

## Another State of Mind

*Charles E. Lindblom*

About liberal democracy, V. O. Key, Jr., wrote: “Political parties are basic institutions for the translation of mass preferences into public policy” (1967, p. 432). He did not write that they obstruct the translation of mass preferences into public policy. Although his formulation may be the correct one, it is not justified by any evidence and argument.

Karl Deutsch wrote that “politics has the function of coordinating the learning processes of the whole society” (1980, p. 19). He did not say “indoctrinating”—his was the kinder word “learning.” Nor did he write “obstruct” or “distort” the learning processes; his word was “coordinate.” How does he know his words are more accurate than these alternatives? Again, his statement is introduced as a preface to subsequent analysis, all of which simply assumes it to be true.

David Easton and Robert Hess (1962, p. 233) wrote—and Richard E. Dawson and Kenneth Prewitt (1969, p. 45n) wrote that they agree—that a political community is “a group of persons who seek to solve their problems in common through a shared political structure.” They did not write that the phenomenon they sought to describe was that of prevailing over adversaries—their phrase was the more benign “solve their problems *in common*.” Again, how do they know that their formulation is more accurate than the alternatives they did not choose? They do not say.

Let me interrupt this illustrative procession of witnesses, though I shall resume it shortly with younger authors. My concern is that when we, political scientists, make gratuitous claims like these, we leave mainstream American political science vulnerable—vulnerable to the charge from radical political science that we have without evidence fallen into a complacent view of the liberal democratic political process, government, and state and that we do not even bother to debate it.<sup>1</sup> It is, I think, largely an American problem. Euro-

---

Presidential Address, American Political Science Association, 1981. Reprinted in a somewhat shortened version from *American Political Science Review* 76 (1982): 9–21.

1. These vulnerable views can be and are sometimes attacked from within a broad mainline tradition, going back to Madison in the *Federalist Papers* and even earlier. My primary interest is

pean political theory has in recent years been greatly reconstructed by the incorporation of much radical thought. If these European developments can be taken as leading, American thought is a decade or two behind.

### Two Views of Liberal Democracy

To see whether there is any merit to so bruising a charge, let me first lay out—very briefly because it is familiar—the simplest elements of the democratic political system and state as they have often appeared since World War II in respectable circles in much of theoretically oriented American political science.<sup>2</sup> I shall also lay out a simple synthetic dissenting view that captures much of the radical concept of the democratic state. They will be two views of what democracy is, not what it ought to be. After laying them out, I propose to appraise basic elements of the conventional view that I have chosen to discuss.

*A Conventional Intellectual Tradition in American Political Science.* According to views common in theoretical circles of the profession in which broad generalization is attempted—and for which I shall offer further documentation—the political system called democratic in the West is best understood as a distinctive kind of mutual-benefit society. However imperfect, it provides some degree of social order, as well as widespread benefits beyond that. In Deutsch's term, it "coordinates the learning processes." In Easton and Hess's, it attacks "problems in common." In Key's, it "translates mass preferences into public policy."

Conflict abounds, however, in this view of the democratic state, running in all directions. The state is therefore also seen as a conflict-resolving system—a theme so common as hardly to require documentation. The theme can be traced back to Hobbes and earlier; and among contemporary voices that sound it is Dahl's in the opening pages of his *Democracy in the United States* (1972). It also opens the analysis of politics in Prewitt and Verba's *Introduction to American Government* (1977).

---

in their vulnerability from any source of attack. I give special attention, however, to the radical attack for several reasons: the magnitude of the assault, the sharpness of issues posed, and a concern that radical thought is likely to be undervalued as a corrective to the problem.

2. There are, of course, other mainstream traditions. I am trying to capture an intellectual tradition in mainstream theory construction, one of recent unchallenged prominence in American political science. I think it has already lost much of its earlier vitality, for two different reasons. On the one hand, its persuasiveness has already declined among some political scientists. On the other hand, it is less vital because it is taken for granted in many circles. It remains strong, as I see it, sometimes all the stronger for being taken for granted, for therefore remaining only implicit, and for directing research attention down some avenues rather than others without explanation or justification.

The concept of the state or government as a common-benefit organization has to be reconciled with the concept of the state as conflict resolver. The reconciliation is easy. Everyone is seen as wanting a core of much the same fundamental services or benefits: law and order, national defense, and a prosperous economy, among others. Ordinarily, only secondary conflict develops within such an agreed fundamental set of desires. Class conflict is only one important conflict among many.

The specialized political machineries of these systems (elections and legislative representation, for example) are seen as necessary instruments for holding government or the state responsible to society as a whole by placing important powers in the hands of all—with some approximation to equality in the distribution of these powers. It is believed that some consequential approach to equality, even if distant, is achieved and justifies interpretation of the system as benefiting, however unequally, almost everyone.

In this conventional intellectual tradition, the disproportionate political influence or power of elites is recognized. But their disproportion does not deny any of the above characteristics of democracy; all that is required is that elites be held accountable. Some political scientists, David Truman (1959) among them, go further to make elites the guardians of democracy, on the grounds that they are more committed to it than are nonelites.

Pluralism is not a necessary feature of this picture. It is at most secondary and is absent from some versions.

*A Synthesis of Dissent.* An alternative view captures the most basic features of dissenting Marxist and other radical thought on liberal or bourgeois democracy. A transitional form, liberal democracy can be understood only in light of where it came from. If we cut into the historical process at a stage at which humankind has already developed a complex social structure marked by substantial specialization of function, we see that some subsets of the population at that time rule others and enjoy various advantages denied to other subsets. Once such a degree of complexity is realized, a high degree of political inequality and resultant conflict thereafter become universal historical phenomena—in all places and at all times, though less in some circumstances than in others.

There is some cohesion or cooperation, much though not all of it unintended and without self-awareness, among the advantaged on one hand and the disadvantaged on the other. Most radicals would say that this is the distribution of property rights that has for the last few centuries marked off the two loose, somewhat cohesive, aggregates. That the disadvantaged and the advantaged each cohere loosely is critical to the model, and the usual word for each of the aggregates is class. Within, between, and jointly among the advantaged and disadvantaged aggregates are conflicting subgroups. But the most critical

conflict is between the two aggregates, even if it is suppressed and consequently not recognizable as a conflict by such mainstream political scientists as I am summarizing.

The liberal democratic political systems of the world have to be understood as the present institutionalized form of that struggle. Democratic institutions represent the present alignment, strengths, and formal authority of advantaged and disadvantaged groups. Democracy did not come about through any agreement between advantaged and disadvantaged groups that henceforth the political system should be operated for the benefit of all. These systems represent social machinery for converting the age-old struggle into a more peaceful one than it would otherwise often be, but not for terminating the struggle.

For the advantaged groups in these systems, the principal effort is to keep such advantages as they have, even if it has become impolite for them to say so. For the disadvantaged groups, the principal effort is to reduce the degree of inequality, or exploitation, or dominance—the dissenters do not all use the same terms. A principal weapon of the advantaged groups, which have always been more educated and have had instruments of communication available to them (ranging from the Church in times past to the mass media today), is indoctrination of the disadvantaged groups to induce them to believe in the rightness of their disadvantaged position and of the difficulty, in any case, of doing anything about it. Hence, the principal purpose of most members of the disadvantaged groups is no more than to protect such gains as are already won and to pursue others only timidly and fitfully.

It is then argued that the political systems of the West are, as a consequence, not mainly mutual-benefit or common-purpose systems. Both sides share an interest in some common purposes, such as in some degree of social order and organized economic production. But many interests are shared only in the sense that two nations at war have shared interests in methods of communication between them and in the exchange of prisoners. Their common interests are usually best understood as serving more fundamental conflicting interests. Some of the common interests of the advantaged and disadvantaged are best understood as no more than common interests in keeping the struggle from escalating.

Finally, specific mechanisms of government like mass elections and broad legislative representation are concessions (wrung from a bourgeoisie that earlier won these gains for itself) that have grown out of historical struggle. For the disadvantaged, the gains are significant. They are, however, so far from perfect instruments of popular control and political equality that they leave many opportunities for the advantaged to continue their predominance of control and other advantages. If, in the eyes of the disadvantaged,

the purpose of these mechanisms is or ought to be the establishment of popular control and political equality, in the eyes of the advantaged the point of establishing them was to make no more than necessary concessions, sometimes of more apparent than genuine significance.

The relation between polity and economy is a key issue in the dissenters' model. Orthodox Marxism often tended toward a conspiratorial model of dominance by property, yet those at the frontiers of current Marxist thought have moved far from such a position. They are now exploring more carefully qualified and specific hypotheses. I attribute to contemporary radical thought a concept of the state as much more autonomous than that in traditional Marxism.

In some formulations, the state achieves autonomy because of the existence of competing capitalist fractions, to no single one of which the state is subordinate. In other formulations, the state to a degree responds to demands from the working class and is therefore not wholly subordinate to property. Or the state has to provide welfare benefits to all classes because they each provide an input necessary to the productive system. In still another formulation, the state responds to all interests within a set of constraints that protect the survival of capitalism. Some Marxists have also introduced explicit elements of pluralism into their analyses.

The dissenting view draws no great number of adherents in the American political science profession. But many of us are aware that some of our students, including many of the brightest, are exploring it independent of our tutelage. They claim to be finding intellectual nourishment in such sources as Habermas (1976), Poulantzas (1973), Miliband (1969), Offe (1976), O'Connor (1973), Lukes (1974), Mandel (1974), and Gough (1975), among others who are being widely cited in a new literature on the state. The hold of the conventional theory on political science is indicated by a striking fact that, although scholars like those just named write about politics, they come to it from sociology, philosophy, economics, and history, as well as disproportionately from European intellectual traditions to which American political science is cool. Very few come from American political science—and of this particular list, none. Radicals do not see political science as a well-designed discipline; its very definition is an obstruction, they will say, to necessary research. Our discipline itself is a formidable difficulty in the way of some of our younger colleagues.

*The Nondissenting Dissenter.* In their choice between these two pictures of democratic politics, a wider array of political scientists than first appears holds to the conventional one. So persuasive is the conventional picture that even some forms of dissent among political scientists do not break with it. Lowi's polemic (to use his own term) against interest-group liberalism in *The*

*End of Liberalism* (1979) makes no sense if the radical picture of the political system is correct. Only on the assumption that the political system might be and should be evaluated as a mutual-benefit organization, a problem-solving mechanism for the good of all, can he be indignant that it has drifted off course.

Dye and Zeigler set out to attack pluralist interpretations of democratic systems. Yet they propose an alternative in which the political system is still a mutual-benefit association whose elites “may be very ‘public-regarding’ and deeply concerned with the welfare of the masses” (Dye and Zeigler 1970, pp. 1–2).

Similarly, Dolbeare and Edelman, who desire in their textbook to give full hearing both to the conventional and what they call the challengers’ models of the American political system, categorically declare by way of introduction that people “erect governments to maintain order, further mutual goals, and promote general well-being” (Dolbeare and Edelman 1981, p. 7).

I am suggesting that scholars of a wide range of ages, temperaments, and schools of thought are largely committed to the conventional view and give little sustained analytical attention to the radical model. My list of samples above is illustrative of the variety.

*An Incomplete Breakaway.* In recent decades, some significant attempts have been made by members of the conventional school to break out of its confines with frames of reference or theories that would then permit an eyes-open choice among existing or yet-to-be-developed theories. A monumental attempt of this kind—on a functional framework—has been that of Almond and Powell (1966) on foundations they attribute, in part, to Easton. Their analysis of the political process is worked out with such extraordinary care that it can accommodate both the dominant and the radical pictures.

For their discussions of democratic politics, however, they choose, without any explicit defense of their choice, the conventional view. For example, although interest aggregation might, according to their framework, largely neglect the interests of the disadvantaged, they appear to take it for granted that in democratic politics it does not. Having developed a framework that will work for either the conventional or radical view of democracy, they work it for the conventional one.

In addition, their framework seems to have been designed with an eye on variables that best fit the conventional view. For one thing, the framework is structural-functional with debt to Parsons; it therefore habitually identifies functions served for the whole society rather than some functions for the advantaged and others for the disadvantaged. Although fundamental and continuing struggle between the two groups is neither denied in the framework nor impossible to place in it, it is difficult to fit the struggle in. To fit it would

require that a strained interpretation be given to such societywide functional categories as interest articulation and interest aggregation. It is possible to consider the advantaged group's interest in exploiting the disadvantaged as just another interest to be articulated and aggregated, but one cannot help wondering about the usefulness of these terms—articulation and aggregation—for describing such a situation. To make the point vividly by analogy, though with some exaggeration: if a racketeer shakes down a tradesman for monthly protection payments, we could say that in so doing he is both articulating his own interests and aggregating his and the tradesman's. But the concepts would seem strained.

### **Do We Know That the Dominant Model Is Superior?**

At this point, the questions are: How solid, verified, or even thoughtful is the conventional tradition? Why do we think our picture is more useful for political science than the radical picture? Let us examine some of the differences between the two. I propose to do so without any appeals to the vocabulary of radical thought and without any radical methodological stances; nor shall I ascend to the philosophy of science.

*Common Purposes Versus Struggle.* Is it known—is it settled—that the primary motivation among leaders and ordinary citizens is the pursuit of those benefits they share in common? Clearly not. Empirical evidence does not establish even a thin case that, on this point, the conventional view is correct.

What do we actually observe when we observe political life? We observe millions of ordinary people pursuing a variety of objectives. Even to an experienced observer, it is not at all clear that certain objectives common to all occupy much of their energies. On the other hand, neither is it obvious that the various partisans cohere either deliberately, tacitly, or unintentionally into two loose coalitions, the advantaged and the disadvantaged, each pursuing distinctive conflicting objectives. In short, we actually observe forms of behavior that the dominant view wants to construe one way and the radical the other. A principal task of a scientific political science might be to research the issue. Conventional political science has no grounds for simply holding to its present view to the neglect of the radical one.

There seems to be a way to escape making such a concession to the radical model. We can argue as many do—Dolbeare and Edelman (1981) most explicitly among those cited above—that a political system, government, or state is necessary for law and order. We simply cannot imagine doing without it—all people need it whether they know it or not. Hence, it makes a certain kind of sense to say that fundamentally the state's purpose is (for the benefit of all) law and order and other necessary benefits. In an earlier anal-

ogy, however, we noted that to carry on international warfare seems to require that some system of communications between the warring nations be kept open and that they thus can be seen as joining in pursuit of that common purpose. But it would confuse our understanding of war if we called it a common-purpose activity. We would do better to see it as a struggle moderated by some common concerns. Similarly, perhaps, the democratic state is an institutionalized form of a struggle to which such necessary common purposes as observers see are secondary. Until that possibility is more carefully examined, the conventional view is not persuasive.

More important, by what logic does a purpose rather than any other important variable dictate how we should build analytic models? As a guide to what goes into models or theories, there is no logical imperative that requires that an essential social purpose must be made the centerpiece.

Perhaps we are still missing something. Perhaps the emphasis in the conventional view on certain common purposes rather than on struggle between advantaged and disadvantaged is not meant to assert or imply any *fact*, historical or contemporary. Perhaps it is only intended to lay out a fruitful strategy, thus to imply a judgment about method—that we shall get more results if we study the state in the light of certain necessary functions than if we study it as though it were an institutionalized form of a long-standing struggle. If this is so, perhaps all variants of the conventional view represent a commitment to structural-functionalism, though only a few are explicitly so labeled.

I do not want to undertake at this point a survey of the pros and cons of structural-functional analysis. But if structural-functionalism is a requirement of good social science—which is not obvious at all—note that the radical model is often put in structural-functional terms. Some advocates of the radical model subscribe to such propositions as that the state's function is to preserve the advantages of the advantaged. I take it that they mean that the state is a structure serving such a function for the ruling class, whether members of the ruling class know it or not. Similarly, many Marxist statements about the working class attribute functions to it. We do not often recognize structural-functionalism in radical thought because the functions postulated are not for the whole society but instead for either the advantaged or the disadvantaged or for an abstraction like "the development of the productive forces."

Have we any reason to assume that the nation-state society is the correct social group for which functions and structures are to be analyzed? Or that the functions explored should be stabilizing functions? Do we have any reason to say we know that structural-functional analysis is inappropriate when used to analyze the functions performed for subgroups or for social change rather than for stability? Must structural analysis be limited to its particular formulation in conventional theory?



Thus we come to the end of our first line of inquiry into analyzing the state or government as a kind of mutual-benefit organization versus analyzing it as an institutional form of struggle between advantaged and disadvantaged. If neither position is wholly satisfactory, as I believe to be the case, we have nevertheless found no solid ground for choosing the first approach over the second. The radical model begins with what may be a historical fact, a struggle, while conventional theory begins with allegations about necessity without connecting that necessity to facts about participants' behavior. There is, consequently, a slightly stronger a priori or question-begging tone to conventional than to radical thought. But our purpose is not to evaluate the relative merits of the two models but only to try to understand the grounds on which the advocates of the dominant model might be justified in holding confidently to it. So far, we have found no grounds.

*Diversified Conflict: Second Line of Defense.* Perhaps I am giving too much attention to the "common benefits" theme in conventional theory. A mainstream political scientist might want to play it down, arguing instead that the critical point of difference between the two views is that one asserts diversified conflict in all directions, the other asserts a more fundamental conflict between advantaged and disadvantaged, each as loosely cohesive groups.

As a defense for conventional theory, the tactic will not quite do. For one thing, as my quotations have shown, the assertion of common benefits and of their central importance to the understanding of democratic politics is hardly an only secondary feature of conventional theory.

Second, the conventional emphasis on diversified conflict to the near exclusion of attention to conflict between advantaged and disadvantaged is, I shall argue below, an intellectual habit of focusing on manifest conflict rather than an emphasis warranted by empirical comparison of the two patterns of conflict which are not equally manifest.

I do not have to show that the radical view of the pattern of conflict is correct, mainstream view wrong. All I must do is show that the mainstream view is unsubstantiated and that there is an issue between the two views that has not been carefully investigated. On whether the conflict is dichotomous or not, consider the distribution of wealth. It is not conclusive evidence that the advantaged cohere in the perpetuation of their advantages, but it is a phenomenon of such striking character as to make such an hypothesis worthy of investigation. So also are patterns in the perpetuation of educational inequality that persist despite public education and state universities. So also is the frequency with which government subsidies turn out to be for the benefit of the well-off rather than for the disadvantaged for whom they are ostensibly designed. So also are differences in teachers' treatment of children of different socioeconomic class. All of these examples, and many more easily listed, should stir our curiosity about the radical model of conflict. Proving nothing

but suggesting much to which much mainstream political science has been indifferent, they undercut confidence in the conventional picture of diversified conflict.

The ordinary or daily business of politics, it might be replied, is resolution of conflicts of a highly diversified sort. What we can observe on the political agenda is diversified conflict. That, consequently, is what democratic politics is all about. What we can see is what is really happening. What we cannot see, or cannot see very clearly, we must not only doubt, but we must also entertain a strong presumption against its existence. In one formulation in the mainstream literature that caught my eye, it is said that, so long as men have liberty to express their views, conflicts will exist—as though conflict does not exist unless made so conspicuously manifest. Indeed, I think one of the misunderstandings separating mainstream and radical political science is that the one often identifies conflict with such expressions of it as liberty permits while the other is sensitive to repressed conflict.

Let me further examine this “politics is what we see” argument in defense of the conventional view of diversified conflict—in three steps.

The first possible point of vulnerability in the argument is the counter argument that what we do not see can be seen if we look harder. Radical political science often argues hypotheses about those parts of the social world, such as indoctrination, most difficult to see. It also warns us against imputing to the unseen the same characteristics as mark the seen. Some mainstream political scientists consequently allege that radicals hold a conspiracy theory of political life. Some radicals do, but that is not characteristic of radical political science. The unseen that interests them is no more conspiratorial than, and is in many ways comparable to, Smith’s hidden hand, though a less benign hidden hand—perhaps a hidden fist. Their hypotheses, like earlier hypotheses about the once unseen backside of the moon, are not to be discredited solely because of formidable difficulties in proof so long as they are willing, as at least some are, to specify what phenomena they would seek to observe if they actually became observable.

The second point of vulnerability in the “politics is what we see” defense of conventional theory is the possibility that, as good scientists, we have to explain both what exists and what does not exist. Radicals believe so—that nonoccurrences require explanation. Sherlock Holmes had to explain why the dog did not bark. If people do not have liberty to express their conflicts, we must often explain why. John Gaventa, our Woodrow Wilson prizewinner for this year, says he had to turn traditional political science around—to ask why rebellion in Appalachia does not occur (1980, p. vi). That is no less a scientific question than why rebellions occur when they do. That many conflicts between advantaged and disadvantaged, which radicals think are fundamental, *do not appear* on the political agenda is a good scientific hypothesis. And

if they exist and do not so appear, why they do not is a good scientific question.

The third point of vulnerability of the “politics is what we see” defense of conventional theory is that all the statement means is that “we”—we political scientists—do *not* see and that it is for other kinds of social scientists to observe. Sometimes I hear the opinion that although some of the phenomena in the radical model may exist (indoctrination of the disadvantaged by the advantaged, for example), they are not part of the political process. They are prepolitical, or at least nonpolitical; and they deserve investigation not by our discipline but by sociologists, social psychologists, and anthropologists. For, again, politics is what goes on in the political process, not what does not go on in it.

Such an argument is not a good reason for rejecting the radical model. It is only an argument about disciplinary lines, and it throws some light on why radicals usually find the lines that define political science unacceptable.

I would conclude that for these three reasons the “politics is what we see” defense of conventional theory is extremely weak and the radical criticism of that defense is highly plausible.

I grant, however, that radical political scientists have been short on empirical research into the unseen. That fact cannot be used to deny the inadequacies of the conventional thought; it points, however, to a potential available to radical thought to verify its model.

*Scientific Neutrality: Third Line of Defense.* A third line of defense for conventional theory is that its propositions are more neutral—they commit you to less—than those of the radical model. To assert, even with historical evidence, a fundamental struggle in politics between advantaged and disadvantaged seems to assert a highly questionable proposition. To study the political system as a system into which we are all drawn because of a common concern for law and order seems safer scientifically.

It is not a very good argument. Even if the state does provide law and order and certain other shared benefits, one takes a position—with no satisfactory evidence—if one asserts that participants are drawn into politics and motivated by those functions of the state. There is nothing neutral at all about such a position. It may seem to be a colorless, nonprovocative kind of position to hold; but it is nevertheless an exposed, unproved position, no less so than the belief in struggle between advantaged and disadvantaged.

I shall go further in showing that conventional theory is far from neutral, whatever “neutral” might be defined to be. It departs from neutrality in the specific sense that it claims that democratic politics are at root benign. It grants, of course, that democratic governments make mistakes, are sometimes harsh, and occasionally sink into violence or repression. But its fundamental characterization of these systems is as benign.

V. O. Key, Jr., for example, takes a benign view: “legitimization of the view that the preferences of the governed shall be accorded weight by governors constitutes the moral basis of popular government, an ethical imperative that in mature democracies is converted into consistent habits and patterns of action among those in places of authority and leadership” (1967, p. 412). The quoted sentence characterizes democracy as so benign that it sounds like the statement of an ideal, but he writes it as a statement of fact.

The benign view is missing from the radical model, in which politics is a struggle between adversaries. In some older and contemporary Marxist versions of the radical model, the state is malevolent rather than benign; but usually the model depicts the political process as a mixture of benignity and malevolence unless, more neutrally, it is simply described by reference to historical causation. We cannot categorically say that the radical view is superior, but we clearly have no grounds for declaring the dominant benign view to be the more neutral. Hence, the third line of defense of the dominant model will not hold.

*The Wrong Questions: Fourth Line of Defense.* A fourth line of defense is this: perhaps the trouble with the radical model is that people who use it ask the wrong questions. I suggest that the very questions that radicals have long raised about democratic politics are being raised belatedly by mainstream political scientists in acknowledgment of their importance. Among others, they are questions about political indoctrination, about rising expectations and other sources of new popular demands on government, about corporatism, and about increasingly tense conflict between popular demands and the needs of business (a conflict highlighted in the Reagan administration’s declared position that the economy cannot prosper without a reduction in popular demands for regulation and entitlements). These questions include, consequently, new interests in the politics of inflation growing out of possible connections between inflation and magnitude of demands made on government.<sup>3</sup>

These questions connect with even larger questions about the viability and efficacy of democracy, questions that radical thought has long approached with a useful skepticism that is free of certain defects of mainstream thought.<sup>4</sup>

For attacking these questions, it is not at all obvious that conventional theory is superior to the theory of struggle between advantaged and disadvan-

---

3. Some examples of the radical literature on these issues are to be found in Lindberg et al. (1975), Crouch (1979), and O’Connor (1973).

4. The tendency of radicals to turn every apparent strength in democratic politics into a weakness has not gone any further than the mainstream tendency to convert every apparent defect into a strength. Berelson made apathy a strength; Truman made elite privilege a bulwark of democracy, and some of you have read Lindblom on the blessings of fragmentation.

taged. The literature on these questions is clearly greatly enriched by the radical contribution, the best of which is of a quality that warrants the attention of all mainstream political scientists (despite their habit of regarding contributions from that quarter as falling outside the essential literature of the profession). The fourth line of defense, in short, is no defense at all.

### **A Brief Case Study**

I now propose a case study: the literature on political socialization. In it, we can find concrete examples of the weaknesses of conventional theory to solidify the foregoing analysis.

To begin with, in their view of the democratic political process as benign, many conventional scholars see political socialization as a life-long process, even if especially critical in childhood, in which citizens “mature.” Socialization helps the citizen to “comprehend” and to “evaluate.” It gives him “cognitive growth” and “increasing grasp” (Dawson and Prewitt 1969, pp. 16–17 and 56). Such a view slights the possibility that socialization is intellectually confining, is sometimes crippling, may reduce understanding, and may obstruct the development of skill in evaluation. But which of these it does, or in what mixture, is as important a question for political science as can be imagined. To begin analysis of socialization, as some studies do, with exclusive reference to its benign effects and never to turn to its more questionable effects is, by any scholarly standard, dubious if not unacceptable.

An analytic problem arises because “learning,” like “socialization,” can refer to developmental or other processes through which persons improve their grasp of reality, improve the accuracy of their perceptions, and develop skills in perception, analysis, and evaluation. Or it can refer to the effect of influences on the mind that reduce these very competences, as when a person learns that he is destined to fail in anything he attempts or learns from an abusive parent to trust no one. These two kinds or effects of learning—one benign, the other not—are simply not separated in much mainstream political science. And thus both terms “socialization” and “learning”—against which radical thought would pose such a term as “indoctrination”—though pretending to scientific neutrality, take a position: specifically, that learning and socialization are to be viewed as bringing people into society rather than as obstructing their social capacities.

That this process, which might variably be called socialization, learning, or indoctrination, goes by the benign name of socialization in the literature of political science illustrates the disposition of the dominant model to find benefits for all in political processes, thus benefits for the abstraction called “society.” That disposition confuses the study of socialization in other ways too. Easton and Dennis are an example. They are much too careful to fall into

the trap of associating socialization with maintenance of the status quo; it may also be an agent of change, they say. Notwithstanding, they finally work toward what they consider to be the theoretical significance of socialization, which is its effects on system persistence. They conceive of these effects as the capacity of sets of behavior that allow institutions of value to persist even when their specific forms change (Easton and Dennis 1969, pp. 36–38 and 47–48). System persistence is, again, a benefit for society, a benefit for all. It renders Easton and Dennis unable to examine the extent to which the process they study, whether called socialization or indoctrination, is an instrument through which the advantaged, with their advantages in the control of communications, teach the disadvantaged to accept their disadvantages. Again, I do not have to argue that the latter interpretation of the process would be the correct one, only that users of the dominant model formulate their inquiries so that they do not investigate it as a possibility.

Easton and Dennis subsequently take note of the possibilities that the process they call socialization teaches citizens to curb their demands. The process of constraining demands is a process which on some counts seems to make a democracy more viable, yet on other counts argues that democracy is much less democratic than we have supposed. In such a benign view of demand constraint as Easton and Dennis's, this great issue is missed.

Greenstein's views on socialization avoid many of the traps into which the dominant model seems to have lured political scientists, but consider the following benign picture: "The long-run effect of media attention is probably to build up, gradually and inadvertently, an awareness of basic elements in the political system" (Greenstein 1968). Suppose that I reverse the meaning of the sentence, rewriting it to read that the effects are to reduce awareness of the most basic elements. How could he claim that his sentence is any better than mine?

In the same article, Greenstein moves from "socialization" to "learning," and then without explanation to the term "education." He might have moved, but did not, toward the term "indoctrination" instead of "education." With that word "education" he chooses, perhaps with little self-awareness, to put the best possible interpretation on a two-faced process. We must turn to the radical model if we are to see the other side.

To the dominant model may perhaps also be attributed a gap in socialization studies. Users of the model are familiar with widely circulating propositions that democracy is impossible without some degree of agreement on fundamentals, at least on rules of the game and among elites. Believing that such agreement is functional for society, they have invested little effort in explaining how it comes about. They can of course point to the socialization mechanisms—family, school, peer groups, the media—which pass the agreed beliefs of one generation on to the next. That approach leaves wholly unexplained the agreement that is already formed when transmitted. How

does it come about that certain transmitted beliefs and values are agreed rather than diverse? That we do not understand.

We fall into a bad habit of simply taking for granted that people in any society will think alike, as though agreement were a natural phenomenon that requires no explanation. Even natural phenomena require explanation. Moreover, on some beliefs and values, people differ greatly; only on some do they cluster. Agreement on political fundamentals cries for an explanation. Why, how, through which mechanisms do people come to think alike about political fundamentals?

While conventional theorists are on the whole satisfied merely to note that agreement of certain kinds is necessary and therefore to turn off the search for how it is in fact accomplished, radical theorists have at least some hypotheses to offer. The hypotheses derive from the first feature of their model that we identified above—that political democracy is a transitional phase in a long-standing struggle between advantaged and disadvantaged. The democratic political system has a history; it cannot be understood without reference to its historical origins. If we then look for an explanation of political agreement, we shall find it not in studies of contemporary socialization, though they may give us new chapters for an old story, but in a history in which, as Marx said, the ruling ideas have been the ideas of the ruling class. We shall find it in tendencies toward agreement that were set in motion many centuries ago through such instruments of indoctrination of the disadvantaged by the advantaged as the shaman and later the priest of the Middle Ages. The mechanisms include, through processes of cultural diffusion not well researched, the permeation in more recent history of entire societies with such doctrines as were codified by John Locke and Adam Smith.

Attempting to understand this history, Gramsci (1968) offers propositions, which we may regard as hypotheses well worth study, on cultural hegemony and on the role of intellectuals. In recent years, Habermas and Marcuse have grappled, though not lucidly, with some hypotheses based on Weber on how technology and markets bring about a pervasive purposiveness in human relations that induces acquiescent likemindedness.

We do not know whether the radical hypotheses are true, but they are meaty. They are also sophisticated in their understanding that in opinion formation, just as Adam Smith asserted for the market, much is accomplished through social life without organized intent—often with no intent at all to produce the results actually effected. The hypotheses are an advance over no hypothesis at all from mainstream study of socialization.

## **Conclusion**

Neither in our four lines of defense nor in our brief case study of the socialization literature have we found any grounds for confidence in the conventional

theory on democratic politics. I have not, however, argued the superiority of radical over conventional theory. The conclusion is not that the radical is superior but only that mainstream political science ought to bring it in from the cold. The conventional theory creaks and on the evidence here leads political scientists to say silly things.

We cannot, in a final desperate move, reject the radical model because radicals practice questionable methods. My argument has been that, on its own terms, conventional theory is seriously defective and that, presented in mainstream language and concept and without acceptance of any but the most familiar methodology, the radical model is not obviously inferior.

Radical political scientists, however, annoy many of us with their excursions into phenomenology, hermeneutics, interpretive theory, and critical theory. Yet, so many in the mainstream join in certain of these excursions that we can no longer afford to deprecate them. The radicals' use of these new methods as well as the older habits of Marxist method does, I grant, create a chasm between radical and most mainstream thought. And many mainstream scholars, myself included, have made little attempt to cross it. We are also rebuffed by what we are fairly confident are serious shortcomings in much radical writing. It is sometimes insular and arrogant, sometimes humorlessly incapable of self-criticism. Its terms sometimes defy association with any observable real-world process. It begs questions. And its authors, themselves feeling rebuffed, sometimes make no attempt to communicate beyond a privileged radical circle with its private language—thus also excusing themselves from demands for evidence. But the clichés of some radical thought are no more relevant to my argument than the fatuities of some mainstream thought. My argument has not been that radical thought is a model for all of us. It has been instead, to say it once more, that conventional theory is embarrassingly defective. It greatly needs to call more heavily on radical thought.

#### REFERENCES

- Almond, Gabriel A., and C. Bingham Powell, Jr. 1966. *Comparative Politics*. Boston: Little, Brown.
- Cohen, Ronald, and Elman R. Service, eds. 1978. *Origins of the State*. Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues.
- Crouch, Colin. 1979. "The State, Capital, and Liberal Democracy." In *State and Economy in Contemporary Capitalism*, ed. Colin Crouch. London: Croom Helm.
- Dahl, R. A. 1972. *Democracy in the United States*. Chicago: Rand McNally.
- Dawson, Richard E., and Kenneth Prewitt. 1969. *Political Socialization*. Boston: Little, Brown.
- Deutsch, Karl. 1980. *Politics and Government*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Dolbeare, Kenneth M., and Murray J. Edelman. 1981. *American Politics*. 3d ed., rev. Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath.



- Dye, Thomas R., and L. Harmon Zeigler. 1970. *The Irony of Democracy*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Easton, David, and Jack Dennis. 1969. *Children in the Political System*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Easton, David, and Robert Hess. 1962. "The Child's Political World." *Midwest Journal of Political Science* 6: 229–46.
- Gaventa, John. 1980. *Power and Powerlessness*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Gough, Ian. 1975. "State Expenditure in Advanced Capitalism." *New Left Review* 92: 53–92.
- Gramsci, Antonio. 1968. *The Modern Prince and Other Writings*. Translated by Louis Marks. New York: International Publishers.
- Greenstein, Fred I. 1968. "Socialization: Political Socialization." Part 3 in *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, ed. David L. Sills, vol. 14, pp. 551–55. New York: The Macmillan Company and The Free Press.
- Habermas, Jurgen. 1976. *Legitimation Crisis*. London: Heinemann.
- Key, V. O., Jr. 1967. *Public Opinion and American Democracy*. New York: Knopf.
- Lindberg, Leon, et al., eds. 1975. *Stress and Contradiction in Modern Capitalism: Public Policy and the Theory of the State*. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.
- Lowi, Theodore J. 1979. *The End of Liberalism*, 2d ed. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Lukes, S. 1974. *Power: A Radical View*. London: Macmillan.
- Mandel, Ernest. 1974. *Late Capitalism*. London: New Left Books.
- Miliband, Ralph. 1969. *The State in Capitalist Society*. New York: Basic Books.
- Mouzelis, Nicos. 1980. "Reductionism in Marxist Theory." *Telos* 45: 173–85.
- O'Connor, James. 1973. *The Fiscal Crisis of the State*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Offe, C. 1976. "Political Authority and Class Structure." In *Critical Sociology*, ed. P. Conneton. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin.
- Polsby, Nelson W. 1980. *Community Power and Social Theory*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Poulantzas, Nicos. 1973. *Political Power and Social Classes*. London: New Left Books.
- Prewitt, Kenneth, and Sidney Verba. 1977. *Introduction to American Government*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Truman, David. 1959. "The American System in Crisis." *Political Science Quarterly* 74: 481–97.
- Weissberg, R. 1974. *Political Learning, Political Choice and Democratic Citizenship*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.