for state action to address inequalities, but do so in unapproved ways. Their calls for rationality and efficiency stem from an underlying hatred of the democratic process. Or, their attitudes the Soviet Union are either too sympathetic (conceiving it as a grand experiment) or not supportive enough ("idiotically" comparing Stalin's Russia with Hitler's Germany).[18]

- *The taxation complex.* It is rational to complain about taxes when the proceeds go to waste, Adorno conceded. But in America:

    > The extraordinary amount of libido attached to the complex of taxes, even in a boom period, such as the years when our subjects were interviewed, seems to confirm the hypothesis that it draws on deeper sources of the personality as much as on the surface resentment of being deprived of a

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[16] *Id.*, 699.
[17] *Id.*, 669-670.
[18] *Id.*, 677-678, 721, 724.

considerable part of one's income without visible advantages to the individual.[19]

Adorno, if alive today, would not resist the conclusion that the "teabaggers" of the right-wing tax revolt so call themselves because of the term's sexual meanings.

- *The usurpation complex.* An individual suffering from the usurpation complex fears that governmental elites have illegitimately usurped power from the people who *should* be in charge—namely, economic elites who *earn* their privilege. Sufferers blame dread dark forces on their anxieties and neuroses, and also engage in projection: pseudo-conservatives, for instance, accuse New Dealers of the very thing they themselves would like to do, *viz.* undemocratically seize power.[20]

Did Adorno find much hope in low F-scale scorers to counteract these pathologies? Not exactly. As we have seen, there are "pseudo-liberals" who are dubious in their commitments against fascism. There are also well-intentioned but otherwise defective liberals. There are liberals who are too rigid and mechanistic in their politics, and so lamentably demonstrate the "total" thinking of fascists. There are impulsive or easygoing liberals whose hedonic nihilism pushes them to the other extreme. There are romantic liberals who are too idealistic to meet illiberal force with liberal counterforce. But then there is the genuine liberal: a construct that "may be conserved in terms of that balance between superego, ego, and id which Freud deemed ideal." Only one of Adorno's subjects—an attractive female undergraduate described in suspiciously glowing terms—apparently met the genuine standard without reservation. She demonstrated openness, "moral courage" and "compassion" and yet was "no 'Jew Lover.'"[21]

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[19] *Id.*, 717. It is only a matter of time before someone rediscovers this one….
[20] *Id.*, 689.
[21] *Id.*, 771, 781.

TAP stirred controversy immediately after publication. The sociological liberals nonetheless canonized and defended it. Lipset noted flaws, mainly related to its low sample size, but claimed that follow-up studies using the F-scale corroborated it.[22] Lane conducted one of these studies, using a downsized scale in a nationwide survey in 1952. He concluded, with Adorno, that equalitarians and authoritarians often engage in identical political behavior, but do so from different reasons: the equalitarian votes out of efficacy, the authoritarian out of convention; the equalitarian desires reform from a desire to improve society, the authoritarian to demonstrate his moral superiority over others. Controlled for education and wealth, authoritarians were almost exclusively Republican.[23] His Political Ideology accused TAP's critics of falsely believing "that unless the research is methodologically correct the concept must fail" (!).[24]

The biggest early complaint about TAP was its socialistic political bias. Edward Shils, sociologist and pontiff of the end of ideology school, claimed that its researchers deliberately omitted the authoritarianism of the Left.[25] Less noted in sociological liberalism's heyday were the study's crippling methodological flaws and ethical deficiencies. For one, the F-scale seems designed to produce the result that it did—that traditionalism and conventionalism are related to fascism—because the questions themselves *assume* this relation. Further, the authors unwarrantedly assumed that high scorers were insincere in denying having ethnocentric impulses: their models assumed that such individuals are self-deluded, willing to lie to conceal their inner psychic conflicts. TAP's reliance on "projective" interviews especially highlights this. That is, the researchers would ask interviewees questions such as, "what are the worst forms of

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[22] Lipset, "Working-Class Authoritarianism," 486-7 no. 14.
[23] Lane, "Political Personality," 180.
[24] Lane, *Political Ideology*, 404.
[25] McClosky and Chong, 329.

crime?" If the answer was "rape and murder," and the interviewee was a high scorer, the inference was that these would-be brownshirts *wanted* to rape and murder.[26] *A ha—caught you!* When "Mack," the archetypal authoritarian, praised his father and denied ever being abused, researcher Nevitt Sanford commented that "Mack's references to his father's devotion and attention can be better understood as expressions of a wish rather than as statements of what the father was like in actuality."[27] A recent critic attributes these methodological problems to:

> The fusion of nominalist research procedures (in which empirical results were used to type respondents) with a realist interpretation of types (in which some people "just were" authoritarians and others not) …[28]

"Authoritarian" and "anti-authoritarian" thus became dichotomous metaphysical categories. The authors squeezed their data in every which way to fit the dramatic Manichaeism that characterized the end of ideology school.

4.3.3. "Working-Class Authoritarianism:" The Common Man or the Common Monster?

Centered on the experience of Nazism, TAP focused primarily on middle-class subjects, deemed to be the American counterparts of the *kleinbürgerliche* malcontents who joined Adolf Hitler's ranks. Within ten years of TAP's publication Lipset had absorbed Adorno's style and premises. But Lipset's "Working-Class Authoritarianism" expanded the authoritarian tent to accompany the industrial and agricultural workers of Western democracies. Workers, after all, had proven susceptible to totalitarian mass movements and ethnic prejudice. Just as Aristotle doubted that the harried poor could ever demonstrate political excellence, Lipset in much different language claimed that the working lifestyle stunts the capacity to act reasonably and

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[26] Martin, 5-6, 9.
[27] Adorno et al., 795.
[28] Martin, 1.

sensibly: democratic participation requires an "abstract" understanding of the rules of the game, whereas physical labor encourages "concrete" thinking. Workers can neither conceive of the connection between ends and means nor delay gratification in their political behavior. Lipset further cited psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner, whose "most consistent finding" shows "more frequent use of physical punishment by working-class parents. The middle-class, in contrast, resorts to … 'love-oriented' techniques of discipline." This only increased workers' aggressive and authoritarian behavior.[29]

But what of the working class's historic contribution to liberal and social democratic movements? *Poppycock*. Workers supported liberal policy goals, for instance the expansion of the franchise, not out of principle but because such goals accidentally corresponded to their immediate economic interest. Remember, they are capable of thinking only *concretely*. But is not such a limitation to their credit, at least from the sociological liberal point of view? After all, ideological fanaticism speaks in the abstract. Lipset answered in the negative, because in his view "status anxiety" causes workers to advance perhaps legitimate interests in illegitimate ways. As a "low-status group" they *cannot* support liberalism with sufficient sincerity: non-economic liberalism "must be considered in part a basic attitude which is actively discouraged by [their] social situation." Even if they participate in the correct political groupings, chances are these associations are elite-dominated, and so it is the *elites* who deserve credit for whatever positive contribution they make to society. Besides, being conformist authoritarians, they vote Democratic or Labour because "everyone does it."[30]

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[29] Lipset, "Working-Class Authoritarianism," 492-4.
[30] *Id.*, 490, 497.

Psychologists S.M. Miller and Frank Riessman disputed Lipset's findings in "'Working-Class Authoritarianism': A Critique of Lipset" (1961). In words that could apply to all of the end of ideology ideologists, they wrote:

> [Sociologist Alvin] Gouldner has referred to the 'metaphysical pathos,' the philosophical and emotional overtones, in which a theory is embedded. The metaphysical pathos of Lipset's work seems to be that of the desirability of what might be termed 'progressive moderation' in a period that he believes to be marked by the fortunate end of ideology.

Lipset used his own conception of liberalism and democracy as a yardstick for everyone else's liberal and democratic commitments. But there are other ways of conceptualizing liberalism and democracy than bare proceduralism, and the occasional questioning of the functioning of democratic institutions is hardly authoritarian. "If other features of democracies were to be considered," wrote Miller and Riessman, "such as the equalitarian, anti-elitist, co-operative connotations, then it is likely that the working class would not appear to be so threateningly anti-democratic." Further, the childrearing research Lipset cited was flimsy, and he confused workers' desire for strong and "people-oriented" leadership with a desire for dictatorship. Whatever the workers' authoritarian potential, it is merely an inactivated potential, not a "perpetual actuality."[31]

Lipset also contradicted himself when admonishing workers for their authoritarian dogmatism and in the same breath noting that "low-status groups …, in general, are less interested in politics."[32] Lipset, with perhaps greater intellectual integrity than most, acknowledged the force of the critique and admitted that he jumped the gun on some of his

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[31] S.M Miller and Frank Riessman, "'Working-Class Authoritarianism': A Critique of Lipset" *The British Journal of Sociology* 12.3 (1961): 263-276, 272, 263, 272, 268, 272.
[32] Lipset, "Working-Class Authoritarianism," 490.

claims. He said that the study was not so much a critique of all working-class personality features—which is the plain implication of the text—as it was an more humble attempt to explain worker participation in communist movements.[33] Follow-up studies showed that Lipset's conclusions held good nowhere in the West save the Southern United States.[34]

4.3.4. "Conservatism and Personality:" Conservatism as Psychological, Not Philosophical

The behavioral revolution led the sociological liberals to at times conceptualize intellectual history as a contest between competing psychiatric types. McClosky's "Conservatism and Personality" argued that we can best understand conservatism not as a philosophy but as a personality: a "natural" set of traits "around which individuals of certain habitual outlooks, temperaments and sensibilities can comfortably come to rest and be united with others of like disposition." But what of the writings of Hume, Burke, Disraeli and others? It turns out that conservatism's written tenets are too contradictory and fatuous to merit attention, and have not fundamentally changed since the eighteenth century. For McClosky this raised the presumption that conservatism has inspirational power over only those individuals, present in every generation, with certain personality features. And because the conservative outlooks, temperaments and sensibilities are in postwar America *deviant*, "these projections of aggressive personality tendencies take on the respectability of an old and honored philosophical tradition."[35] That he could not correlate his typology to any actual behavior mattered little.

McClosky never considered that one could perhaps be a conservative and liberal at the same time, as the philosophical tenets of the liberal tradition—shorn from any cultural context—

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[33] Lipset, "'Working-Class Authoritarianism': A Reply to Miller and Riesman" *The British Journal of Sociology* 12.3 (1961): 277-281, 277.

[34] Edward G. Grabb, "Working-Class Authoritarianism and Tolerance of Outgroups: A Reassessment" *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 43.1 (1979): 36-47, 36.

[35] McClosky, "Conservatism and Personality," 28, 41.

are implicit in the attitudes of many Americans perhaps ignorant of "liberalism's" historical meaning. (At the very least we could hope for an economy of disagreement). But the behavioralist account of political discourse takes us away from the forum of ideas. Though claiming to be value-neutral and hostile to the "reductivist [*sic*] fallacy" of draining issues of philosophical content,[36] McClosky's writings invoke an apocalyptic American politics, where two personality styles—one perfectly virtuous, the other seemingly perfectly vicious—struggle in an all-or-nothing contest. In this and similar accounts we have prophetic visions of the Culture Wars that would shatter sociological liberalism.

4.3.5. "The Paranoid Style:" The Paranoids—They're Everywhere!

Hofstadter's "The Paranoid Style" opened by explaining his choice of the term:

I call it the paranoid style simply because no other word adequately evokes the sense of heated exaggeration, suspiciousness and conspirational fantasy that I have in mind. In using the expression "paranoid style" I am not speaking in a clinical sense, but borrowing a clinical term for other purposes.

He believed this political "style," distinguished from but related to certain political *ideas*, to constitute a sturdy thread in American political history: starting with the anti-clericalists in the Federal Era; through the anti-Masons of Jacksonian America, the anti-"Slave Power" abolitionists of the eighteen-fifties, the populists of the Gilded Age and the antiwar Left during World War I; and finally continued by McCarthyists, Sun Belt conservatives and "both sides of the race controversy today." Quite a politically diverse bunch, these paranoids! Their paranoia, of course, often represents status anxiety and manifests hidden sexual meanings.[37]

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[36] *Id*., 44.
[37] Hofstadter, "Paranoid Style," 77, 78, 85.

In the *Paranoid Style and Other Essays* (1966), which expanded the critique of Goldwater's "pseudo-conservative" movement, Hofstadter acknowledged his debt to Adorno et al.'s "enlightening study," though expressed he "some reservations about its methods and conclusions." Responding to criticism that his original "Paranoid Style" essay neglected the social and economic context in which conservative activism inheres, he claimed that economic dynamics matter mainly insofar as "wealthy reactionaries" manipulate pseudo-conservative organizers and perpetuate "one of the most perverse forms of occupational therapy known to man." Even so, no determinant societal factors—not even the manipulation of "useful idiots" by an elect few—could explain the movement's "broad appeal" and "dense and massive irrationality." Hofstadter concluded that the Right wanted not practical victories, a prospect Hofstadter then deemed impossible, but rather the emotional payoff that comes from undermining and perhaps destroying American government.[38]

Anthropologist Margaret Mead's "The New Isolationism" (1955) objected to some of Hofstadter's earlier work. She wrote that the latter unfairly penalized conservatives for anxiously reacting to anxiety-provoking international events—events in which the liberal Cold Warriors of the Truman Administration figured prominently. In the world of Hofstadter's psychological speculation, "there might be no atom bomb, no hydrogen bomb, no explicit insistence on a polarized world, no Communist China to alter the attitudes of the American people."[39] Indeed, the Korean War seems absent from the sociological liberals' accounts of vulgar anti-communism. Mead's critique holds good for Hofstadter's later work as well. The Paranoid Style pointed to the role of Baptist evangelicals in the New Right and expressed legitimate concerns about the potential fundamentalist threat to democratic stability, but denied that such church

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[38] Hofstadter, *Paranoid Style*, 44 no. 1, 49, 137. I am unfortunately indebted to V.I. Lenin for the phrase, "useful idiot."

[39] Buckley, 160.

attendance could have any but insensible motives.[40] His tendency to articulate political positions in psychological categories therefore seems to tell us as much about his own anxieties about America's future as it does those of his subjects.

4.3.6. *Political Ideology*: Allegiance as Mental Health

We have already discussed how Lane's Political Ideology advocated the increasing atomization of American life. Briefly, we should also note how Lane discussed opponents of the "new collectivism." The politically maladjusted are usually either too apathetic or too socially inept to participate politically—either way, the electorate wins!—, and Lane was more sanguine than Adorno about the average American's democratic credentials. (Whereas Adorno's "genuine liberal" sounds like something out of heroic fiction, Lane believed sufficiently democratic a "modest self-esteem" and willingness to leave politics to its own devices). However, Lane's book abounds with such foreboding language as "the fragile thread of reason," and the worry that the common man will "borrow and use explanations for his plight that may easily set the world in flames." This is because the only "effective" criticism of the status quo that Lane heard in his interviews came from an "anomic, cabalistic, destructive … counterelite," and "*this* is the opposition prepared to 'explain' matters and exercise leadership, if anything were to go wrong and a crisis atmosphere to prevail."[41]

This counterelite of "undemocrats" was pathological for no other reason than for doubting that decision-making is widely shared in modern democracies, and thinking "big business" to be inordinately powerful. But Bell had already proven that no "power elite" or "ruling class" still exists in America. Therefore, only primordial impulses, akin to the roots of

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[40] Hofstadter, *Paranoid Style*, 75-77.
[41] Lane, *Political Ideology*, 162, 348, 453.

anti-Semitism, could impel someone to conclude otherwise: "It would be easier, no doubt, to see the President or Congress as running things—but here, … the deficiencies in experiencing a repugnant ego or self make this less plausible than some system of powerful but unofficial control." No doubt calls for a stronger Executive to rectify Congress's beholdenness to special interests stem from the desire to avoid unwanted sexual impulses![42] Whether or not Lane was rationally licensed to celebrate "the new collectivism" of the managerial state, the fact remains that he dismissed without hesitation any criticism of extant institutions. Highly controversial normative issues he and others consigned to the clinic, having found them already resolved by the light of positive knowledge.

4.4. Why Sociological Liberals and Therapeutic Discourse Were Bedfellows

Our survey complete, I will now bring the paper's discussion back to the issue of the public philosophy. Recall that sociological liberalism's normative assumptions were: positivism; an economistic conception of rationality; moral relativism; the end of ideology thesis; the primacy of stability; and the high demandingness of democratic virtue. To better establish that the tree-killing orgy of midcentury psychological speculation was not a mere historical accident but rather a byproduct of the Academy's dominant variant of liberalism, I will here briefly suggest how each normative assumption contributed.

Positivism. Seduced by the so-called "positive knowledge" of the natural sciences, sociological liberals abandoned the practical knowledge of moral philosophy. Despite professions of relativism and open-mindedness they came to equate knowledge with certainty.

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[42] *Id*., 111, 126. Lane suggested a downsized version of the "authoritarian syndrome," which he called the "impulsion syndrome." People who worry that they cannot control their sexual appetites project this anxiety on everyone else. Fearing that their fellows will act savagely if tempted, they then crave strong public authorities to keep everyone in check. Mead hypothesized that Russian culture exhibits a similar tendency, in part causing Russian political forms to be statist.

Gone were the unscientific questions of "what must I do?" and "what can I hope?"[43] Humanity's

moral imagination, striving for norms, once had a privileged ontological status as *res cogitans*.

The first positivists saw the unscientific respect accorded to the realm of ideas, and so demoted it

to *res extensa*: matter scrutable to the sociologist's surveys. In the fifties and sixties,

behavioralists took this transformation to its logical conclusion in at least implicitly denying *any*

independence on the part of ideas in relation to brain states. Protests against this move met

guffaws. Philosophical idealism is the *real* opiate of the intellectuals, said Lane.[44] In the absence

of non-naturalistic inquiries, therapeutic discourse stood unopposed.

The economistic conception of rationality. Only those who make economic claims on the

system are "rational" in the sociological liberal scheme. Tough luck for everyone else: "where

there are status anxieties, there is little or nothing which a government can do," shrugged Lipset

condescendingly.[45] Although modernism avowedly eschews such neat distinctions, the influence

of modernist psychological theory ironically led the sociological liberals into an epistemic

Manichaeism: the wheeling and dealing trade union, whose behavior they could explain in

Schumpeterian terms, is rational; all others political styles are the proper subjects of hairsplitting

psychiatric speculation. The problem is that such *a priori* modeling does violence to truth. Like

earlier utilitarian models, public choice theory accounts for *preferences* and not *values*. The

lobbying of Congress for subsidies on the part of farmers or capitalists puts no stress on the

public choice model because such political behavior is non-normative (unless "I would rather be

rich than poor" counts as a value). But what of abortion, gun control and even the rudiments of

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[43] Two of the famous questions that Immanuel Kant's philosophical system sought to answer, *Critique of Pure Reason*, eds. Paul Guyer and Alan Wood (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), A805/B833.

[44] Lane, "Knowledgeable Society," 656. The phrase is a nod to French skeptic Raymond Aron's book, *The Opium of the Intellectuals* (1955), a jab at Marxism. Aron was something of a French Daniel Bell, though I should say that France's intellectual culture needed far more than America's a cold dose of positivistic pragmatism.

[45] Lipset, "The Sources of the 'Radical Right,'" *The New American Right*: 166-233, 170.

foreign policy? To say that I *prefer* a policy outcome on any of these issues in the same way that I *prefer* a self-serving change in the tax code, and that the procedural republic could aggregate my foreign policy preferences and everyone else's, violates certain pre-theoretical intuitions. Given the "market failure" of positivist pluralism in relation to values, the sociological liberals compensated by *pathologizing* the stresses that "true believers" put on their notion of democracy. Further, as seen in Mead's critique, the methodological individualism attendant to public choice theory encouraged the sociological liberals to treat the stresses in isolation. They made little effort to contextualize allegedly irrational political behavior, because such a wider context would have perhaps made such behavior sensible, and so undermine their public philosophy's most important tenet: that ideology was over.

Moral relativism. From an exhaustion of the philosophical imagination sprung the notion that the liberal public philosophy ought to admit no valuational certainties. This doubly encouraged therapeutic discourse. First, it encouraged the sociological liberals to interpret even oblique or nonpolitical professions to certainty as "absolutist" and ergo undemocratic. Adorno speculated that even liberals who allow for "standardization in the sphere of human experience"—as when they adhere to rich and comprehensive moral philosophies—have definite "fascist potential."[46] Second, as mentioned earlier, the sociological liberals had to fill the philosophical void with psychological substance. They gave up exhorting the grunts to be democrats with reasoned argumentation and instead strove for a "common culture" and a "democratic personality."

The end of ideology. As a normative and ergo ideological claim, the end of ideology thesis renders suspect any idea outside of whatever the thesis' votary happens to designate as the American consensus. Bell had in mind an aggressively Keynesian welfare state geared to contain

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[46] Adorno et al., 749.

communism. (While it would be grossly hypocritical for me to speculate as to what sort of consensus Brooks has in mind, I can justly guess that it diverges from Bell's). So how do the sociological liberals negotiate a simultaneous endorsement of the thesis and an awareness of extra-consensual ideals? If the rational "end state" provides everything that citizens want or should want, and yet some individuals want differently, the sociologist must then either claim to know what these individuals *really* want or else discount these wants as worthless.[47] Therapeutic discourse assists in either of these moves.

The primacy of stability. How this rather undefended normative priority contributed to the midcentury therapeutic discourse hardly needs spelling out. Dumbfounded that political actors sought to rock the boat, the sociological liberals interpreted their actions as aggression for the sake of aggression, to further instability for the sake of instability. Lane thus spoke of an "Armageddon Complex" among his fellow citizens. These lost souls seek a "legitimate," "destructive" and "idealistic" release from their spoiled lives in the forms of war and revolution.[48]

The impossibility of common virtue. The sociological liberals burdened individuals with unreasonably high standards when assessing their support for democracy. They set "common men" up for failure, as when they demanded unflinching support for dissidents' due process rights even as the party of the sociological liberals publicly portrayed American Communists as criminals. The subjects not only had to state approved positions but do so with the proper intensity and from the right motives. Failure easily secured, scads of psychological literature appeared to explain the matter. If having unalloyed feelings about the state of American

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[47] "Nobody can know what an agent wants better than the man himself," MacIntyre, *Self-Images*, 10.
[48] Lane, *Political Ideology*, 463.

democracy either in the sixties or our nameless decade is the standard of mental health, who among us is sane?

4.5. Gone Awry

4.5.1. Introduction to Section

So therapeutic discourse went hand in hand with sociological liberalism. But is therapeutic discourse of necessity a *bad* thing? And even if so, is it sufficient to sink such a titanic public philosophy, which won the allegiance of America's best and brightest? I will here establish that it is almost certainly a bad thing, and suggest that it at the very least calls some of sociological liberalism's principles into serious question. First, I will explain (hopefully not *too* pedantically) how therapeutic discourse offends common sense, or in fancier language pre-theoretical and pre-liberal intuitions. Second, I will drive home the already suggested scientific bankruptcy of much of the surveyed literature, making the point that sociological liberalism *really* had a theoretical need for therapeutic discourse if it proved so magnetically drawn to pseudoscience. Third, I will discuss why this theoretical attraction—already well-established— led to liberalism's conceptual suicide.

4.5.2. Bentham Knows Best

First, the obvious. Unless Adorno and his followers established beyond a shadow of doubt that they were so virtuous and wise that only knaves and fools could possibly disagree with them, then they had no license to automatically conceptualize opponents of their preferred political and cultural outlooks as deficient, defective and blameworthy. Being human, and being

humans with especially serious contradictions and antinomies in their political thinking at that, they did not. (And even if they did, Book Three of Aristotle's *Politics* prescribes appropriate measures to which their less virtuous research subjects could justly resort). It is also puzzling that anyone should reject arguments because of the motives that may or may not give rise to them. In *Modern Dogma and the Rhetoric of Assent* (1974), a book that speaks to the seldom addressed question of when we should and should not change our minds, literary critic Wayne C. Booth gave this particular tendency a name: "motivism." While describing it as a "modern dogma" spurred by popularized Marxism, psychoanalysis and positivism, Booth found the first motivist to be Plato's Thrasymachus.[49] Jeremy Bentham was sufficiently leather-tongued to see the fallacy for what it was. In a compendium of political fallacies, he described a scene in the House of Commons:

> The proposer of the measure, it is asserted, is actuated by bad motives, from whence it is inferred that he entertains some bad design. This, again, is no more than a modification of *the fallacy of distrust;* but one of the very weakest—1. Because motives are hidden in the human breast; 2. Because, if the measure is beneficial, it would be absurd to reject it on account of the motives of its author.[50]

Bentham styled himself the most benevolent man who ever lived, gave personal names to his possessions and had his embalmed corpse displayed in public for posterity. But whatever neuroses gave rise to this great thinker's outlooks his assessment above is inarguable.

Another obvious problem of therapeutic discourse is that it poses a pragmatic paradox for those who engage in it. This is akin to the paradox that some philosophers attribute to the

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[49] Wayne C. Booth, *Modern Dogma and the Rhetoric of Assent* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1974), 37 no. 26.
[50] Jeremy Bentham, *The Book of Fallacies: From the Unfinished Papers of Jeremy Bentham* (London: John & H.L. Hunt, 1824), 133.

"nightmare world" of determinists, or those who believe that all events are explicable in terms of sufficient and irreversible causes and that free will does not exist: if they say that their reasoning is determined, how could they claim to have any good reasons to be determinists?[51] Similarly, how could sociologists arrogate to themselves a philosophical superiority over their research subjects if they reduce *all* opinions, and so both their subjects' *and* their own, to primordial psychological forces?

4.5.3. The Pseudoscientific Revolution[52]

The sociological liberals took it for granted that private tics somehow snowball into explosive consequences in the political arena. This both Booth and MacIntyre correctly identified as a peculiarly modern and peculiarly dogmatic assumption. In what way *could* Hitler's compulsive vegetarianism explain the course of Nazi Germany? On a more serious note, the sociological liberals claimed that rigorous scientific backing informed their conclusions—as when Hofstadter accused his enemies of hating society, "a hatred which one would hesitate to impute to them if one did not have suggestive clinical evidence"[53]—, but such "suggestive clinical evidence" one could only *very charitably* find inconclusive. In a recent issue of *Political Psychology* devoted especially to authoritarianism, a contributor laments:

> In giving an overall evaluation, one has to state that after more than a half century
> of research the concept of the authoritarian personality was not very successful.

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[51] See Berlin, *Historical Inevitability* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), 33 no. 1 and Karl Popper, "Indeterminism and Human Freedom," *Popper Selections*, ed. David Miller (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985): 247–64.

[52] It is *not* my contention, as it seems to be MacIntyre's, that psychotherapy on either the Freudian or behaviorist conception is pseudoscientific, or that therapy is a worthless exercise. (Freud himself abhorred the sort of reductionism seen in TAP and was far from Adorno politically). I also do not claim that psychology ought to be irrelevant to political inquiry. Where I depart from the sociological liberals is the comical, self-parodying way in which they deem it relevant.

[53] Hofstadter, "The Pseudo-Conservative Revolt," 34-5.

> The enormous research effort has produced few clear results; most findings have
> been compromised by counterevidence, and a stable relationship between the
> characteristics of an authoritarian personality and corresponding overt behavior
> has not been established.[54]

The sociological liberals employed psychological categories that lacked predictive power—the reduction of the Right's political behavior to status anxiety explains as little as saying that a "particular group discriminates against blacks because its members are racist"[55]—, were verifiable with only tautological methods and reeked of ideological bias. It was always the *other* people who are authoritarian, after all. They reached for the prestigious brass ring of the natural sciences but came away from the carousel with counterfeit pseudoscience. They should have known better. But they exercised poor judgment not because of their personality flaws, but rather because of the peculiar liberal public philosophy in their analyses were embedded. We saw this in the chapter's previous section.

Political theorists of yore did rely on psychological speculation, often arriving at useful and brilliant ways to think about politics. Thomas Hobbes prefaced his *Leviathan* with an explanation of his method: detailing the appetites and aversions of his own mind, and projecting them others. But he added in a monument to intellectual integrity that such political psychology is:

> harder than to learn any language or science; yet, when I shall have set down my
> own reading orderly and perspicuously, the pains left another will be only to

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[54] Detlef Österreich, "Flight into Security: A New Approach and Measure of the Authoritarian Personality" *Political Psychology* 26.2 (2005): 275-297, 277.

[55] Wasburn, 258.

consider if he also find not the same in himself. For this kind of doctrine admitteth no other demonstration.[56]

What distinguishes the sociological liberalism from such earlier enterprises is its enmeshment in the dangerous fantasy that it alone conducted value-free and unideological political inquiry. This could be the only implication of their intemperate insistence that ideology was over.

But sociological liberalism was explicitly preferential—which one would *expect* from a school that aspired to public philosophizing. Duke political theorist Thomas A. Spragens, Jr.'s book, *The Irony of Liberal Reason* (1981), discussed the self-contradiction of much sociology: "those who are 'value-neutral' may thus also be for democracy or may intersperse calls for value-neutrality with demands that mankind 'grow up.'"[57] MacIntyre's unfortunately titled but brilliant essay "The End of Ideology and the End of the End of Ideology" (1971) correctly draws our attention to the ideological nature of the end ideology thesis, which is sufficient to discredit it. To MacIntyre, an ideology has three characteristics: first, it describes empirical realities in ways not inherent in the realities; second, it makes descriptive and normative claims and explains the relationship between the two; and, third, it defines the life plans of votaries and why not everyone shares their ideology.[58] The end of ideology thesis—which more or less contains all the normative paraphernalia of sociological liberalism—is ideological because it non-obviously interprets world developments to be heading towards a beneficent end-state. It equates the "is" of Western politics with the "ought," meaning it ideologically overlooked the racial question in the fifties and sixties. And finally it is ideological because it fosters in its votaries the self-conception as a civilized and "tough-minded" minority, defending the tradition of pragmatic civility against

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[56] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Edwin Curley (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), 5.

[57] Spragens, *Liberal Reason*, 203.

[58] MacIntyre, *Self-Images*, 5-7. I say "unfortunately titled" because it inspired such later essays as "The End of the End of the End of Ideology," which I will not dignify by citing. Were I less sparing with the reader's patience I could have titled a section "The End of the End of the End of the End of Ideology."

the willfully demented. Arguments about first principle already settled, the task was no longer to converse with adversaries but rather to describe them as the dangerous dreck that they are: the hysterical New Right; the sloppily sentimental romantics; the would-be commissars of the left-wing intelligencia. Sociological liberalism constructs in its premises its enemies. Is it any wonder that its adherents grasped at pseudoscience that described "authoritarians" in ways amenable to these constructions?

4.5.4. Dangers for Liberalism: The Dark Legacy of Therapeutic Discourse

This section deals with how sociological liberalism veered off the liberal course and found itself in the dark alleyways of illiberalism. First, despite its reputation as a "cult of consensus," its account of politics so amenable to therapeutic discourse in fact closed the possibility of consensus. Second, it tends towards an illiberal technocratic emphasis. Third, its attachment to liberal philosophical norms is so contingent that it cannot prevent its potential illiberalism from receiving actual expression.

First, the destruction of consensus. Like the nineteenth century party bosses and spoilsmen, the sociological liberals sought to banish all moral disagreement from the public space. This they did in the spirit of preserving a supposed "consensus" around procedures. However, as therapeutic discourse demonstrates, the fragility of the consensus startled them: American affluence had hardly brought about the end of ideology but rather new strains, beyond the comprehension of extant theoretical models. The attempt at a "pseudo-consensus" was misguided in the first place for two reasons. First, the notion that fundamental disagreement can just wither away in the right socioeconomic conditions rejects premises long established in political theory. Hume wrote that moral disagreement would exist so long as there is a relative

scarcity of goods combined with a limitedly generous human nature. Value theorists have established that our social world entails a multiplicity of valid and competing goods, the perfect negotiation of which is impossible. Then there is the problem of an imperfect diffusion of information. Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson argue in *Democracy and Disagreement* (1996) that these factors, taken together, make disagreement a "permanent condition of democratic politics" even were a perfectly classless and racially harmonious society realized. Second, a public philosophy can either ignore or suppress this condition only at a great cost. As Gutmann and Thompson put it:

> Moral argument in politics can be socially divisive, politically extremist, and morally inconclusive, but avoiding it for these reasons would be self-defeating: the division, the extremism, and the inconclusiveness would persist while the prospects of finding better terms of social cooperation would deteriorate.[59]

In the unduly circumscribed terms of social cooperation of positivist pluralism, dissenting opinions on highly controversial public questions receive no consideration and are ripe for *ad hominem* ridicule. Is such a move likely to win dissenters' allegiance and engender greater democratic stability? Could the policy of "shut your traps" furnish the intellectual tools produce an economy of disagreement between the public philosophy and its opponents? More likely it helped produce the politics of confrontation that shook the "new Enlightenment" to its core. As MacIntyre put it, the problem with the end of ideology thesis is that it "leaves precisely those whom it seeks to educate vulnerable to almost any ideological appeal."[60] Sociological liberals' exaggerated normative premium on institutions' "smooth functioning" paradoxically endangers these institutions' very survival. While right in their outrage over the New Left's assault on

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[59] Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, *Democracy and Disagreement* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), 9, 347.

[60] MacIntyre, *Self-Images*, 11.

higher education, these men were wrong in denying that they themselves had reaped what they had sown. Were the left- and right-wing subjects of pseudoscientific condescension, invective and abuse *wrong* to be malcontented? Not in the least.

The introduction of psychological categories into political discourse has no doubt contributed to its sorry state. Once motives and not reasons become the loci of discussion, the art of manipulating or attacking people replaces the art of convincing them. It would only be faintly overdramatic to interpret the logical conclusion "motivism" as a blood curdling license to suppress or eliminate ideological enemies: *you can't convince 'em, why not shoot 'em?* On a less frightening note, the problem with therapeutic discourse is that liberals could not guarantee that their accusations of "authoritarianism," "status anxiety," "self-hatred" and others would not be turned against them. 1972, the year that saw McGovern's platform of pacifism and redistributive liberalism and an explosion of interest in Rawls, was *the* turning point for postwar liberalism. The liberal associates of Bell became ex-liberals and began issuing jeremiads against a "new class:" the left-leaning white-collar professionals who had become or were becoming America's ruling class, comparable to the communist bureaucracies for which Yugoslav dissident Milovan Djilas had designated the term. Rawls was the chief ideologist for the new class, which Moynihan accused of "manipulating the symbols of egalitarianism for essentially middle- and upper-class purposes." Engaging in "greedy, selfish, snobbish, vicious, pretentious, hypocritical, and stupid behavior," in Barry Bruce-Briggs's words, this class allegedly suffered the same psychological disorders as the "authoritarians" of the fifties. A Theory of Justice's arguments were therefore not worth examining. Kirkpatrick demanded that American society, in order to remain free, eliminate the "totalitarian" new class from politics—never mind the fact that none

of the neoconservatives agreed on just who these villains were![61] This all goes to show something. *Anyone* could mobilize therapeutic discourse for *any* purpose—including bad ones, as when the Soviets committed its dissidents for all sorts of made-up dissident complexes—, suggesting its bankrupt and self-defeating nature as an argumentative tactic.

Second, technocracy.[62] On this subject, allow me a quick digression, the relevance of which should soon be clear enough. I start with the question: how should liberals defend themselves? Spragens' Irony of Liberal Reason spoke to the question on many thinking people's minds during the eighties: how flawed *is* liberalism, anyway? Other contemporary defenses of liberalism were kind to the tradition: they either explained its flaws as a loss of revolutionary zeal, as did as Anthony Alabaster's *The Rise and Decline of Western Liberalism* (1986), or tried to expose its critics as strong on style and light on substance, as did Stephen Holmes's later *Anatomy of Illiberalism* (1993). But Spragens conceded that the flaws were real. Liberalism had at points in the twentieth century attached itself to undemocratic social engineering. Liberalism had also at times gone to seemingly opposite extreme and embraced an exaggerated epistemic and moral relativism. Both tendencies, respectively designated "technocracy" and "value noncognitivism," were dangerous. So what had caused them?

Spragens explained that liberalism at the Enlightenment's outset made a pact with the natural sciences. This liberal thinkers did with the hope that, just as Newton explained the mechanics of the solar system, social scientists could arrive at a "moral Newtonianism."[63] At first, Locke and his followers simultaneously upheld a Christological moral philosophy and

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[61] *The New Class?*, ed. Barry Bruce-Briggs (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1979), 134-5, 215, 47.

[62] I do not share the opinion of many anti-liberals that America is or ever was a "therapeutic state," if only because power in this country is too decentralized to allow for a government of men in white coats. This discussion instead *suggests* the possible practical outcomes of a dangerous but prevalent feature of many currents of thought. Further, perception is sometimes reality; the therapeutic nature of a public philosophy may convince detractors that public institutions are therapeutic rather than political.

[63] Spragens, *Liberal Reason*, 66.

physics' then deterministic ethos, only vaguely aware of the tension between the two. Fast-forward to the twentieth century. By now the tension had redoubled and rent the liberal tradition to ribbons. On the one hand, new developments in the behavioral sciences overawed some liberal rationalists, who then reconstituted politics as the manipulation of behavior so as to achieve "rational organization." On the other hand, the failure of positive knowledge to build the New Jerusalem overawed other liberals, who then gave up the quest for norms and embraced such intellectual currents as the end of ideology ideology. To revive the tradition, liberals must overcome their compulsive reverence of positive knowledge, even as they designate a rightful place for the natural and social sciences in politics.

While persuasive, Spragens weakened his analysis by bifurcating it. He missed that "technocracy" and "value noncognitivism" are not distinct trends. They are rather one and the same. Excessively relativist premises do not lead to a liberalism that, in fascist philosopher Carl Schmitt's frightening phraseology, makes neither make hard decisions nor designates enemies. To the contrary, the persuasion that the capacity of reason to beneficently affect political outcomes is "exhausted"—a word that Bell has used *ad nauseam* for the duration of his career—comports nicely with the technocratic logic of domination. Unlike the prototypal technocrat Bentham, the midcentury technocratic sociologists did not profess fealty to the Enlightenment project, too naïve for modernist sensibilities. In fact it was *worse* than naïve. Adorno for instance pathologized the residuum of Enlightenment passions in his subjects. "What was one of the decisive impulses of the eighteenth century Enlightenment," Adorno wrote of secularism, "may function today as a manifestation of provincial secularism or even as a paranoid system."[64] Lane too wrote that the Enlightenment fetish of "reason" was not less psychically driven than the social pathologies of "Eastport's" common men: "the failure of the liberal bourgeois democrat to

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[64] Adorno et al., 742.

see the irrational and brutal forces in the world is a product of his need to believe that everything is subordinated to reason."[65] The renunciation of liberalism's early modern pedigree was extensive if not total. The social contracts of Locke, Rousseau and Kant torn to shreds, the technocratic manipulation of behavior was the only remaining means with which liberalism could pursue its humane goals. *Reason is lead; long live behavioralism!*

Therapeutic discourse is therefore a technocratic symptom of relativistic premises. Technocracy, though it permeates certain strands of liberalism, is decidedly *illiberal* in word and deed. Indeed, British political theorist Bernard Crick diagnosed technocracy as "a derangement in the wider thought of American liberalism" that causes the positive sciences "to subsume all politics."[66] Consigning individuals to the realm of necessity, technocracy insults the autonomy of individuals in pursuing life plans and cultivating beliefs. Bestowing on managers the task of shaping society irrespective of what the society wants—this aim could be the only interpretation of Lane's "Knowledge Society" article—, it deprives the laws of democratic legitimacy. With the faith that "the best and the brightest" can solve any problem with more science, more technology, more rational bureaucratic structures, it leads societies into such enterprises as the Vietnam War, insoluble as it was bloody. It tempts sociologists to succumb to the sin of pride and become Comtean philosopher kings, as when Lasswell, behavioralist expert on propaganda, wrote in 1938:

> The most far-reaching way to reduce disease is for the psychiatrist to cultivate closer contact with the rulers of society, in hope of finding the means of inducing them from utilizing their influences for the prompt rearrangement of insecurity producing routine.

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[65] Lane, *Political Ideology*, 377.
[66] Bernard Crick, *The American Science of Politics* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1959), 209.

So the psychiatrist may decide to become the advisor of the "king." Now the history of the "king" and his philosophers shows that the king is prone to stray from the path of wisdom as wisdom is understood by the king's philosophers. Must the psychiatrist, then, unseat the king and actualize in the realm of fact the "philosopher-king" of Plato's imagination?

By the grace of his psychiatry, of course, the modern philosopher who would be king knows that he may lose his philosophy on the path to the throne, and arrive there empty of all that would distinguish him from the king whom he has overthrown. But, if sufficiently secure in his knowledge of himself and his field, he may dare where others dared and lost before [!].[67]

The technocrat does not balk at manipulating his subjects with noble lies. Misleading survey responders and interviewees, the studies surveyed in the chapter abound in dishonesty. TAP's authors lied to the institutions to which they presented questionnaires:

A more successful approach to conservative leaders [of surveyed groups] was to present the whole project as a survey of general public opinion, "like a Gallup poll," being carried forward by a group of scientists at the University, and to count upon the variety and relative mildness of the scale items to prevent undue alarm.

The instructions attached to the questionnaires read:

We are trying to find out what the general public feels and thinks about a number of important social questions.

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[67] Harold Lasswell, "What Psychiatrists and Political Scientists Can Learn from One Another" *Psychiatry* 1 (1938): 33-39, 39.

We are sure you will find the enclosed survey interesting. You will find in it many questions and social issues which you have thought about, read about in newspapers and magazines, and heard about on the radio.

This is *not* an *intelligence* test nor an information test. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers. The best answer is your *personal opinion*. You can be sure that, whatever your opinion may be on a certain issue, there will be many people who agree, many who disagree. And this is what we want to find out: how is public opinion really divided on each of these socially important topics? …

This survey works just like a Gallup Poll or an election. As in any other secret ballot, the "voters" who fill it out do not have to give their names.

In order to solicit "intensive" interviews, the authors lied again:

In order to disguise the basis of selection and the purpose of the clinical study, the groups were told that the attempt was being made to carry on a more detailed discussion of opinions and ideas with a few of their number—about 10 percent— and that people representing the various kinds of degrees of response found the group were being asked to come for interviews.

They thus encouraged interviewees to "give their time in a 'good cause.'"[68]

The dehumanizing character of sociological studies later came under close scrutiny. In 1964, the U.S. Army's Special Operations Research Office recruited social scientists to study sociological trends in the Third World, using Chile as a case study. Without informing the Chilean government or the American ambassador in Santiago, the Pentagon allocated millions of dollars to "set up a system to measure the likelihood of armed insurgency's [*sic*] breaking out in

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[68] Adorno et al., 24-6.

a developing country and to work out the measures most likely to counter this likelihood."[69] The

not so implicit aim was the defense of undemocratic anti-communist regimes. But it came to

nothing when Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung went rogue and informed the press. The

fallout of "Project Camelot" was not pretty, and neither is the transformation of human beings

into objects in general.

What are we to make of this? To Spragens, the claim that social pathologies exist, or the

claim that the electorate is mad, does no affront to humane liberalism. "The affront comes," he

wrote, "when the attempt is made manipulate people on the basis of that claim."[70] I nonetheless

cannot but go even further. Not only is therapeutic discourse practically problematic but it is

theoretically so as well. If inherent in liberalism is the tendency to reduce articulated reasons to

psychological affectations, then critics are right in rejecting it.

Third, the conceptual suicide of liberalism. Sociological liberalism was more sociological

than liberal. That is, it committed itself to liberal norms not because of their positive virtues but

because they instrumentally advance stability. This instrumentality is highly contingent: liberal

procedures are useful props to get everyone to buy into the system, but these procedures often

introduce destabilizing, populist elements into governance. And sometimes people start asking

questions about these procedures' legitimacy in the first place.

The normative assumptions discussed in Chapter Three could just as well support

monarchism or political theorist James Burnham's nightmarish "managerial revolution."[71]

Indeed, sociological liberalism hypocritically advertised itself as many things it was not. "The

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[69] Richard Eder, "Project Under Review," *The New York Times*, 8 Jul. 1965: 11. "Project Peasant Pacifier" would have been a better name than "Camelot," in my view.

[70] Spragens, *Liberal Reason*, 166.

[71] Burnham, initially a Trotskyite, became a neoconservative long before it was fashionable to do so. His *Managerial Revolution: What is Happening in the World* (New York: John Day, 1941) celebrated the worldwide ascendancy of amoral technocrats, and predicted that the more rationally centralized Nazi Germany would overwhelm the weak, decentralized and effeminate democracies. Later supporting McCarthy, his writings began to describe political liberalism as a mental illness.

end of ideology" belied a passionately held ideology. "Pragmatism" belied an apocalyptic tendency to cast everything—world affairs, domestic politics and even the most trivial of cultural matters—as a contest of core values: everything a *crisis*, every received answer to problems *exhausted*. "Civility" belied the most uncivil treatment of interlocutors. The lamentation about "anti-intellectualism in American life" belied the anti-critical, anti-political and truly anti-intellectual orientation of the end of ideology thesis. It was only natural that the term "liberal" would find itself similarly desecrated. For all their earsplitting fear of an American *1984*, the sociological liberals sure made ample use of newspeak.

In sum, sociological liberalism stands in ambiguous to the liberal tradition. Its "liberalism" proved too weak to resist its *il*liberalism. The cure, as for so much else amiss in the world, is a bit of philosophical reflection.

5. Rawls: Moving Liberalism Onto Sturdier Ground

> *"My ambitions for the book will be completely realized if it enables one to see more clearly the chief structural features of the alternative conception of justice that is implicit in the contract tradition and points the way to its further elaboration. Of the traditional views, it is this conception, I believe, which best approximates our considered judgments of justice and constitutes the most appropriate moral basis for a democratic society."*
>
> -John Rawls[1]

5.1. Introduction to Chapter

This chapter will, first, work out criteria of a liberal public philosophy so as to avoid the normative traps of therapeutic discourse. Second, it will explain why it makes sense to view sociological and philosophical liberalism in dialogue with each other. Third, it will briefly reconstruct Rawls's project. Fourth, it will explain how Rawls's philosophical liberalism corrects for sociological liberalism's illiberalism. Fifth, it will explain how Rawls simultaneously addresses the concerns of sociological liberalism. Sixth, in the interest of fairness, it will conclude with an exposition of Rawls's main weaknesses.

5.2. Picking Up the Pieces: Criteria for a Liberal Public Philosophy

Towards which correctives does our examination of therapeutic discourse direct? What normative features should a liberal public philosophy have to avoid the slide into technocratic illiberalism? I suggest seven:

1) A willingness to take arguments seriously.

2) A positive as opposed to negative account of democratic institutions.

3) A faith in the natural capacity for moral learning and virtue.

4) A more vital account of democratic legitimacy than an anemic proceduralism.

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[1] Rawls, *Theory*, viii.

5) A privileging of human goods other than stability.

6) A proper and self-conscious relationship between descriptive and normative claims.

7) A healthy utopianism.

I will now explain what I mean by each.

Taking arguments seriously. Popper's *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (1945) is a brilliant if at times self-righteous tome that accused Plato and Hegel of the totalitarian heresy. It contains a justified passage attacking British historian Arnold J. Toynbee:

> What I must describe as Toynbee's irrationalism expresses itself in various ways. One of them, is that he yields to a widespread and dangerous fashion of our time. I mean the fashion of not taking arguments seriously, and at their face value, at least tentatively, but of seeing in them nothing but a way in which deeper irrational motives and tendencies express themselves. It is the attitude … of looking at once for the unconscious motives and determinants in the social habitat of the thinker, instead of first examining the validity of the argument itself.[2]

The passage refers to Toynbee's opinion of Marx: that his monistic, materialistic philosophy is really an expression of his primordial Jewishness. (Never mind that Marx's relationship to Judaism was a mixture of ignorance and contempt. And why stop at his rabbinical heritage? Maybe his philosophy is reducible to his painful carbuncles and chronic indigestion). Whatever his failings as a political theorist and philosopher of science, Popper was insightful in that his account of the reality assigned ideas a special ontological place. The "third world"—as opposed to the worlds of matter and emotion and bearing no relation to the Third World—is the sphere where increasingly adapted ideas grow increasingly able to solve problems. It is not only

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[2] Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies,* vol. 2, *The High Tide of Prophecy: Hegel, Marx, and the Aftermath* (London: Harper and Row, 1962), 251-2.

analogous to Darwinian evolution, but continuous with it as well. Having such an existential status means that ideas are irreducible to contingent brain states. This is a step in the right direction. While we need not don Phrygian caps and worship at the Goddess of Reason's altar, we should neither abandon the Enlightenment faith that problems are rationally soluble through rational argumentation. This means working out a conception of deliberative norms useful towards this end, and cultivating in ourselves a willingness to treat opposing views not only with tolerance, but a benign, nonjudgmental acceptance for experimental purposes. We have already seen what can happen when this "as if" assumption about the independence of ideas goes by the wayside.

A positive as opposed to negative account of democratic institutions. While attractive at certain world historical moments, elitist defenses of democracy leave something to be desired, especially since—for all the world's problems—the threat of totalitarian mass movements has abated. Democratic realists treat democracy as an advertising ploy that cows the erratic public into accepting the beneficent tutelage of elites. Therapeutic discourse suggests that they fear the "masses" they profess to help in spite of empirical evidence that they need not fret. Theoretically, upholding both democracy and an elite of Weberian heroes is a bit inconsistent. Habermas addressed the problem in "Popular Sovereignty and Procedure" (1989), a lecture that commemorated the French Revolution's bicentennial and identified its legacy in the communicative channels of public institutions. He said that "elitist interpretations of the principle of representation," in satisfying the requirement that opinions in the public space be reasonable, "respond … by shielding politics from a forever-gullible public opinion. In normative terms … this way of defending rationality against popular sovereignty is self-contradictory: if the voters' opinion is irrational, then the election of representatives is no less

so."[3] So if not merely to keep *hoi polloi* in line, why *should* we have legislatures and courts? This is a question a public philosophy must answer.

A faith in the natural capacity for moral learning and virtue. Locke believed that a free commonwealth is possible only because of natural man's inclination towards good. This was the basis for liberal egalitarianism. Sociological liberalism raised the standards for democratic reasonableness so high as to undermine this egalitarianism. Given the technical nature of modern societies and the low knowledgeableness of their electorates, is egalitarianism—beyond the formalistic equality of atomized and disempowered individuals before behemoth private and public bureaucracies—a dead dream? Habermas continued his lecture by saying that if a background culture and properly designed institutions could meet "half-way," we can imagine citizens who, enjoying rich and spontaneous associational lives, democratically participate in constructive ways.[4] Public participation can mold private preferences, perhaps unreasonable and even irrational, into ones concerned with the public good. We need not overburden citizens with unrealistic demands for virtue or, in Lippmann's apt phrase, "omnicompetence." Though, in all probability, the capacities for even a humble American citizenship are as of yet widely inactivated, we have to assume that they are there as an article of democratic faith.

Up from proceduralism. As mentioned in Chapter Three, wheeling and dealing proceduralism accounts for a stable politics only during periods of skyrocketing economic growth and muted moral disagreement. (And any form of government would be popular and stable were both those conditions to obtain). Obviously we need something better for when the

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[3] Habermas, "Popular Sovereignty as Procedure," trans. William Rehg, *Deliberative Democracy: Essays on Reason and Politics*, eds. James Bohman and Rehg (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997): 35-65, 57. An aside: before the latter's health failed, Habermas and Rawls engaged in a vigorous but friendly debate about the relationship between liberalism and democracy. To radically simplify: Rawls believed constitutional protections of the individual ought to precede, and therefore define the proper scope of, democratic institutions; Habermas believes rights and democratic institutions to presume each other.

[4] *Id.*, 59.

chips are down. Spragens observes that that, even "at its best," *modus vivendi* proceduralism "produces a politics of grudging hard bargains and extraordinary litigiousness."[5] What better ways exist to conceptualize the ideal of ordered liberty? How can we reconcile pluralism—which the midcentury polyarchists rightly saw as a positive feature of free societies, within reasonable limits—with normatively sound constitutional principles that transcend chaos? Towards a resolution of the problem, the abandonment of the market model of democratic procedures and an embrace of the forum seems a promising move for a public philosophy.

More than just stability. Sociological liberalism resembles Hobbes in its stability emphasis. Where it differs is that Hobbes gave *reasons* for this emphasis: he spent two-thirds of *Leviathan* on a materialist reinterpretation of scripture, whereby it is *just* to obey the Sovereign. Sociological liberals provided very little in the way of such justification, and did not explain the relationship of stability to the other goods that democracies should provide. In a lexical ordering of values, where does stability rank? ("Life is also tranquil in dungeons," asked Rousseau, "is that enough to feel well in them?")[6] Without an answer, I do not think that a public philosophy's prescribed institutions meet the requirement of liberal legitimacy.

A proper and self-conscious relationship between descriptive and normative claims. Sociological liberalism accounted for the positive features of extant Western institutions, but in comparison to what? In conflating descriptive and normative, it could imagine no possible alternatives. It became an alloyed celebration of all of the system's features, including presumably negative ones like voter apathy and the atomization of life, because they contributed to institutional good working order. In addition to the empiricism of political sociology, a public

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[5] Spragens, "The Antinomies of Social Justice" *The Review of Politics* 55.2 (1993): 193-216, 213-14.
[6] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings*, ed. Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 45.

philosophy needs practical reasoning for the articulation of norms, which could then serve as a benchmark with which to evaluate data.

A chastened utopianism. In describing midcentury intellectual currents, Lasch wrote that "the educated classes overcame their fanaticism at the price of desiccation."[7] The sociological liberals conceptualized a normatively sound politics as a valley of bones. If you want idealistic and ambitiously purposive political action, *tough luck*. But this may have swelled the ranks of political cults on college campuses. The buzzwords of "civility" and "competence" being associated with Vietnam, the New Left's idealism became the only political home for a generation of students. (As a non-Baby Boomer, I could never understand the mystique of the sixties). But a public philosophy should be a middle ground between dry pragmatism and the swamp of existential political irrationalism. Utopianism *per se*, or the idea that immanent in the human imagination are ideals pointing to realities not heretofore extant, is neither a sickness nor a crime—even if the delusions too often attendant to it are. A public philosophy needs a degree of utopianism if it is to critically evaluate politics and provide the *enragés* with a rational though inspiring alternative. *It needs it for the sake of stability.*[8]

5.3. Why Read Rawls in Dialogue with Sociological Liberalism?[9]

Rawls was a political theorist. Bell, Lipset, Hofstadter, Lane and McClosky were not—at least not directly. So why does it make sense to consider Rawls in relation to these latter thinkers? I will give five reasons.

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[7] Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and its Critics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991), 467.

[8] "What is pernicious is not utopian aspirations *per se* but rather the flattering delusions about human nature which sometimes attend utopian thought but which are nonetheless clearly distinguishable from it," Spragens, *Civic Liberalism: Reflections on Our Democratic Ideals* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield), 16-17.

[9] Because the previous chapters dwelt so heavily on intellectual history, I there presented writings in the past tense. Since we are in pure philosophical territory at this point, I am switching mainly to present tense. Hopefully the transition will not induce whiplash.

First, and most trivially, some of the sociological liberals directly argued against Rawls's tenets. As seen in Chapter Two, Lane and particularly Bell—for whom Rawls was a soft-boiled romantic, his popularity being a portent of America's decline—did so.

Second, even though the sociological liberals were not professional political theorists, as established in preceding chapters they did conceive themselves as expounding a sort of public philosophy. This public philosophy shares commonalities with classical political theorists. These theorists include Hobbes, concerned with the sociological liberals mainly with the problem of social peace, and Hume, whose naturalism and moral skepticism led to a Tory distrust of political innovation. Sociological liberalism's normative commitments would also reverberate during the deliberative democracy debates of the nineteen-nineties. Facing the question of whether public deliberation can to a more consensual politics, many theorists answered in the negative. Arizona State professor Gerald F. Gaus wrote that given voter irrationalities, the public should not reach a consensus, because "the political judgments of cognitively imperfect people are more apt to converge (though of course incompletely) on stereotypical characterizations of some groups than are fully-informed understandings."[10] Judge and aspiring polymath Richard A. Posner shares this view of deliberative democracy, adding that compared to the Schumpeterian proceduralist model it is divisive and inefficient.[11] Rawls defends deliberation within the framework of public reason, as we will see.

Third, while the sociological liberals sometimes doubled as political theorists, Rawls especially in his later works often doubles as a political sociologist. Political Liberalism, for instance, takes as its starting point ideas "implicit in the public political culture of a democratic

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[10] Gerald F. Gaus, "Reason, Justification, and Consensus," *Deliberative Democracy*: 205-242, 210.
[11] Richard A. Posner, *Law, Pragmatism, and Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 31, 112-13, 135.

society."[12] His works take increasing note of the empirical realities of modern democracies. These include concerns about stability, pluralism and disagreement. In the process, his philosophy becomes much less monistic and more open to the zigzags of democratic politics.

Fourth, Rawls acknowledges the force of the sociological conception of democracy. He agrees with Bell and the rest that a particularistic morality, no matter how high its ideals, cannot be the foundation of democratic institutions and practices. Rawls departs by leaving open the possibility of a *political* morality: first principles that are not the product of political bargaining and the balance of power between competing interest groups, which would be "political in the wrong way."[13] This political morality is *not* skeptical or relativistic.

Fifth, Rawls responds to the end of ideology thesis by reasserting the role of practical reason and norms in political inquiry. He responds to the sociological liberals' lack of interest in the justice of basic social institutions, their equation of liberalism with the unalloyed celebration of extant political forms and their cynicism towards any politico-moral abstractions.

6.4. Rawls: An Overview

The tenets of Rawls are well known to the academic audience. But too often secondary commentators give "Rawlsianism" an incredibly simplistic and unconvincing treatment. Taxing the limits of my questionable ability to write economically, and despite duplicating the mountains of Rawls literature already in existence, I will here present Rawls's mature thought. Keep in mind that I aim not at a comprehensive account of Rawls but rather an exposition sufficient for our purposes.

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[12] Rawls, *Liberalism*, 13.
[13] *Id.*, 142.

As explained in the introduction, Rawls's project of regrounding liberalism has four objectives. He articulates this at the beginning of his last book, Justice as Fairness: A Restatement. First, a liberal public philosophy should provide normative tools for the resolution of conflict. The sociological liberals believed that proceduralism was sufficient to this task, but perhaps there are better ways of achieving a consensual politics. Rawls believes abstractions to nonetheless have practical uses.[14] Second, it should help us orient ourselves in our social environment. It helps us conceptualize a unified, rational method of solving social problems consistently, addressing the question of political ends and means. Third, it should help us reconcile ourselves to extant injustices. Our government does bad things, it is true, but perhaps inherent in our political institutions is the potential for rationality and humanness. Progressive accounts of history and constitutional law accomplish this quite well. Fourth, it should be realistically utopian, helping us imagine beneficent political change that is nonetheless workable. "Justice as fairness" tries to discharge these tasks.

But how? To answer, we have to examine the starting point and limits of his inquiry. Rawls begins Theory by asking, what do we mean when we say that a society's institutions are "just?" He argues that a proper conception of "society" must precede a conception of justice. "A correct regulative principle for anything," he writes, "depends on the nature of the thing."[15] A democratic society encompasses a diversity of free and rational persons, who have no choice *but* to cooperate in a particular social world from birth to death (a simplifying assumption). It is therefore "neither a community nor, more generally, an association." Unlike a church or club, it can have no final ends of aims because of the "fact of pluralism"—that in modern Western democracies there is not only a pluralism of worldviews but a pluralism of *reasonable*

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[14] *Id*., 44.
[15] Rawls, *Theory*, 29.

worldviews—and the "fact of oppression"—that none of these reasonable worldviews can arrogate the coercive power of the state without oppressing others.[16] How, then, could a society's institutions be "just?" How can anyone contemplate "justice" independently of what Rawls calls "comprehensive doctrines?"

Rawls still believes, with Kant, that humans have a sense of justice. Intuitively, "justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought."[17] But "justice" here means a *political* conception of justice.[18] What does a political conception of justice entail? First, it applies to the basic structure of society, or its main institutions, because these are the essentials of social life. Second, it is anti-perfectionist. In less technical language it defines society not an association for the advancement of some particularistic idea of the "good," as with Aristotle's idea of "living well," but as a *system of social cooperation*. Third, it concerns itself with fairly distributing the goods of social cooperation. Fourth, it is *reciprocal*, as required by liberal legitimacy, in that it advances principles which "all citizens as free and equal may reasonably be expected to endorse."[19] The resultant social order can therefore "be justified to everyone."[20] These are the main points regarding the political conception of justice, but we can find others in Rawls's writings. A conception must also be acceptable in light of the culture and practices of modern democracies, for instance by prioritizing individual freedom over "the greater good." It must account for the continuance of social cooperation from one generation to the next. Finally,

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[16] Rawls, *Liberalism*, 40, xvi, 37.

[17] Rawls, *Theory*, 3.

[18] Rawls did not originally define "justice as fairness" as "political." In Political Liberalism, there are passages suggesting that justice as fairness is a reasonable comprehensive doctrine a la Kantianism and utilitarianism. He writes: "Whether justice as fairness (or some similar view) can gain the support of an overlapping consensus so defined is a speculative question," *Liberalism*, 15. He goes on to argue that the "political conception" of justice, or "political liberalism," demands that the basic structure only fulfill the civil libertarian, and not income redistributionist, portion of justice as fairness. The courts could therefore not impose socialism on the American masses with their consent, to borrow my advisor's phraseology. Justice as Fairness: A Restatement reinterprets justice as fairness not as a comprehensive doctrine but rather as a political conception of justice. Rawls here cautiously endorses a constitutionally protected "basic economic minimum" for all, *Fairness*, xvi, 162.

[19] Rawls, *Liberalism*, 137.

[20] Rawls, *Theory*, 103.

it must not be "political in the wrong way." A political conception of justice must articulate first principles insulated from "political bargaining" and "the calculus of social interests."[21] Otherwise justice could merely justify extant injustices and rationalize extant irrationalities.

Theory addresses main currents of midcentury moral philosophy. Political theorists had variously used these currents in support of democratic institutions. Do they satisfy Rawls's requirements for a political conception of justice? One current, utilitarianism, insists in the greatest happiness principle: justice is the satisfaction of happiness, in either a hedonic or eudaimonistic conception, and the minimization of pain for the greatest number. But utilitarianism is very flawed. To Rawls, the biggest problem with utilitarianism is that it "does not take seriously the distinction between persons." It subsumes all members of society into a single quantifiable entity, ready to be molded by a technocratic "ideal legislator." It also says nothing about the *distribution* of the goods of social cooperation; a society could hypothetically confer all of its advantages on *one* "utility monster," in Nozick's phrase, and still satisfy the greatest happiness principle. Whatever its validity as a moral theory, utilitarianism does not confer on democratic societies the legitimacy it deserves. It is divorced from the individualistic assumptions inherent in the political culture of free societies. It must be rejected.[22]

"Moral intuitionism" is another such current. Decrying the stale and formalistic rigidity of utilitarianism, it affirms the moral complexity of life. It is not hard to imagine the nightmarish states of affairs that utilitarianism endorses, and intuitionism explains our aversion to them with an appeal to an "I know it when I see it" faculty allegedly residing in us all. Legislators adhering to justice as moral intuitionism would therefore balance competing social goods—liberty, equality and so forth—in *ad hoc* ways. But this Berlinian hand wave does not cut it, either.

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[21] Rawls, *Theory*., 4.
[22] *Id*., *Theory*, 27.

Intuitionism lazily shirks from the task of providing answers. It denies that "that there exists any useful and explicit solution to the priority problem," appealing to legislators' "sense of reality" to adjudicate the vexing conflicts of legitimate policy objectives in democracies. This robs a society's public philosophy of any permanence. Further, that the laws comport with legislators' gut feelings is not a sufficiently robust account of democratic legitimacy. Rawls acknowledges the force of Berlin's critique of the systematic philosophizing of so many intellectual tyrants, but holds out hope that under certain deliberative conditions a "lexical" ranking of goods is possible.[23]

Finally, *modus vivendi* justice a la sociological liberalism fails as a political conception of justice. A truce between two hostile groupings may for a time satisfy everyone's needs. But what of when the balance shifts, the Bourbon king revokes the Edict of Nantes and civil war breaks out? A pluralism that is merely stable does "not significantly affect the moral quality of public life and the basis of social concord."[24] What of the more sophisticated *modus vivendi* liberalisms of Schumpeter's public choice theory, Chamberlain's "broker state" and Dahl's "minorities rule?" They suffer from similar problems. We have already seen that the hollowing out of the postindustrial economy undermined the logic of these and other pluralist conceptions of democracy. Further, as "no system of constitutional checks and balances succeeds in setting up an invisible hand that can be relied upon to guide the process to a just outcome," proceduralism cannot alone account for why within its institutional framework citizens should act reasonably. (It may have been reasonable to posit an invisible hand in American politics during the end of

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[23] *Id.*, 40-5.
[24] Rawls, *Liberalism*, 148.

ideology era, but no longer). There must be a public philosophy that gives citizens *reasons* to act *reason*ably.[25]

So where does that leave us? Rawls turns to the contract tradition of early modern liberalism, which before Theory's publication was forgotten or else the sole province of crusty laissez faire capitalists. He believes that the contract tradition, properly understood, will arrive at a more intuitively acceptable conception of justice, according to the criteria sketched above, than any other way of thinking about liberalism. To thus reground liberalism, Rawls's "aim is to present a conception of justice which generalizes and carries to a higher level of abstraction the familiar theory of the social contract as found, say, in Locke, Rousseau, and Kant."[26] These thinkers were correct in trying to articulate a disinterested "moral" point of view in assessing the legitimacy of political institutions. But, especially in the case of "historical contract" doctrines— the idea that just institutions come into being though a *literal* contract, as in Locke's *Second Treatise of Government* and Nozick's *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (1974)—, the liberal contract tradition leaves something to be desired. From Rawls's neo-Kantian (not necessarily *Kant's*) standpoint, these thinkers illegitimately subject the relationship between free and equal contracting parties to historical contingencies. Individuals in the state of nature have advantages and disadvantages for which they can take no responsibility. By ratifying extant injustices and equalities, the contract tradition becomes a "non-ideal" theory drained of normative substance.[27]

Rawls's designs his famous "original position" to overcome the limitations of older contract theories and establish a true position of equality. Compared to older liberalisms, the contractual moment here plays a greater role. Rawls wants his original position to not only legitimate a Sovereign, but to construct the norms that antedate political institutions. Rawls calls

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[25] Rawls, *Theory*, 493.
[26] *Id*., 11.
[27] Rawls, *Liberalism*, 287.

the process "political constructivism." The original position is a hypothetical thought experiment, amounting to a deliberative ideal that incorporates how we already make moral judgments. It treats deliberating individuals as moral agents, stripped down to their moral essentials: the capacity to be reasonable—adhering to just norms—and rational—able to articulate and pursue their own conceptions of the good life. It abstracts out "non-moral" characteristics because generality is a necessary feature of any morality, political or otherwise. Moral rules are general in that they apply to all moral agents and make no distinctions based on accidental characteristics. (Race is an obvious example of an accidental and therefore non-moral characteristic).

In Rawls's more mature statements of the original position, the deliberators are representatives of social groupings. At the first stage of deliberation, a "veil of ignorance" enshrouds the representatives' constituents; their socioeconomic statuses, personal views and even location in time and space are unknown. And once the representatives agree to the just terms of social cooperation and the veil lifts, the constituents are stuck with the results. This forecloses the possibility of a slave uprising or tax revolt, so they had better pick carefully. The veil is "thick" in that it conceals individuals' conceptions of the good. This is because "the reasonable is prior to the rational:" as we have seen, liberalism demands that just institutions, to which citizens *reasonably* adhere, precede ideas of the good, which individuals *rationally* pursue.[28] What the representatives *do* know are facts about individuals and societies in general: economics, political sociology and value theory, for instance. For example, while they know nothing of the special psychologies of their constituents, they know the general laws of psychology. They could not therefore agree to utilitarianism, which would impose on their

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[28] The reasonable and rational distinction originates with Kant, *id.*, 25 no. 28.

constituents too high a risk, and too stringent a demand for altruism and self-sacrifice.[29] Representatives are also aware of a "thin" theory of the good. They know, for instance, that the pursuit of *any* life plan among reasonable and rational citizens requires that society provide certain primary goods. These include:

1) The basic rights and liberties.

2) Freedom of movement and freedom of occupation among meaningful choices.

3) Offices, i.e. positions of power and responsibility.

4) Income and wealth.

5) The social bases of self-respect, to Rawls "understood as those aspects of basic institutions normally essential if citizens are to have a lively sense of their worth as persons and to be able to advance their ends with self-confidence."[30] Theory is more to the point in describing this good as self-esteem or self-efficacy.

They are also aware of the "Aristotelian principle:" that, all else being equal, an individual prefers that life plan which, by virtue of its complexity, allows for the greatest exercise of his or her innate powers.[31] A just framework has to provide the space and means with which individuals could pursue their own respective reasonable conceptions of the good.

The representatives first construct a political conception of justice. (The conception includes a just savings principle deciding how much consumption their constituents are to forego for the sake of justly benefiting future generations). They then evaluate the conception's stability. Rawls's idea of stability, in contrast to that of the sociological liberals, is *philosophical*. It relates not so much to the smooth functioning of institutions as it does their ability to win hearts and minds. He writes in Theory:

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[29] Rawls, *Theory*, 500-1.
[30] Rawls, *Fairness*, 58-9.
[31] Rawls, *Theory*, 426.

> When institutions are just (as defined by this conception), those taking part in these arrangements acquire the corresponding sense of justice and desire to do their part in maintaining them. One conception of justice is more stable than another if the sense of justice that it tends to generate is stronger and more likely to override disruptive inclinations and if the institutions it allows foster weaker impulses and temptations to act unjustly. The stability of a conception depends upon a balance of motives: the sense of justice that it cultivates and the aims that it encourages must normally win out against propensities towards injustice.[32]

When our society's political system is just, we want to bequeath it to our children. It therefore engages our capacity to be reasonable to a greater extent than an unjust system would, crowding out unreasonable and unjust impulses. Representatives agree provisionally to principles of justice, evaluate their tendency towards philosophical stability as described above and if necessary revise them accordingly. They thereby achieve "reflective equilibrium." The representatives then undergo a four stage process to institutionalize the revised conception of justice, moving towards an increasingly "thin" veil of ignorance and finally full information.

Rawls believes justice as fairness to be the most plausible, but by no means only, political conception of justice at which representatives in the original position will arrive. Justice as fairness consists of two famous principles, which Rawls tweaked over the years. Their final formulation was: first, that "each person has the same indefeasible claim to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic liberties, which scheme is compatible with the same scheme of liberties for all;" and, second:

> Social and economic inequalities are to satisfy two conditions: first, they are to be attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of

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[32] *Id..*, 454.

opportunity; and second, they are to be to the greatest benefit of the least-advantaged members of society (the difference principle).[33]

The first principle accords with orthodox varieties of liberalism. Its scheme of political liberties is prior to, and more fundamental than, economic liberties. Nonetheless, I should remind the reader that sociological liberalism prioritized rational management over liberty in ways inconsistent with Rawls's liberty principle. Rawls believed that it licensed conscientious objection, an anathema of Lipset and others, as "the priority of liberty … requires that conscription be used only as the security of liberty necessitates."[34]

The second principle is much less orthodox. This "maximin" requirement for distributive justice is what led Bell to label Rawls a "socialist." Despite my own misgivings, I am nonetheless highly sympathetic to his variety of egalitarianism and will present it as attractively as possible. Rawls believes that basic inequalities ought to benefit the least advantaged *especially* because, though it may seem intuitive that inequalities should benefit *everyone*, this latter principle violates the integrity and inviolability of persons. The representatives would sooner agree to a difference principle protecting the least advantaged, even if—as is often the case—it would have no different outcome than one protecting everyone. Rawls's later defenses are a bit more convincing. In Justice as Fairness: A Restatement, he expresses his faith that if citizens bestow reciprocity on the least fortunate, they will thereby social cooperation for everyone, and "put all citizens in a position to manage their own affairs on a footing of a suitable degree of social and economic equality."[35] They do *not* do so out of pity. Rawls does *not* believe it just or unjust, pitiable or blameworthy, that people are inevitably born into society with natural advantages or disadvantages. He *does* believe that society, as a "pattern of human action," should

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[33] Rawls, *Fairness*, 42-3.
[34] Rawls, *Theory*, 380.
[35] Rawls, *Fairness*, 139.

channel the accidents of nature towards positive ends. "In justice as fairness," he writes, "men agree to share one another's fate."[36] If I am advantaged and do not put my God-given talents to good use, I am robbing from humanity.

Rawls believes that justice as fairness, and other varieties of political liberalism, can be the focus of an *overlapping consensus*. Though a political conception of justice is a "freestanding view"—supportable on metaethical grounds through the original position device—, citizens can support and affirm it in based on differing and opposing comprehensive doctrines. A Thomist, a utilitarian and a Rawlsian could support the same political conception of justice, and do so authentically as opposed to prudentially.[37] Rawls believes it possible that a *modus vivendi* pluralism can approximate an overlapping consensus over time.

Nevertheless, disagreement will persist. This is for two main reasons. First, there are strains of commitment. Though Rawls builds into his original position a procedure for reconciling the terms of social cooperation with human psychology, some divergence is inevitable even among just individuals, free of envy and grudgingness. No form of political liberalism is going to merit our unalloyed and unconditional support. Second, reasonable individuals, in addition to being able to abide by the terms of social cooperation, must "recognize the burdens of judgments and … accept their consequences." *In other words, we must recognize that people can disagree with us without their harboring a perversity of will*. The difficulties in evaluating evidence, differences of experiences, value pluralism, and so forth prevent public unanimity on all but the barest of essential political issues.[38]

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[36] Rawls, *Theory*., 82-3, 102.
[37] Someone needs to come up with a joke that begins with, "A Thomist, a utilitarian and a Rawlsian walk into a bar"…
[38] Rawls, *Liberalism*, 54-58.

"Public reason" refers to the guidelines of inquiry as well as standards of justification for political action to which parties in the original position agree given the fact of reasonable pluralism. Public reason is also a regulative ideal implicit in all democratic cultures to varying degrees, as few would advocate an "anything goes" approach to deliberation and voting. (Indeed, Rawls's earliest articulations of public reason draw especially on this fact, considering the concept in isolation from his general philosophical scheme). When engaging in *public* political activity—this includes voting, but not private discussions—that relates to *constitutional essentials*, a citizen must satisfy the strictures of public reason. This entails:

- Giving *reasons* (of course!).

- Appealing to public, that is nonsectarian, values.

- Relying on public and accessible methods of inquiry. This means, among other things, "accepting the methods and conclusions of science when not controversial."[39]

- Evincing a duty of civility to all deliberators. This is a moral rather than legal imperative.

Nonpublic reasoning is acceptable only during moments of constitutional crisis, or if necessary to bring an unjust society to a well-ordered state.[40] And what of the unreasonable, seditious rhetoric on the part of Adorno's authoritarians? Except, again, in exceptional circumstances, a just state cannot censor even unreasonable political doctrines. To do so would disrespect citizens' capacity to be reasonable and rational, and so a censorious government is unagreeable in the original position. Because people do not rebel at light cause, to use Locke's phrase, the state had instead better address the problems to which the "unreasonable" speak.

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[39] *Id.*, 139.

[40] Secondary commentators call this the "Martin Luther King proviso," ascribing to Rawls a desire to have it both ways: *viz.* the benefits of religious appeals in the public space without its illiberal drawbacks. Nonetheless, King's rhetoric hearkens back to classical liberalism and to me seems too general and universalistic to merit the label of "sectarian" or "nonpublic."

5.4. Exorcising Sociological Liberalism

I will here present the ways in which Rawls atones for the sins of his sociological liberal forbearers. This atonement is eightfold:

1) Rawls gives reform liberalism that systematic and coherent treatment it deserves.

2) He accounts for the autonomy of ideas, without making any strong metaphysical claims.

3) He provides us with a plausible common creed, distinguishable from a common culture.

4) He asserts the need for liberalism to democratize civic virtue.

5) He therefore joins Locke and Rousseau in democratizing civic virtue, insisting that a political conception of justice cannot overtax individuals' reasonability.

6) He is cognizant of, and avoids, the technocratic danger inherent in any articulation of liberalism.

7) He hopes to achieve a democratic stability that incorporates more than the absence of astringent social conflict.

8) He is cognizant of the question, almost unaddressed during America's age of positivism, of the relationship between values and facts in political science, and provides in my view a convincing answer.

I will now sketch what I mean by each item.

Philosophical coherence. By giving reform liberalism a systematic argumentative foundation, Rawls's philosophical liberalism is less likely to turn on liberal norms than its sociological counterpart. The latter often resembled a patchwork of *ad hoc* observations about

the importance of pragmatic moderation. Because it lacked normative backing, its wooden insistence in "playing nice" often took the form of heteronomous demands. Rawls's system, whatever its congruence with American ideals, gives reasons and tries to account for why autonomous individuals would affirm them.

The autonomy of ideas. Rawls denies that, in order to be objective contributors to the public sphere, we have to be capable of accounting for the cognitive causal origins of our views. "We explain our judgment, so far as we do, simply by going over the grounds for it," he writes; "the explanation lies in the reasons we sincerely affirm." As far as disagreement goes, we cannot infer "a lack of reasonableness, or rationality, or conscientiousness" among any of the deliberating parties from the fact of disagreement itself. We must have "independent grounds" for assuming that psychological considerations are at work given the reality of the burdens of justice. We have a duty of civility to take arguments seriously and not reduce them to brain states. This hardly requires strong metaphysical ideas of personhood or an old fashioned philosophical idealism, each an anathema to the end of ideology positivists.[41] Though Rawls does not work out a detailed procedure for distinguishing the illegitimate and legitimate uses of political psychology, it is not difficult to imagine one in the framework of public reason.

A philosophy, not a culture. As this paper documents, sociological liberalism renounced political theory. In so doing, it perhaps inadvertently reconceived liberalism as a set of cultural and dispositional outlooks. Reason could no longer be the determinant of political action. By conceiving itself as a "work of reason," philosophical liberalism has no need to tread in the dangerous waters of articulating *correct* behavior and the *proper* self.[42] Because political liberalism respects individuals' rationality, part of the moral personality active in the original

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[41] Rawls, *Liberalism*, 118, 121, 29 no. 31.
[42] Rawls, *Fairness*, 3.

position, they are free to pursue reasonable life plans—including something as ridiculous as "counting blades of grass"—without an invidious judgment in the court of liberalism.[43] In a more serious example, so-called authoritarians "are not to be criticized" for basing their life plans and political views on "faith, custom and tradition."[44]

Belief in a natural capacity for virtue. The sociological liberals had jaundiced accounts of the average person's democratic commitments. They justified this view by saying that they were speaking *descriptively* and not normatively, and yet their ideological commitments undoubtedly distorted their analyses. To Rawls, on the other hand, liberalism:

> must agree with Locke that persons are capable of a certain natural political virtue and do not engage in resistance and revolution unless their social position in the basic structure is seriously unjust and this condition has persisted over some period of time and seems to be removable by no other means.[45]

If the average person were too vicious and stupid to act justly, then any standard of political justice higher than "might makes right" would be a pointless exercise. The experience of well-ordered democracies nonetheless permits us to hopefully speculate that this is not the case. Chapter VIII of Theory offers suggestions for why this is the case. Rawls believes that moral learning, beginning with the child's love of parents, segueing into an understanding of right and wrong in social life and culminating in a developed sense of justice, *must* lead to individuals' willingness to propose fair terms of social cooperation and reciprocally abide by them. He suggests that political psychologists assist political theorists in better understanding this dynamic.[46]

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[43] Rawls, *Theory*, 432-3.
[44] Rawls, *Liberalism*, 314.
[45] *Id*., 347.
[46] Rawls, *Theory*, 490-1.

A reasonable burden on citizens. Rawls sees the pointlessness in demanding that individuals uphold liberalism for the "correct" emotive and cognitive reasons. Nowhere does he conflate civic virtue with an Adorno-esque capacity for critical analysis. Further, as discussed above, the strains of commitment accounts for the ambivalence people will have in relation to even optimal political institutions. In Rawls's paraphrase of Berlin, "there is no social world without loss."[47] The implementation of a political conception of justice will undoubtedly sacrifice perfectly respectable human values. A public philosophy can reduce our anger at extant political realities but perhaps never eliminate it.

Avoidance of the technocratic danger. Though the oatmeal consistency of his writings is comparable to Comte's, Rawls nonetheless makes an exerted effort *not* to endorse technocratic liberalism. Despite the avowed methodological individualism of the sociological liberals, they seemed to care little if non-intellectuals saw things their way. (They said that the welfare state is end point of history. Did they *ask* recipients of welfare?) Rawls *does* give individuals a role in constructing a political conception of morality, though he of necessity relies on hypothetical reasoning to insulate first principles from "politics." He intends the difference principle to transform "the aims of the basic structure [of society] so that the total scheme of institutions no longer emphasizes social efficiency and technocratic values."[48] He denounces utilitarianism as a potentially inhumane negation of the individual. He knocks positive science off of its pedestal as the sole source of political wisdom. Interestingly, and most to the point of his relationship to sociological liberalism, Rawls attacks welfare statism as nonreciprocal. By largely devaluing positive liberty, it denies individuals a fair value of political liberties and "permits very large

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[47] Rawls, *Liberalism*, 197.
[48] Rawls, *Theory*, 101.

inequalities in the ownership of real property."[49] With other critics of such statist capitalism, conservative and progressive alike, he sees the problem of one-sided dependence on political authorities as real.

Philosophical stability. "The criterion of stability is not decisive" in choosing among two prospective conceptions of justice. That said, all else being equal, representatives in the original position will of course choose the more stable conception. Rawls's stability has as its foundation the "sense of duty and obligation" arising from just, self-affirming social cooperation. It is not static because social arrangements, in continually renewing their commitment to justice, must change over time.[50] Such a stability cannot arise from the atomization of life and apathy that sociological liberalism prescribes for America. It is a richer and more plausible account of stability than Lipset's "smooth functioning," capturing what we intuitively take to be the health of any democracy.

A proper relationship between is and ought. Rawls believes political psychology and sociology to be impossible without politico-theoretical norms. Hypotheses about the capacity to be reasonable and rational "incorporate moral notions even if these are understood only as part of the psychological theory."[51] Sociology in turn answers questions about the viability of certain conceptions of justice in concrete empirical settings. The judgments of both fields, being known in the original position, can amend representatives' normative determinations so as to bring them closer to reflective equilibrium. *They cannot however replace these determinations.* The social sciences should therefore aspire to a value-explicit rather than value-free methodology. Rawls's *The Law of the Peoples* (1999), which applies the original position to international relations in the hope of a realistically utopian cosmopolitan order, makes a further distinction: between ideal

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[49] Rawls, *Fairness*, 137-8.
[50] Rawls, *Theory*, 455, 234, 474.
[51] *Id*., 491.

and non-ideal theory. An ideal theory of justice makes simplifying and idealizing assumptions: for instance, that a society is already well-ordered and enjoys civil peace. A non-ideal theory integrates the ideal theory with the unfortunate limitations of reality, arriving at a plan for positive social change.

5.5. Addressing the Counter-Considerations

It may well be, the sociological liberals might contend, that Rawls's political philosophy has merits. But does he leave unaddressed the vital concerns of democratic realism? Point by point, I will reconstruct how Rawls might respond to sociological liberals' criticisms.

Is insisting in individuals' hypothetical civic personality, which is hopefully reasonable and rational, too strong an assumption? Does not Rawls take us into the realm of metaphysics? Rawls's Theory seems open to this criticism, but his more mature thought addresses the seeming incompatibility of metaphysical personhood and the prohibition on comprehensive doctrines. While the idea of the individual as reasonable and rational is an abstraction, though a practical and not metaphysical one, it is so general as to encompass any notion of personhood.[52]

What if the sociological liberals are right about the capacities of the average American? Though concerns about the civic capacity of Americans are well placed, the idea that these constitute a "fascist potential" relies on pseudoscience and apocryphal stereotyping. The popularity of the Supreme Court—to Rawls the home of public reason—, for years exceeding that of Congress and the Executive, suggests that the average American values reasoned argumentation over cynical politicking.[53] If truly interested in deliberative democracy—in using

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[52] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 31-2 no. 34.
[53] "Poll: Supreme Court approval rating high," *UPI.com*, 9 Sept. 2009, United Press International, 9 Dec. 2009 <http://www.upi.com/Top_News/2009/09/09/Poll-Supreme-Court-approval-rating-high/UPI-86681252519382/>.

public institutions to nudge irrationalities in a positive direction—, democratic realists should find a more constructive relationship with the American electorate than parental scolding. If they find electorate's irrationalities insurmountable, then they should at least be *honest* about their own tottering commitment to liberal democracy.

Why should we think the forum conception of liberalism stronger than the market one? Is not the beautiful flowering of a diverse, transnational civil society evidence of the strength of procedural democracy? It may well be. But an account of politics that conceives of no other form of social cooperation than a Newtonian stasis between competing groups poses difficulties. Amnesty International is a civil societal actor, but so are organized crime syndicates and terrorist networks. This fact suggests that proceduralism free rides on a third party political morality in order to seem plausible. Even the enlightened self-interest of legitimate political actors presupposes a sense of justice absorbed in society, and the willingness of individuals to share their fates.

Rawls criticizes the notion that stability overrides all other considerations in political institutions. Is he fair to do so? After all, his original position assumes stability in the first place, because the difference principle could be an empty abstraction at best in Afghanistan. Secondary commentators have attacked Rawls along these lines. Political theorist George Klosko believes that the "facts of political sociology over the past half century … strongly contradict Rawls's assumptions about democratic regimes"—that they need to be stable "philosophically" in order to last.[54] In truth, Rawls refers to a higher order of stability than the mere absence of conflict. As well he should: instability seldom shakes developed societies to the core. When we talk about "instability" in modern democracies, we typically refer to things like popular distrust in

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[54] George Klosko, "Rawls's Argument from Political Stability," *Columbia Law Review* 94.6 (1994): 1882-1897, 1896.

government and the mean things the parties to the Culture War say to each other. It is not excessively utopian to conclude, first, that we could do better and, second, that we should therefore redefine a stable politics as something that in addition to lasting *deserves* to last.

Does not Rawls violate professional standards by insisting in a value-explicit rather than value-free political science? Ignoring the question of whether a value-free political science is possible, a matter that has occupied the minds of many German theorists, we have seen that normative commitments overshadowed sociological liberalism's commitment to value-free methodology. As an examination of political phenomena alone cannot tell good apart from bad, "social pathologies" can exist only in relation to values. Rawls's call for value explicitness is a call for self-awareness and honesty. The values themselves hopefully provide checks that constrain researchers from treating their subjects unjustly.

Now, in my commitment to fairness as constructed in the original position, I conclude the chapter with an exposition of more general criticisms of justice as fairness.

5.6. Rawls's Weaknesses, and What to Do About Them

Though the academic printing presses do not church out as much commentary as they used to, the anti-Rawls industry still reaps a nice revenue. If we think, as I do, that Rawls's public philosophy deserves reconsideration more-so than Brook's roster of sociologists, then it is only fair for this paper to evaluate where Rawls is weakest. Even a survey of the body of criticisms could fill a volume, so I will focus on the ones I consider most compelling. Hopefully I will not stray too far from my topic.

Elitist worry. Implicitly endorsing Ronald Dworkin's "constitution of principle," Rawls believes the Constitution to be law not by virtue of its centuries-old enactment but rather its embodiment of normatively sound principle. He therefore claims that the Supreme Court's

"special role makes it an exemplar of public reason" and calls for the other branches of American government to emulate it.[55] But does it follow from the Constitution's wide incorporation of civil liberties that the Supreme Court is their guarantor? It might if the Court's philosophical inclination makes it the paragon of deliberative virtue. (Though certain decisions made even in recent memory render this assumption dubious, at least from a descriptive standpoint). But does this perhaps collapse into the technocratic elitism against which Rawls forcefully argues against? But because judicial activism—or sound jurisprudence, depending on your point of view—aims to lessen the tension between rights and popular sovereignty obvious in the Declaration and liberalism generally, and because seemingly no legal philosophy can discharge this task to everyone's satisfaction, it seems unfair to dismiss Rawls on this sole point.

Justice as fairness is not foundational. Continental philosophers have labeled Rawls a philosopher of the "last man:" the flat-souled, weak-willed, soft-brained nihilist foretold in Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. We saw in Chapter Two that Bell reached similar conclusions. Rawls's original position allegedly equates moral agency with an effeminate and hedonistic conception of life. Contrary to public perception, Rawls did not take the charge lightly. Philosopher Martha Nussbaum's remembrance of Rawls recounts:

> I recall a conversation with him about Wagner's "Tristan," when I was a young faculty member. I made some Nietzschean jibes about the otherworldliness of Wagnerian passion and how silly it all was. Mr. Rawls, with sudden intensity, said to me that I must not make a joke about this. Wagner was absolutely wonderful and therefore extremely dangerous. You had to see the danger, he said,

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[55] Rawls, *Liberalism*, 216.

to comprehend how bad it would be to be seduced by that picture of life, with no vision of the general good.[56]

In his philosophy, Rawls does try to answer this charge of nihilism—sidestepping the obvious question of whether it deserves an answer!—by pointing out that the nature of moral deliberation *itself*, and not the averseness of deliberators' special psychologies, that leads to "the maximin rule as a rule of thumb."[57] Nevertheless, Alexandre Kojève and Fukuyama, in *admitting* to be philosophers of the last man, are perhaps more immune to the continental line of criticism.

There are passages where Rawls seems to fall into the modus vivendi *trap he criticizes in others.* The question of how to practically get the rich to part with their toys never receives a satisfactory treatment. In certain related passages he sounds downright Hobbesian:

> The government's right to maintain public order and security is an enabling right, a right which the government must have if it is to carry out its duty of impartially supporting the conditions necessary for everyone's pursuit of his interests and living up to his obligations as he understands them.[58]

The public order embodying the two principles of justice therefore benefits everyone, including the most advantaged. But Nozick is correct to see that this logic could easily back an aristocracy. What if the most advantaged threatened to withhold their acceptance of the laws unless granted terms of social cooperation rigged in their favor? "The better endowed gain by cooperating with the worse endowed," he writes, "*and* the worse endowed gain by cooperating with the better endowed."[59] So much for fairness!

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[56] Martha Nussbaum, "Making Philosophy Matter to Politics," *The New York Times*, 2 Dec 2002, late edition: A21.
[57] Rawls, *Fairness*, 107.
[58] Rawls, *Theory*, 213.
[59] Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, 1974), 192.

Reasonableness and public reason: too strict? It is true that any normative account of reasonableness will exclude many widely held beliefs. It is also true, as we have seen, that too high a standard turns liberalism into what Strauss called a "seminary of intolerance."[60] Political Liberalism contains a footnote claiming that the expression of opposition to legalized abortion in the public space is unreasonable, given the priority of liberty.[61] Citizens in a Rawlsian society would then be free to express opposition in their own private lives but not vote on this value at the polls. Secondary commentators were displeased.

A residuum of moral intuitionism. His assertion that our moral intuitions demand that justice be the first virtue of government leaves Rawls open to the objection that, first, this is not necessarily so and, second, that it is irreconcilable with his discussions about moral intuitionism.

Rawls and classical republicanism. Rawls believes that the reciprocity of maximin justice will generate the affective attachment to the laws prioritized by such republican thinkers as Niccolò Machiavelli and Rousseau. So long as society does not advance virtue or excellence for its own sake, there is "no fundamental opposition" between classical republican and political liberalism.[62] Nevertheless, we can justly ask if political liberalism's *instrumental* rather than *constitutive* approach to civic friendship and personal authenticity frustrates these goods.

Rawls and meritocracy. Though the thread of individualism and meritocracy in America assumes exaggerated proportions in the hands of some thinkers, it is nonetheless true that justice as fairness is at out of step with a large portion of the electorate. On a practical level, Rawls's egalitarianism may suffer from the same pragmatic paradox as sociological liberalism's priority of stability: just as stability is best served by society's incorporation of other goods, egalitarianism may be most realizable when not made into an omnibus principle. On a theoretical

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[60] Leo Strauss, Natural Right and History (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 6.
[61] Rawls, *Liberalism*, 243 no. 32.
[62] *Id*., 205.

level, Rawls has to answer the charge that his project of redistributing such natural assets as talents transgresses on the inviolability and uniqueness of each individual, so important to liberalism. Nozick's claim that we *deserve* the natural advantages bestowed on us by accident of birth is unconvincing for reasons that we need not here discuss. Nevertheless, his charge that justice as fairness treats people as means for greater social ends—Rawls believes that individuals' moral personalities should be treated as ends in themselves, but Nozick replies that this abstraction is meaningless because individuals are "thick with particular traits"[63]—and so violates the tenets of liberalism has rung true for so many. A chastened rather than omnibus account of egalitarianism is in order.

These criticisms should not however take away from the achievements of Rawls's theoretical scheme. His restoration of norms in political inquiry corrected many of the failings of postwar liberalism. A wholesale rejection of Rawls may lead us back to the contradictions and dangers of the end of ideology, suggesting that the most constructive way to proceed is to absorb what he teaches us about politico-moral reasoning and build off of his insights.

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[63] Nozick, 228.

6. Conclusion: "The Analytic Mode?"

> *"Barring a scientific breakthrough, we can't merge Obama's analysis with George Bush's passion. But we should still be glad that he is governing the way he is. I loved covering the Obama campaign. But amid problems like Afghanistan and health care, it simply wouldn't do to give gauzy speeches about the meaning of the word hope. It is in Obama's nature to lead a government by symposium. Embrace the complexity. Learn to live with the dispassion."*
> -David Brooks[277]

> *"With regard to what is commonly meant by intemperate discussion, namely, invective, sarcasm, personality, and the like, the denunciation of these weapons would deserve more sympathy if it were ever proposed to interdict them equally to both sides; but it is only desired to restrain the employment of them against the prevailing opinion: against the unprevailing they may not only be used without general disapproval, but will be likely to obtain for him who uses them the praise of honest zeal and righteous indignation."*
> -J.S. Mill[278]

6.1. Restatement of the Argument

The skeleton of the argument was as follows:

1) Public philosophies, which tell us how to think about politics, matter. They provide rational frameworks for the adjudication of conflicts. They tell us why existing institutions are legitimate and, if not, ways in and means with which we can change them. They are secular theodicies. Even if two public philosophies endorse the same conclusion, for instance reform liberalism, *how they get there* can matter decisively.

2) Sociological liberalism was an American public philosophy. It originated as a culmination of the decades-long intellectual trend towards positivism, and as a response to the threat of totalitarian mass movements. Its characteristics included

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[277] Brooks, "The Analytic Mode," *The New York Times*, 3 Dec. 2009 <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/04/opinion/04brooks.html?_r=1&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss>.
[278] Mill, 51.

positivism, a narrowly defined conception of rationality, a distrust of "utopian" values and a belief in the beneficent end of ideology. It emphasized stability, celebrated pluralism, designated a wide role for political and managerial elites and heavily circumscribed the terms of social cooperation. It dominated political science from about 1955 to 1975.

3) That sociological engaged in a "therapeutic discourse," meaning arguing for and against political positions in psychological categories. It often pathologized dissent from the "post-ideological" welfare state.

4) That sociological liberalism engaged in therapeutic discourse because of its normative makeup and not by accident.

5) That therapeutic discourse was *bad*, however satisfying urbanely mocking the unwashed may be. It relied on obvious pseudoscience. Still worse, it violated basic deliberative norms, endorsed an invidious elitism, sanctioned psychiatric "philosopher kings" and befouled public discourse. It introduced into discourse such categories as "authoritarianism," "status anxiety" and "mental illness" that anti-liberals would use against liberals beginning in roughly 1972.

6) That, if liberalism *must* engage in this tendency, then it is unworthy of the support of humane and intelligent people.

7) That there are correctives for a liberal public philosophy. These correctives include a willingness to take arguments seriously, a positive as opposed to "least bad" defense of democracy, a faith in natural virtue, a more accurate and attractive account of politics than bare proceduralism, a privileging of goods besides stability, an understanding of the relationship between facts and values, and a healthy utopianism.

8) That, though more or less reaching the same reform liberalism (though Justice as Fairness: A Restatement takes care to distinguish maximin economic justice from the "welfare state"), Rawls's philosophical liberalism, though not without weaknesses, is a much stronger account of democratic institutions. He offers a liberalism that amounts to more than an insistence on reasonability, sensibleness and stability. It aims at a "political" conception of justice that, though not based on a particularistic morality, transcends the *modus vivendi* justice of sociological liberalism. It derives its sustenance from the contract tradition—the original position—and the epistemic norms of a forum—public reason. It accounts for a philosophical stability that transcends the mere fact of stability in that it gives citizens *reasons* for adhering to its institutions. It values humans as moral agents, able to act reasonably and rationally and change their minds. It defines parameters for political sociologists, such that they engage in value-explicit work when analyzing phenomena. (A person who inordinately pursues gain and power may or may not be "pathological," but we can only know if he is *unjust* by reference to terms agreeable in the original position). Political sociologists must help political theorists define what conceptions of justice are workable.

9) That Rawls successfully avoids the therapeutic discourse. This should lead us to a presumption in favor of philosophical over sociological liberalism.

Now, I will proceed to outline some of the political implications of the preceding work of scholarship.

6.2. Some Implications

The volubility of my writing alone can support many interpretations on the reader's part. I will nevertheless present my own:

1) *A reinterpretation of intellectual history.* My research above suggests that the campus tumults of the late sixties expressed not so much a generational divide as an ideational one: between sociological liberalism and the romanticism of the New Left. Rawls was not primarily a ratifier of the Great Society. Perhaps we should best read him as a *synthesis* of the end of ideology thesis and the idealism of the student movements. We thus have a public philosophy that is realistically utopian.

2) *The bankruptcy of introducing psychological categories in explaining and arguing against the recent round of conservative activism.* Events in recent years have to dangerous degrees de-legitimated America's public institutions in the eyes of much of the electorate. The populist tax revolt, for all of its irresponsible and destructive behavior, responds to sensible concerns about our government's poor performance. The solution is not to drive a wedge between to its members and all "right-thinking" Americans by diagnosing them with social pathologies. The solution is to improve extant institutions so that they are worthy of respect, in articulating a vision of American politics able to criticize and if necessary the populists with *reasons*. A public discourse befouled with motivist reductionism and *ad hominem* viciousness adversely affects the piously publicly spirited more than it does the unreasonable. We should inform our reaction to the recent dissensus with the storehouse of political theory at our disposal. Our reaction should also inform our normative conclusions about deliberative democracy.

3) *An explosion of the myth of pragmatism.* The George W. Bush Era produced a legend among Democrats. It said that if only our Party's non-ideological centrists were in charge, then they would solve all of the basic problems of governance. I hope to have shown that a liberal public philosophy requires more than insistence in moderation and competence. Otherwise, it may sanction a technocratic nightmare, as in the form of therapeutic discourse or the Vietnam War. Most individuals would likely rather not live in a society governed by scientific managers *and political theory must account for this preference.* It is to Rawls's credit that his philosophy does.

4) *A case study of the dangerous cult of sensibleness.* Just as it is self-evident that all political regimes must restrict political speech in certain ways, it also seems self-evident that the cult of sensible liberalism can insulate public policy from needed criticism. The Obama Administration's consideration of only hard-line military input in formulating his Afghanistan policy, thereby considering the views of the fifty-two percent of pro-withdrawal Americans as "beyond the pale," seems a fine example. Our examination of therapeutic discourse demonstrates the need for a political theory that positions public deliberation between the extremes of antinomianism and insular technocratic rule. Rawls's public reason, despite espousing an unduly circumscribed conception of "reasonability," does at least try to accomplish this.

5) *An appreciation of the strengths of Rawls's original position in light of contemporary problems.* As recounted in Chapter Five, an entire industry—employing an army of disappointed liberal egalitarians and anti-liberal critics—emerged with the sole purpose to attack Rawlsianism. But given capacity of philosophical liberalism to avoid the worst features of a nevertheless highly sociological liberalism, a

reassessment of Rawls's relevance to contemporary political problems seems in order. The original position and public reason capture features of moral deliberation that we would hope for in a public philosophy, serving as bulwarks against technocratic elitism.

6.3. Brooks's Moment of Honesty

Thurman Arnold (1891-1969), an antitrust lawyer, appellate judge and Yale law professor, was one of America's best legal philosophers. A legal realist, he saw laws and power structures in functional rather than formalistic terms. He sounded like Bell in saying that effective judges and legislators must scorn creedal formulae and be scientific pragmatists. His *The Symbols of Government* (1935) depicted the ideal government as an "insane asylum," which:

> liberates us from the notion that wise men think up principles and schemes of government for their duller fellows to learn and follow, and that thus social change is accomplished. It frees us from the notion that "thinking men" decide between the relative merits of communism and capitalism, and choose the better form. Finally, the theory is based on a humanitarian ideal which seems to be indestructible in the march of society—the ideal that it is a good thing to make people comfortable if the means exist by which it can be done.

With more insight and honesty than the sociological liberals, he saw the connection between positivistic utilitarianism and the therapeutic leviathan. He also saw that Americans would not buy into such a philosophy of government. The problem facing New Deal capitalism, which as a member of the Roosevelt Administration Arnold saw as embodying his ideal of rational governance, was advertising and manipulation. *How do we update capitalism such that*

Americans do not realize what is happening? Raw Machiavellianism does not work because, though government really *ought* to be an insane asylum, this "judgment does not endow mankind with the dignity or the hope or the tragedy which most persons with qualities of leadership feels that it actually possesses."[279] Just as laws are specious and tautological pronouncements to which people irrationally genuflect, emotive sloganeering—"liberty, equality, fraternity"—proves useful to the ruling class of scientific managers. Burhnam's "managerialism" made similar claims.

Brooks's latest article, "The Analytic Mode," resembles Arnold almost to the point of plagiarism. He writes that "the Obama campaign, like all presidential campaigns, was built on a series of fictions."[280] True enough. He then goes on to argue that Obama's manipulation of voters is a *good thing* because only the dishonest use of symbols and sloganeering can propel as analytic, dispassionate modernist intellectual to the White House. It is apparently good for American democracy that Obama appoints not a single cabinet officer that reflects the views of his electoral base. It is apparently good strategy to deactivate his network of youth organizers upon entering office. Lastly, it is apparently good leadership that considers only those options in Afghanistan approved by the center-right Beltway policy establishment, which has in recent years proven dangerously reckless and incompetent. Nowhere in the channels of communication is the public to be found.

Mill was insightful in seeing the one word underlying commands to be civil: *obey*. Brooks and other end of ideology ideologists treat as spoiled children anyone who wants democracy to be any more than it is today. As pressure on Obama mounts from the Left, look for Brooks—who never subjects right-wing populists to the same scrutiny as their ideological

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[279] Thurman W. Arnold, *The Symbols of Government* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), 236, 249.
[280] Brooks, "Analytic."

foils—and similarly situated pundits to sound increasingly like the texts surveyed in this paper. My own impression is that the media establishment, like the sociological liberals, defines "centrist" vis-à-vis "extremist" opinions not on the basis of their merits but rather on the basis of *who holds them*. (It permits only "hawks" like Zbigniew Brzezinski or Will to criticize American foreign policy without impugning their patriotism). Meanwhile, the mutual incomprehension between political elites and the individuals they govern can only grow. The crisis of confidence may reach dangerous levels: today, it undermines the possibility of effective policy; tomorrow, it could undermine the possibility of civil peace. Whether or not they are right, Americans excluded from the "politics of cohesion" will have every rational reason to see the government's call for reasonableness as hypocritical at best.

Brooks and others miss the point. Those Americans animated by political movements and rallying around inspirational slogans do not want *impractical* leadership. Like Lipset before him, Brooks mistakes the desire for leadership with a moral center and willingness to take risks for irrationalism and authoritarianism. Perhaps voters do not deserve manipulation at each election cycle at the hands of both parties. Brooks also confuses "pragmatism" with coldness and amorality—the cult of the hardboiled—in a move that the philosophical tradition's American founders would have disowned.

The politics of advertising, manipulation and condescension leads to therapeutic discourse. The attempt to subordinate politics to a higher epistemic and moral standard of legitimacy, for instance public reason, has been untried in recent decades. We could perhaps do worse than to see where Rawls's realistic utopianism might lead. Ought implies can, but we do have to try.

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