

ON POLITICAL THEORIES

AND PREDICTIONS

by

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ABSTRACT

Why are political scientists largely incapable of making political predictions which could satisfy a moderately demanding philosopher of science?

The question is interesting, because answering it provides indications about the nature of political phenomena and also an assessment of the "scientificity" of political science.

The thesis contends that it is necessary to understand the nature of political decisions in order to discuss their possible predictability, because decision making is the function of political structures.

It proceeds to investigate the treatment given to decision making by various contemporary political theorists (notably Easton, Deutsch and Jouxenel).

The inability of these theories to generate predictions is attributed to their failure to consider ideology as a dominant variable, because they assume rationality on the part of decision makers.

It is consequently proposed to consider politics as well as the study of political decision making as an art and to self-consciously admit the limitations of political science. Politics can best be studied from a "common sense" point of view.

Finally, the thesis draws some conclusions from this contention as regards teaching, advising decision makers, and research in the field.

In conclusion, it is argued that the search for prediction-yielding political theories is a failure, but that since political predictions of all kinds are in demand, political scientists should

nevertheless use their expertise to argue political issues; however, without the sense of authority usually attached to "scientific" endeavours.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis contends that if the study of politics were a science,* individual political decisions made by persons in (and out of) power could be predicted. The theories available to political scientists seldom, if ever, allow conditional predictions to be made. As it seems unlikely that predictive theories can be produced in view of the nature of the phenomena, the systematic study of politics should either abandon scientific pretensions or limit itself to those aspects of political behavior that are amenable to scientific theorizing. Either course of action has disagreeable consequences. The former displaces the security afforded to those who can claim their activity to be the passionate search for Truth while the latter reduces the scope of enquiry to a dangerous extent.

The danger is that if political scientists refuse to take the risks involved in offering arguments for or against given policies, others who are even less familiar with the potential consequences of particular policies will do the advising. It seems that there is a middle ground between falsifiable causal theories and mere opinion. An analogy with medicine, for example, may be helpful; beyond the solid scientific knowledge available to any practitioner there is undoubtedly some special ability possessed by the great diagnostician that others lack.

Similarly, political scientists have usually acquired a certain amount of specialized knowledge which should permit them to discuss policies

* Definitions of science are both numerous and contradictory. Here it means the form of knowledge adequate to the formulation of generally successful conditional predictions. The delineation of the boundaries between common-sense knowledge and scientific knowledge is caught up in an ideological predicament. (cf. D. Braybrooke, Philosophical Problems of the Social Sciences, New York, 1965, Macmillan, pp. 1-18.)

in a quasi-scientific manner that might be called enlightened common-sense.

Given the assumption that men sometimes act as if they were free (whether or not they actually are is an ontological question outside of the boundaries of the present paper), predicting their behavior is formally contradictory to that assumption. Political action is arbitrary, yet this does not mean that it can take any and all forms. The specification of limits to the arbitrariness of political action is one of the goals as well as the means of political action itself. Even though political science cannot offer very reliable predictions, political organizations--of which nation-states are the most visible manifestation--are extremely predictable entities. Not only have many nation-states succeeded in insuring interpersonal non-aggression among complete strangers and furthermore organized their mutual relationships for purposes of production, defense, education and welfare, in addition they have developed limited systems of government such that the behavior of the governors as well as that of the governed is largely predictable.

This very success of large-scale political organization has made it possible for the natural sciences to prosper by providing resources and security to the scientists. Given such opportunities, the natural sciences have considerably increased the reliability of predictions about the behavior of things which in turn led to very rapid technological developments. These technological developments have changed and continue to change radically the conditions of interaction among men. In addition they have permitted increases in the numbers of the species and, more importantly for political science, have increased the means of control of the governors over the governed and perhaps also the means of the governed to control the governors.

It is as if politics and technology were in a dialectical relationship such that improvements in the quality and quantity of political interactions permitted by the improvements in the control of the behavior of things lead to further technological resources, which in turn modify political relationships, and so on. One can argue, for example, that the establishment of the European Common Market corresponded to the needs of the new technologies which, in their industrial applications, require large markets to be profitable. It is equally plausible that contemporary industrial developments in Europe, the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. would not have been thought of had there not been large economico-political units in the first place.

The point here is not to provide a theory of history but simply to indicate that political behavior is largely predictable. This predictability is not a consequence and a precondition of the prediction of the behavior of things provided by the natural sciences. For the relationship to hold, it is necessary to assume that men are interested in things. This is a reasonable assumption to make, not only because of biological needs for food and shelter, but also because of the constant intellectual efforts devoted to the organization of the relationships between man and his things.

Political science, however, is not God. That is to say, it cannot be expected to integrate the whole of humanity in its infinite relationship with things and between man and man. It is necessary for predictive theories in the natural sciences to be concerned with closed systems, or at least to be able to treat sub-systems as if they were closed. Strictly speaking, political science can neither claim to predict on the basis of the only closed system it has (namely the whole of human society) for reasons of scale, nor can it identify sub-systems unambiguously because it is always possible

to show that any boundary requires arbitrary assumptions. That is to say, that it is impossible to identify two distinct occurrences of the same phenomenon without making unwarranted assumptions about the invariance of the rest of the Universe. If the number of potentially relevant factors in political decision making can be deemed to be infinite, so can the number of objections to any selection of any finite group of factors.

At the same time, if it is impossible to predict with certainty the occurrence and the outcome of political decisions, such decisions will necessarily remain arbitrary. If they were predictable they would be administrative decisions. As long as complete knowledge about human affairs is inaccessible, there will be a need for "free", i.e. unpredictable choices.

If the laws of history were known for certain, there would be no point in trying to modify them.

In the absence of such laws, this thesis will present some of the forms that plausible predictions about political behavior and action may take.

The first part will be an attempt to circumscribe the notion of political decision by a criticism of some political theories which do not, in my opinion, offer a plausible account of politics because they fail to describe the decision-making process as arbitrary. In particular, "functionalist" theories will be criticized because they assume away the problem of decision. Game theory and related approaches will be discussed and reluctantly abandoned on the grounds that they assume rationality and clear goals on the part of decision makers. Such assumptions do not seem to be warranted by even a cursory familiarity with history. The inability of these political theories to account for irrational decision making, even

though "irrational" decisions are often the mark of political geniuses, will lead to the conclusion that politics, despite all the data gathered about the phenomena in question, remains an art.

Political science cannot replace the artists if it wishes to remain a contemplative and advisory enterprise. Nor can it predict what will be done. But it can perhaps say what cannot be done.

In the second part of this paper, I will present some of the ways in which political scientists can make plausible predictions about what cannot be done except at unacceptable costs. But it will become clear that the costs involved cannot really be quantified; and that what is deemed acceptable or not depends on one's particular ideology, so that the pronouncements of political scientists will themselves be treated by decision makers as an opinion for or against a particular policy. It will also be noted that the predictions offered by political scientists or other predictors of political actions who have access to information media tend to be self-modifying. This will lead to some considerations of the moral status of the political predictor and to my advocacy of an open forum about the future of politics as a "second best" to those scientific political predictions which I claim to be impossible. Such a forum would not necessarily produce more reliable predictions, but it should be a way for political scientists to confront their theories with real policy problems and perhaps have an ancillary value to the societies which support the political scientists.

Finally, I will draw some consequences for teaching, advising, research, and the relationship between political scientists and others that the view of politics as an essentially unpredictable art entails.

PART I

DECISION

Chapter 1

What is a Political Decision?

Any decision is a choice between two or more alternatives. All kinds of decisions are made every day, most of which are perfectly trivial in isolation (although they may have considerable cumulative effect; for example the decision to turn on an air-conditioner is insignificant, yet multiplied a few million times it becomes a "brownout", if not a blackout.) Deciding in any case involves consciousness and the exclusion of at least one course of action in favor of another.

The outcome of a decision is often unknown to the decider. If one of the alternatives of the choice is superior to the other in the opinion of the decider, then there is no need for a decision. The formation of the opinion does involve costs, however, and the reduction of a problem to a choice between a small number of options and then to the actual selection of the least bad or best course puts great demands upon the intellectual and emotional resources of those who have to make decisions. Because it is so difficult to make decisions, those who make them demand and often obtain considerable compensation for their services. And, of course, it is easy to argue that the compensation is often disproportionately high (does one have to put up with a Hitler to solve unemployment?)

It should be noted that because decisions are so difficult to make, we often try to avoid them. In the social realm we institute rites, usages and "good manners" to avoid countless micro decisions. Similarly, morals and other strongly held beliefs are often substitutes for choices which we do not

want to make. When we learn from our mistakes, we transfer some aspect of our behavior from the realm of decision making to that of automatism; and of course much of our physical behavior is automatic, either by natural reflex or by acquired reflex.

Determinism and Decisions

There is no need to reiterate the controversy between Free-willers and Determinists. It seems to me that the following statement by I. Berlin is a reasonable position on the subject:

"...to make a serious attempt to adapt our thoughts to the hypothesis of determinism is scarcely feasible as things are now and have been within recorded history." 1

In the same article, Berlin also says that:

"It may well be that the growth of science and historical knowledge does in fact tend to show--make probable--that much of what was hitherto attributed to the acts of the unfettered wills of individuals can be satisfactorily explained only by the working of other 'natural', 'impersonal' factors; that we have in our ignorance or vanity extended the realm of human freedom much too far." 1

In other words, we may live in a completely pre-determined world, but even though we cannot exclude the theoretical possibility that it may be so, the theories available to us do not enable us to account for human behavior in strictly deterministic terms.

Determinism and Political Theory

The consequence for political theory of the theoretical impossibility to formulate truly deterministic theories which are not obviously false, is that political theory must assume men to be forced to make decisions. Making decisions is to act on the basis of less than perfect information. Therefore, it is unlikely that plausible strictly causal theories, of the kind reconstructed by logical positivist philosophers of science, will be present in political

science.

Indeed, the very notion that there are decisions to be made by politicians means that the explanation of such political actions entails the imputation of motives and of rationality which cannot be ascertained, as decision makers have the privilege to reveal what they want of their thinking.

The recognition by political scientists and political philosophers that there are insurmountable obstacles to the formulation of laws of political behavior that could be subjected successfully to empirical tests has often been distressing.

Utopia

One solution to the problem that there are no reliable laws of political behavior is to propose some kind of a priori fully explained system, thus doing away with the irritating apparent capriciousness of the rulers.

The Utopian writers are dissatisfied with what they see and experience. They then proceed to assign the blame for that sad state of affairs to some causes, which, of course, vary. Perhaps the rulers are corrupt, or economic allocations are done with a poor sense of priorities; more generally, power is arbitrary; man is free and should remain so. If only this or that evil could be abolished there would be no more need for compulsion and force. Utopians are concerned with the establishment of an harmonious society from which conflicts would have been eliminated and consequently there would be no need to allocate values authoritatively.

What characterizes Utopian thinking is its overconfidence in the causal relationship between the evil they identify and all that is wrong. Consequently, the solutions they propose are hopelessly simplistic. Plato, for example, thought that politics could be replaced by simple administration

in the pursuit of what he considered to be excellence. Once this excellence had been attained, there would be no need to change anything; and thus, of course, predicting the future in terms other than a continuation of the present would not only be unnecessary, it would be subversive as well. In a sense, Utopian thinking is an extreme case of deterministic aberration. Unfortunately, it is all too easy when thinking about politics to abuse oneself with the belief that one has found a causal relationship; harmony does not reign, however, and politicians everywhere claim to be working for changes which they tell their followers will bring a better world.

Political Action and the Future

There is obviously no way in which either the past or the present can be modified. There is equally no way in which the future can be decided with certainty, since the future will, of course, be the resultant of decisions made now, by a constellation of relatively independent decision makers.

The ability of some men to enforce their decisions upon other men is a universal phenomenon. The world is divided between some hundred nation-states, each of which maintains a government, that is to say, a small group of men who have the power to impose their will upon the population living within the boundaries of the country in question. More specifically, this power extends to the point of being able to successfully, and with impunity, order the killing of other men, for example, in war. The ability to wage war on one's neighbors is the one decision that can only be taken by the executive of a nation-state. A contrario an executive that cannot wage war is not a government but some lesser political unit.

The example of the decision to wage war is a good example of political decision. As in all other decisions, the outcome is unknown, and

it is an effort to modify the future; however, when the executive of a nation-state decides to wage war his order is implemented and it affects, potentially at least, everyone residing in the country in which he exercises his authority. The outcomes of wars have seldom, if ever, been what their protagonists intended them to be, thus showing that statesmen are as incapable as others of predicting accurately the consequences of their own choices.

The irony of the situation is that, according to most political theorists, the purpose of government is precisely to reduce insecurity and uncertainty.

Bertrand de Jouvenel, for example, states:

The more different from the past the future seems to be likely to differ from the past, the more desirable it seems to us that this future be not any unknown but a pre-known...and the more we are inclined to give powers to the State to dominate this future..."²

The above statement is not very different from Hobbes' rationalization of the need for a sovereign. The role of public authorities in the traditional formulation of political economy was also to insure certainty about law and order. For Marx, the Bourgeois State, as the executive committee of the Bourgeoisie, was to guarantee favorable business conditions at the expense of the Proletariat.

Selection of Rulers and Conflicts

If it is impossible to predict the decisions of rulers, the second best course of action is to have "good" rulers. The selection of good rulers, in this view, minimizes the risk of their acting against the interests of the society.

The literature devoted to the problem of selecting "good" rulers is enormous. Plato wanted philosopher-kings, St. Simon engineers, and so on.

For K. Popper:

"...we should like to have good rulers, but historical experience shows us that we are not likely to get them. This is why it is of such importance to design institutions which prevent even bad rulers from causing too much damage." ³

It does seem a little odd that practically all rulers are judged as "bad" and that almost always the cause of the trouble is attributed to an inadequate selection procedure. Considering the incredible varieties of methods that are used to select rulers who are found to be unsatisfactory, one wonders whether the attack on selection procedures is not a cover-up for some other dissatisfaction.

Another way of asking the question is: what would a "good" ruler look like?

If we ever had a good ruler, who is going to judge? Political scientists? The more-or-less incompetent masses? God? In a sense "God" is the best solution because it exposes the question for what it is: a pseudo problem. It is a pseudo problem in that it assumes that there is such a thing as a political good, or a general interest, or even a consensus about institutions. As Ralf Dahrendorf shows, social life is conflict and all attempts to describe or explain the social system in terms of equilibrium, consensus or homeostasis is utopian. Instead, he proposes a conflict model of society:

"We assume that conflict is ubiquitous, since constraint is ubiquitous wherever human beings set up social organizations. In a highly formal sense, it is always the basis of constraint that is at issue in social conflict." ⁴

The notion of constraint contains that of authority and more generally that of undesirable behavior of others toward ourselves. In this sense at least there cannot be good rulers, regardless of their mode of selection. Yet there are rulers everywhere who make decisions which invariably hurt some people and favor others.

As Berlin shows, men are in a position to make at least some choices. Why do they choose to have rulers who make decisions that sometimes hurt them? Evidently because they feel that they would be hurt even more by no decision at all.

Of course, it is not really necessary to find origins for the existence of rulers. The universality of the phenomenon suffices to establish that there is no alternative, that in some sense the existence of rulers is "in the order of things", that it is in fact a given.

The Authoritative Allocation of Values

That there are rulers who make the "authoritative allocations of value for the society as a whole" of which Easton speaks,⁵ is a universal statement. As a theory of politics it merely denies the possibility of a "stateless society" and asserts the scope of political science as the study of these binding allocations of value.

For Easton:

"The essence of a policy lies in the fact that through it certain things are denied to some people and made accessible to others. A policy...consists of a web of decisions and actions that allocate values... My point is in summary, that the property of a social act that informs it with a political aspect is the act's relation to the authoritative allocation of values for a society. In seeking to understand all social activities influencing this kind of allocation, political science achieves its minimal homogeneity and cohesion."⁶

Such theory, however, is not sufficient for a political science to declare that political phenomena exist, even though it is necessary in view of the permanent temptation to subsume politics under some other class of phenomena. But such insufficiency entails poverty.

The poverty of political theory, and to me that means the absence of a plausible method of making political predictions, is of course a

powerful factor in the never-ending search for explanations of politics in terms of biology, psychology, sociology, economics or astrology.

The Poverty of Political Science

The impatience with the poverty of political science, however understandable, does not warrant the kind of infinite regress mentioned above. But it does indicate that the need for good, i.e. predictive theory about political phenomena is so great that there is a frequent temptation to deny the very existence of politics as an essential, or irreducible category.

Apart from the well known economism of Marxists and their often unconscious followers, there are other pseudo political theories. Consider, for example, The Nerves of Government. In this book, which has almost become a textbook, K. Deutsch argues that:

"Politics like all techniques of making and implementing decisions is not an end in itself...politics in the world today is an essential instrument of social learning... government and politics will long remain instruments for accelerated social learning, by which mankind in its various subdivisions, still organized in states, can adapt more quickly to the dangerous but hopeful tasks of growing up." 7

To see politics as a mere technique seems to be a mistake. In this passage, Deutsch appears to believe that politics is a transient stage and that we shall grow out of it.

Another variety of pseudo-political theory is the input-output approach, as outlined by Almond in the introduction to his "The Politics of the Developing Areas".⁸ There, Almond proposes a series of inputs which are supposed to shape the policies of the countries in question in an almost mechanistic fashion. He proposes a series of functional categories, as follows:

A. Input Functions:

1. Political socialization and recruitment
2. Interest articulation
3. Interest aggregation
4. Political communication

B. Output Functions:

5. Rule making
6. Rule application
7. Rule adjudication

The production of categories is not a substitute for a theory and functionalism is really not much more than a taxonomy. Almond tells us that these functions are performed by all political systems. There is no reason to doubt that indeed they are, but there are reasons to doubt that these functions are more than truisms. One cannot, for example, visualize a political system without political communication, of one sort or another, and certainly rules have to be made and applied.

Perhaps the trouble stems from the very notion that one should study a political system rather than political decisions. It is certainly possible to study the political behavior of individuals analytically grouped into a system, and then to make generalizations about the functions thus performed, but to explain or predict politics in terms of the functions ascribed to the political system cannot help but be circular.

A theory of politics should explain political decisions instead of mere political behavior, since presumably the fact that these decisions are binding on the society as a whole will affect their form and content.

That is, for example, the difference between a theory of inter-

national relations, where the decisions of the various governments may well be countered by the decisions of other governments, and domestic politics, where decisions however unpleasant have to be implemented if the decider is to retain his privilege qua legitimate decision maker.

It should be quite clear that I am not saying that the new approaches to politics that Easton or Almond call the "revolution of political science"⁹ are unimportant. Au contraire, they point out what happens to a discipline when it refuses to confront philosophical problems or when it adopts such a broad tautological view of theory that it cannot, in fact, ever be falsified nor solve real problems. The determination of what is a real problem for political science does not seem to be all that difficult.

There are a number of "technological" difficulties in the governing of nation-states which should benefit from critical studies. For example, why is it that it is so difficult to impose executive decisions in some countries without police terrorism? Why is it that in almost all industrial countries, public consumption is lagging so far behind demonstrated needs?

Political Science as Servant of the Rulers

Why is the problem of prediction so seldom attacked? When the problem is to predict the behavior of the polity, in elections for example, the field is crowded. It is as if it were perfectly all right to anticipate the political decisions of the powerless while the decisions of the powerful have to be spared the sometimes disagreeable scrutiny of academia. Of course, the most immediate answer is that our methodology is much better at dealing with mass phenomena than with the relatively small-scale decision making process at the top. Yet when one compares the relative importance of voting

and of executive decision making, one cannot help but wonder about the purposes of political science and the adoption of functionalism as "theory" seems like a strangely apologetic way of studying politics.

Distinction Between Bureaucracy and Executive

Another mistake that can result from the view of politics as a functional system is that the distinction between administrative/ bureaucratic decision and purely political decision is not kept. Yet there is a fundamental division of labor between the bureaucrat and the politician even though their interactions are frequent.

The mistake of considering everything that is done collectively to be the result of a purely political decision has been studied recently by Jacques Ellul, who places himself in the area between political science and political philosophy.¹⁰ For him, the increased complexity of the state, composed of a bureaucracy and a political decision-making body, tends to constantly diminish the autonomy of the latter. As Burnham saw the "Managerial Revolution" as robbing all powers from the owners of the means of production, so Ellul sees a managerial revolution in the state which seriously restricts the ability of the purely political decision maker from really choosing among alternatives.

The decrease in the importance of politics, according to Ellul, can be traced to three main causes. The first is the uncritical acceptance of efficiency as the criterion for the evaluation of all policies. The second is that the belief that problems do have solutions of a political nature prevents anyone from seriously challenging the very growth of the bureaucracy. In a democratic country, for example, opposition parties welcome the increase in the sheer size of the institution as it will increase their power when they form the government. Finally, the myth of participation by all in the

political process means that the decision maker has to take into account the propaganda possibilities of his decision above all else; that is, the decision must look efficient.

The absorption of the government by the bureaucracy at first tends to make the prediction of political, or rather pseudo-political, decisions easier as bureaucracies obey their own rules and apply them. But the decision maker has to rely on information supplied by the bureaucracy, and since bureaucrats tend universally to pass up only that information which will reflect favorably on themselves, his decision is likely to reinforce the status quo, regardless of the urgency of the problem at hand. Furthermore, if efficiency is the sole criterion by which to judge policies, the decision maker who cannot be an expert on everything has to rely on more experts to allocate power between competing policies, all of which are generated by the bureaucracy itself.

Once the politician becomes dependent on the bureaucracy, it becomes virtually impossible for him to use another set of priorities than that of his main support. And indeed, says Ellul, the parties and the rhetoric change from time to time, but policies do not. What passes for political decision making is only the accumulation of countless micro-decisions which politicians have no choice but to "cover". If they refuse such coverage, if they refuse their role of glamorized public relations men for the bureaucracy, they will find themselves deprived of information and will become totally ineffective. Yet,

"to have political processes, it is necessary that there be an effective choice among several solutions. These solutions are not all equally just or effective, or pleasant, but all are possible and, generally no one solution can be selected as absolutely superior to all others...The true political man will be the one who perceives the solution--not necessarily the middle solution incorporating most of the possible advantages,

nor the most efficient solution, or the one that best expresses certain values; but he will be the man who taking all facts and opinions into account, will find the response that wins the consent of the greatest number while opening new possibilities for the future, i.e. possibilities for development...True political decisions can never obey necessity." 11

The opportunities for making these "true" political decisions wither away, and with them the ability of politicians to effectively dominate the future rather than be dominated by it.

Ellul is, of course, writing in a French context where the bureaucracy is particularly powerful and narrowly conservative. But the crisis of May 1968, when the government for a while lost contact almost completely with the masses only to win a bigger than ever parliamentary majority a few weeks later would tend to vindicate Ellul's general position.

Here was a whole country in search of a "political solution" to a deep dissatisfaction with everything pertaining to the use of power and authority. But it was enough for the rulers to promise a few reforms, presented by the propaganda machine, as being a solution to the problem to see the populace respond positively. While this is not the place to provide an analysis of the "events" of May 1968 it seems that the problem was much deeper; that what was needed was a change of structure rather than simply a change of policy based on the same premises. But in the name of efficiency structural changes are doomed, as it can almost always be demonstrated that such changes would bring certain chaos immediately, while the benefits--if any--would be too far off.

The standard procedure for the bureaucracy is to present failure as a confirmation of the sad state of affairs with which it has to deal, thus justifying more decisions on the same basis. In case of success, the modus

operandi is even more reinforced. In either case, the politician has to go along as he usually lacks the information resources to propose alternatives.

For Ellul, the result of this takeover of government by bureaucrats or rather by a bureaucratic ideology is that the nation-state suffers from a complete void at the top. The government-cum-bureaucracy tandem is like a ship without a pilot. Since the overriding value is efficiency, coupled with the myth of the existence of political solutions, the tandem has become a mere fact, self-serving and self-perpetuating, spending all its energy solving problems that it creates itself. The consequence is a profoundly totalitarian society which also becomes absorbed by the bureaucracy.

Ellul claims to be neither a political scientist nor a political philosopher. Indeed, however appealing his criticism of the modern government-cum-bureaucracy is, it finally amounts to a displacement of the problem of politics. If the bureaucracy is everything, having displaced all other sources of political power, we either do not have any politics left or else political phenomena take place within the bureaucracy itself.

Lasswell's question about who gets what, when and how? remains unanswered. The authoritative allocation of values for the society as a whole still has to take place. It is really the demise of the traditional liberal ideology that Ellul laments, and its replacement by a bureaucratic, rationalistic welthanshaung is quite probably taking place; however, there is no reason to equate liberal politics with politics per se. Marcuse, Presthus, Revel,¹² following an essentially similar line of reasoning all deplore the end of political opposition. They see the society as "one dimensional", as having internalized organizational needs, as being totally subject to propaganda.

If it were the case that the whole society was organized "rationalistically"--to coin a neologism--there should be no conflict and predictions should not be very difficult. Yet it is simply not so. Conflict is as prevalent as ever, not only about ephemeral issues, but also about the very basis of authority. ¹³

Of course, the protagonists of the conflicts are not necessarily those that the conventional wisdom of vulgar Marxism would recognize as natural enemies. It may be that the bureaucracy has become the "executive committee" of the technicians both in and out of the formal state apparatus. It may be that the "working class" has been integrated along with the intellectuals into the bureaucratic state. Yet there are almost universal signs of friction which the bureaucracies seem incapable of curbing. The constant inflation, if nothing else, shows that the allocation of values is rejected effectively by many, and of course the need for ever more powerful police forces also indicates a serious resistance.

Another, more serious, criticism of the view that rationalistic efficiency has become the new ideology is that in terms of the decision makers' particular problem, rational efficiency must always have been the aim. In retrospect, we can of course see that many past decisions were, in fact, irrational or inefficient by our criteria, but it is hard to imagine that a politician would knowingly choose a course of action which he knew would not bring the desired results.

Ellul's characterization of the true political man above (quoted on pp. 18-19) seems quite valid regardless of the actual title of the true political man. What is not valid is to assume the ideological battle to be over.

As long as politics is not a science, i.e. dealing with a closed

system of causes and effects, there will be some need for ideas, imagination, ideology to close the gaps in the cognitive maps of the decision makers. Easton's political system will continue to receive demands and supports and to produce binding allocations, Deutsch's communication network will continue to handle more-or-less reliable information, and Ellul's technocrats will continue their petty games. But we still need a theory about what happens in the little black box.

The Little Black Box

Depending on the situation considered, the little black box can either be the President of the United States (cf. Truman's famous "the buck stops here") or a committee such as the Cabinet in Britain, the whole National Assembly under the fourth Republic in France, or the electorate as in the innumerable Swiss referenda. The notable feature of all these committees is that they exclude from their membership a large number of those who will be affected by the decisions to be made. The point is obvious in the case of the President of the U.S., but it is still true in the case of the whole electorate which never includes more than a fraction of the population.¹⁴ Leaving aside the question of why there are such little exclusive "black boxes", it seems that if we had a theory of how they work, we would know much more about political decisions than by studying their functions.

To sum up: There does not exist any surface of this planet any person who is not--whether or not he knows it--subject to arbitrary decisions made by very small groups of men. These decisions, furthermore, are absolutely binding and are unpredictable to the extent that they are based on insufficient information as to their intended and unintended consequences. Further, the criteria applied to the desirability of the

alternatives are by definition other than those embodied in the tradition of the society in question, since they are codified and routinely applied by the bureaucracy.

Chapter 2

Decision Making

How are political decisions made? More precisely, to what extent do theories about decision making in general apply to political decisions? Are political decisions a special case of decisions in general? Or are all decisions explainable by existent theories? Can the political nature of particular decisions be ascertained by some intrinsic characteristics other than the personnel involved or the function performed?

There are still philosophers interested in the definition of politics as an essence derived or rather deduced from what they call human nature, for example B. de Jouvenel and J. Freund.¹⁵

There are also the relatively recent theories of games and the behavior of committees, which claim that regardless of the object of the decision, the decision-making process obeys certain immutable rules.

If we could combine both kinds of theories with a guide to the location in the social landscape of the crucial committees, as well as with some means to identify the problems that these committees will have to solve, we would be much closer to a theory of politics than either deterministic philosophies of history or functionalism can provide.

This chapter will be devoted to these questions.

Methodological Notes

There are serious philosophical problems associated with the notion of essences. Weldon, for example, in his The Vocabulary of Politics states:

"There is nothing sacred or immutable about symbols. They are the product of human ingenuity and are as definite as we want them to be in their application. Clearly some degree of permanence and precision is demanded of them or they will not serve their purpose

which is to enable us to communicate with one another, for such communication is impossible unless we can describe with some accuracy what we see or hear. But it is impossible to say that any particular degree of permanence or precision in usage is indispensable." 16

And indeed it would be presumptuous to assign eternal meanings to words like politics. However, it also seems reasonable to say with Freund that:

"Politics is an essence, that is to say it is a fundamental category of human existence in society, vital and permanent, in the sense that Man is a social being. This is a reasonable idea, in conformity with human experience, since it is impossible to trace the origin (of mankind) it is impossible to make politics derive from some more fundamental phenomenon yet. To the contrary, all essences are equally fundamental; none can be explained by another, but each can be understood in itself." 17

We are not here interested in the philosophy of the controversy and will simply consider so-called essences as theories, that is to say as yet unrefuted hypotheses. The matter of refutation of theories of politics is complicated by the weakness of the measurements that can be made. Notice the recent (June 18, 1970) unpredicted victory of the Conservative party in Britain. There was almost complete unanimity among polling agencies, commentators, etc. that such a victory was extremely unlikely. It will not do for the Polls to claim that they were only describing the state of the electorate on the date at which the poll was taken. The intention was clearly predictive and it may just be that the socio-economic factors deemed to be crucial predictors of political preference are not that crucial after all. The theory of politics that says in effect: in order to forecast voting behavior, it is necessary and sufficient to poll a representative sample stratified by socio-economic status, may be false, or the measurements were not good enough; perhaps the interviewers were incompetent, the questionnaires poorly drawn, etc.

Similarly, information about the workings of select committees is not reliable. For this reason, if for no other, theories of politics can seldom be declared false, but only implausible. A sociology of political science would probably tend to show that the practical impossibility of really destroying a theory on logical-empirical grounds leads the authors of such theories to defend them successfully over much longer periods of time than would be the case in other scientific disciplines.

Winch accounts for the impossibility of clear-cut refutations in the social sciences in general in the following terms:

"The concepts and criteria according to which the sociologist judges that, in two situations, the same thing has happened, or the same action performed, must be understood in relation to the rules governing sociological investigation. But here we run against a difficulty; for whereas in the case of the natural scientist we have to deal with only one set of rules, namely those governing the scientist's investigation itself, here what the sociologist is studying, as well as his study of it, is a human activity and is therefore carried on according to rules. And it is these rules rather than those which govern the sociologist's investigation, which specify what is to count as 'doing the same kind of thing' in relation to that kind of activity." 18

Taken literally this statement would mean that we are never able to be sure of the meaning of observed behavior. However, it is also part of our everyday experience that, in our own society at least, the behavior of others is very predictable, but of course never completely. It seems that one of the purposes of any social science, or rather theory, is to increase knowledge about this predictability while retaining a great sense of humility about the degree to which it can, in fact, reduce the uncertainty.

As a philosopher, Winch is quite right to point out this inherent limitation of any effort to explain or predict social behavior. But if the limitation is inherent, once it is stated and explained, one has to choose

either to renounce the whole enterprise of knowing about politics, or we must "make do" with what we have. Considering the infinity of our ignorance about everything, the assumption that what does not fulfill the criteria of the established methodology is not knowledge appears preposterous.

The difficulty here is that there must remain some criterion of plausibility for our theories; while a priori exclusion of individual hypotheses about politics is not justified, all statements are not equal either. An explanation of politics based on a reading of the stars is not likely to convince many people, or at least not many of the people that political scientists are interested in convincing. Explanations based on human nature would be convincing if there were some agreement as to what it is, otherwise it is a metaphysical infinite regress. At the same time, it is impossible to have a political science without some assumptions about human nature and about the permanency of the particular view of human nature taken.

"The Essence of Politics" - Freund

Keeping in mind the above reservations about the very feasibility of political theorizing, caught as it were between the incapacity of making metaphysical decisions while retaining any kind of scientific status and the very poor quality of the tests available, let us consider the contribution of J. Freund to the understanding of political decision making.

Freund published his L'Essence du Politique in 1965. He acknowledges the influence of R. Aron and Carl Schmitt on his thinking, which is indeed very "continental" and "conservative" in the Machiavelli-Michels-Weber tradition. His problem is to analyze the essence of politics. As his work is 764 pages long, in an extremely difficult language, I do not propose to deal with the whole of the book, but only with those passages which are more directly relevant to our concern.

Freund, among other things, wants to know why domination continues despite generous ideologies, egalitarian revolutions, etc.; why we are still interested by Thucidides' account of the Peloponesian war,* and also why it is that politicians, in order to be effective, must have political goals, even though their success in attaining these goals makes no difference to the essence of politics.

His answer, in short, is that there is a political essence which is composed of three main elements: the relation between command and compliance, the relation between the public and the private, and the relation between friend and foe. ¹⁹

It is interesting to note that his definition of politics is not very different from the delineation of the scope of political science by Easton. The two formulations have in common the notion that men are separated in two groups, those who give orders and those who take them, and that social interactions are either private, i.e. discriminating, or public, i.e. personal. Freund adds that political interactions presuppose an enemy, while Easton is only concerned with a scarcity of values.

Monarchical Decision Making

Turning to the problem of decision making, Freund observes that there is hardly any philosophy of action (we would say of decision). ²⁰

"Everybody knows that one does not act like one thinks, but everybody pretends to ignore it." ²¹

One of the reasons for this nonexistence of a philosophy of action, as opposed to an epistemology, is the natural inclination of intellectuals to overestimate the importance of knowing while of course doers are not

* As if political controversies had not changed much since then.

particularly concerned with writing. One could add that political talent is so scarce that those who have some use it full-time.

Deciding is a use of power, and ultimately is done by a single man, who cannot order anything but must determine something according to non-existent rules. (Otherwise it would have been an administrative decision.) The political decision maker, regardless of time and place, has to insure collective security and domestic order. Conditions change constantly and therefore his decisions concern the concrete means of achieving these ends, which for Freund are universal. As there is no recipe to deal with an unexpected condition, the decision maker has to rely on his own devices, which are a mixture of ideology, competence, luck, etc.

Another constant constraint for the decision maker is the necessity to imagine the worst of all possible situations and outcomes for his decisions. This necessity entails another which is the promise of the best, provided by ideology and propaganda. Which is why, according to Freund, the man in power will always talk differently than the aspirant to power, and also differently than when he was himself aspiring to power.

Ideology, inasmuch as it is only a partial and partisan view, cannot account for the actual logic of the situation confronted by the decider, who has to take into account the totality of a given society.

Ideology and Monarchical Decision Making

The contradiction between the promise of a particular ideology and the logic of the situation as perceived by the decider is of course the problem that has to be "solved" by the politician. The logic of the situation imposes the maintenance of order and external security. The very exercise of power required of the decider because his solutions cannot please everyone make him in turn vulnerable to ideological attack.

In order to counter this threat, the politician will then use propaganda, which for Freund is absolutely inseparable from politics,²¹ and the decision maker has then to consider the propaganda potential of his action. However, politics cannot be subsumed under pure propaganda. In order to remain credible, it is necessary that the masses perceive the propaganda to which they are subjected as a plausible theory of what is actually happening to them. The Nazis were successful, not because the Germans were stupid, but rather because their material lot was indeed improved under Hitler. Propaganda is a kind of inferential leap, where the propagandist gains authority in all fields on the basis of successes in some. As the question asked of the public is not which policy do you prefer, but rather which man do you prefer to decide about policies for dealing with problems that do not yet exist, it is quite evident that propaganda is the natural way of "selling" a man. Furthermore, we are all historicists in the matter of choosing a ruler, since there is no other information available about his potential as a decider.

The natural limit of propaganda is the point at which it is seen as such, that is to say as a false explanation.²²

Critique

Freund declares himself to be a phenomenologist, uninterested in the political "good" as such, while at the same time remaining aware that there is no neutral writing about politics. As we have seen, his essentialist view does not help much in the search for a reasonable theory of decision making. It does, however, provide some plausible observations about the constraints under which decision makers must operate in order to keep their position. Perhaps the more important points of his presentation are the implicit refutation of any "end of ideology" theory. Ideology is seen as a

necessary epiphenomenon of politics and of decision making, thus refuting pluralism.

His monarchistic view of decision making and of politics is a challenge to political theory. If it were true, then the only interactions worth studying would be those between the monarch and the undistinguished mass while sociology would deal with the relationships among the members of the mass. Freund keeps making references to exceptional men, such as Lenin, Napoleon I, Caesar, Frederic II, De Gaulle, etc., as if charismatic leaders were the only variety and also as if they had been the only ones to make political decisions during their period of tenure. Certainly, at times of crisis, power seems to be concentrated in the hands of very strong men, as during the second World War when Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin and Hitler appeared to be in almost complete control of their respective nation-states. Even today there are books published with titles such as De Gaulle's Republic, or countless journalistic references to countries as if they belonged to their leaders, especially if the writer is antagonistic to either the country or its "leader".

I believe this representation of politics to be so partial as to be implausible. First of all it would be simply physically impossible for any one man to effectively decide everything; and secondly if it is true that all political decisions cannot be made by a single man, how do we pick which are the truly important men?

The point is that we really don't know. We are, of course, fascinated by war and bloodshed generally, hence the interest in warlords. However, there are many other allocations of values to be made aside from warmaking, and even the commander-in-chief has to listen to his advisors. The advisors in turn have to listen to theirs, and so on. Yet, the advisors must prove to be reliable if they wish to retain their status, conversely

the "monarch" must also be reliable in the eyes of his advisors if he wants to retain them.

Consequently, it seems that the monarchistic theory proposed by Freund is deceptively simple. It is much more plausible to see political decision making as the work of committees than as the arbitrary whim of a single leader. It may be quite difficult to locate the relevant times and places and personnel of committees; but this is an empirical problem which can be solved in each individual case.

"The Decision-Making Committee" - Jouvanel

Jouvanel is less ambitious in his usage of philosophical terms. He is merely concerned with a theory of politics rather than with finding out essences. For him the fundamental characteristic of Man is that he is born helpless, that he absolutely depends for many years on a family--or a substitute--merely to survive.

Authority and compliance are very natural relationships within the family, where parental power is simply the ability to do what the child cannot do. It is to be expected, says Jouvanel, that such attitudes and relationships experienced before adulthood will persist.

His view of human nature contains the following axioms:

- A. Man is born dependent
- B. Man operates in a structured environment
- C. Man is free
- D. Men incite each other
- E. Man is forward-looking.

23

The notion of "society", "social contract" and the like are meaningless abstractions proposed by "childless men who must have forgotten their own childhood".²⁴ "He does not renounce rights when entering into society,

but he owes his very existence to...the fostering group." 25

One of the distinguishing features of the family is that it is not only structured, but also ordered, from which Jouvanel deduces the overwhelming preference for order in general as well as the natural respect for authority which, in the child's experience, has been almost entirely benevolent.*

Man is an affectionate being, who will enter into contracts, reciprocal agreements, only if necessary, for example in the economic realm. Politics on the other hand is an affective affair: "Followers are won, not hired". 26 "The man who speaks to others and carries them to the actions he desires: there is the man who makes history. Yes, but there is one who decides whether our 'hero' shall indeed make history: it is the man spoken to." 27

This last point does indicate a very serious limitation to the arbitrariness of political decisions. Without any references to the checks and balances of liberal constitutionalism, or to formal democracy, it narrows the field of the possible alternatives to those which will meet a favorable response from the political influential.

A corollary to this observation is what Jouvanel calls the "Law of Conservative Exclusion" 28 which he elaborates as follows:

"The Law of Conservative exclusion is not a law in the sense that it operates at all times inevitably. It is not a law in the sense of its having been edicted by some Authority. It is a law in the sense of its being a necessary condition for the persistence of a body politic. Whenever and wherever competing instigations would conflict, from different signals to do, one is selected and the others are eliminated. There is room

* Jouvanel often refers to his own immediate family in very affectionate terms.

for only one signal and moreover compliance to this one signal must be enforced. There is a name for this monopolistic, obedience-exacting signal: it is a command. The contrast between suggestion-communication and command-communication is stark. In the former case, any member of the set may choose to respond to this or that suggestion or none. Quite different is the case of the command; it squeezes out competing suggestions which would conflict with it, and requests compliance."

It is not clear why the label "conservative" was applied to this "Law", but it does effectively point to the necessary closure of the decision-making body to opinions which are simply too "far out" for it to entertain. In that sense, the political scientist has to be careful in his reconstruction of decision making to consider only those alternatives which were effectively susceptible to implementation. The decision maker is not and cannot be open to all suggestions. An interesting question is: at what point does a competing opinion gain enough power to be considered? What happens when the rejected opinion was in fact the strongest, best-liked one by the politically potent? In other words, when does the informal authority of the challenger become stronger than the established power holder?

Finally, are there decision makers with suicidal tendencies? Do the decision makers who exclude the generally preferred opinion do so knowingly? Or are they simply incompetent?

We do not need to go any farther in this direction as our concern is with decision making rather than decision makers, but it was interesting to point out some further constraints on the arbitrariness of political decision making.

Distinction between Judicial and Political Decisions

Jouvenel makes the distinction between a decision-making body such as a jury, which has to decide whether or not Smith did or did not do such and such, and the political situation in which time is of the essence. The

juror is not limited by time, the trial may and should last as long as is necessary for the jury to make up its mind, there is no cost for the juror entailed by waiting for more complete information. The politician, by contrast, has to pay very high costs for additional information. Doing nothing in that case also has consequences.

"In essence a judicial decision is a finding that some person or persons did at some past moment unduly affect the existing state of the world; while a political decision is an endeavour to affect the future state of the world." 29

The distinction is more important conceptually than practically. It rests on the assumption that judicial decision makers are not interested in changing the world. But the distinction has the merit of showing that a politician who tries to use quasi-judicial methods in his decision making is bound to fail. Examples of such failures can be found in the workings of international organizations which are supposed to attain political goals with juridical methods.

The notion of failure in this context may, of course, mean two very different things: either the decision was not implemented or no decision was made.

To return to our committee under true political conditions, let us examine how it is likely to operate according to Jouvenel.

A decision has to be made, for example, about the shape of the budget: it can either be balanced or in deficit or in surplus. The consequences of each of these options will depend upon the actual performance of the economy, which in turn will be determined to a certain degree by the shape of the budget. Assuming that there are five decision makers with different values as to the desirability of one kind of budget or another and different assessments of the probable economic future, their discussions will

be aimed at convincing each other, not by the use of straight information, but rather by taking each other's prejudices into account. ³⁰

In other words, they will lie to each other as to their own values and assessments of the situation until they reach a consensus that no one can refute even though each and everyone may disagree with it, and know that the others disagree also. We have here one of the distinguishing features of political decisions as opposed to those decisions which involve simple maximization or minimization of a desired or dreaded outcome. The production manager has all the relevant controls at his disposal, not the politician.

Political decisions can be said to be strategic, that is to say they are attempts to devise a course of action which can deal with all contingencies; the manner in which the strategies are devised is also strategic, that is to say, the members of the committee play games with each other in order to devise the moves in the more general political game.

Game Theory

The title of this section should not mislead the reader into believing that I am about to give an account of game theory qua theory. My only concern is with the possible applications of some of the results of game theory to the decision-making process in relatively small committees, such as the cabinets of liberal-democratic states. I suspect that the decision-making process is similar in more dogmatic, authoritarian states except that the players may lose their heads in addition to their positions if they make mistakes.

Game theory draws its name from a book entitled Theory of Games and Economic Behavior published in 1944 by Von Neumann & Morgenstern, and the name has stuck like a nickname, even though there is nothing

particularly playful about decisions involving war and peace. "The name arises from the observation that many parlor games have the key quality of interdependence among players' decisions." 31

On the previous page, we saw that members of a committee will lie to each other in order to achieve their objectives, which may be quite different than their stated objectives. Similarly, when playing bridge, the initial announcements do not necessarily reflect the player's goals.

The theory of games identifies the class of situations where "two or more individuals have choices to make, preferences regarding the outcomes and some knowledge of the choices available to each other and of each other's preferences. The outcome depends on the choices that both of them make, or all of them if there are more than two. There is no independently 'best' choice that one can make--it depends on what the others do." 32

A necessary assumption is that players are rational and that they have some common language. Furthermore, the players are supposed to be of equal intelligence as far as the game is concerned.

The assumptions are, of course, very unlikely to be realized in the real world; rationality in particular being very difficult to define. Whether or not there ever exists a common language is also debatable. But this difficulty is common to any theoretical effort.

There are two main situations that can be looked at as games in politics. One is the interaction between government and interest groups, or other governments, but inasmuch as these situations presuppose competing authorities they are not specifically political--according to our working definition of political decision making which presupposes

compliance.*

The other game-like situation is the actual decision making within the cabinet of a parliamentary liberal democracy, such as Britain. In other words, we are not concerned so much with the way in which the government will play its "hand" but rather in the way by which it will decide to play it.

In order to make the notion of cabinet decision making as game-like plausible, we must firstly exclude a number of possibilities. The first is that all members are unanimously agreed on a policy, for there is then no game at all. The second is that the Prime Minister or any other "player" has an effective veto power over all decisions. The Prime Minister must be seen as an ordinary player whose pre-eminence is limited to the outside world. The limiting condition is that any minister, including the Prime Minister, may resign from the cabinet. The type of decision that we are considering then is one in which, for whatever reason, the cabinet is neither so divided as to split over the issue nor unanimous. Among the "rules" of the game the following apply: time for making the decision is limited; information is also limited; and a simple majority of the members is all that is required to make the decision binding on the cabinet as a whole.

In order for a minister to see his preferred policy through, he will have to convince his colleagues, form a coalition with the more sympathetic ones, but in order to win their approval he will have to make concessions, watering down his proposal. The problem is, how does he

* Of course compliance itself is expensive to maintain in the long run. Allocations of value for the society as a whole are binding only so long as they are regarded as such by those who are so bound. The government's "Metagame" is of course to maintain its authority, but we can look upon this necessity as a given constraint rather than as a specific problem for any one decision.

manage to water it down enough for the cabinet to approve it, while remaining a viable policy? What can the minister offer his colleagues to win them over to his side?

William Riker proposes answers to these problems, although his concern seems to be with larger groups than just the cabinet.³³ For him, "In n-person (more than 2) zero-sum games (that is to say games where the gains of one player are matched by the losses of the others exactly), where side-payments (such as offer of cooperation on future policy) are permitted, where players are permitted, and where they have perfect information, only minimum winning coalitions occur."³⁴

Of course, perfect information is never present, so instead of saying that "only winning coalitions occur", Riker modifies the statement by saying that "In social situations similar to n-person, zero-sum games with side payments, participants create coalitions just as large as they believe will insure winning and no larger."³⁵ (Italics mine)

The size principle*, as Riker calls his hypothesis is one of the more directly applicable results of game theory to political science. As a theory of the behavior of a cabinet it really does not help very much the understanding or prediction of decisions. Indeed, the founders of the theory, Neumann and Morgenstern "specifically stated that the bargaining, haggling, and discussion among the players--the dynamics of coming to an agreement--are excluded from the analysis."³⁶

The characterization of game theory that we borrowed from T.C. Shelling (above page 36) did seem plausible as a model of politics. Yet, according to Meehan³⁷ there are still few actual applications of game theory

* The Size Principle seems very similar to the Law of Conservative exclusion proposed by Jovenel.

to actual political phenomena, even using his broad definition of politics, which is practically whatever political scientists decide to study. ³⁸

In the chapter on the Art of Conjecture below, we will return to other applications of game theory, that is to situations where the problem is not how to make a decision, but which one.

Before we leave the subject, at this stage a few general remarks about the inherent difficulties of applying mathematical models are in order.

Critique

Game theory is supposed to provide a list of all the strategies--all the contingent plans that the player may have for deciding what to do next. It seems that in the cabinet situation, this anticipation is impossible for several reasons. The respective importance (utilities) attached to the policy under discussion may vary almost infinitely from one minister to the next. The utilities may also vary during the discussion. Even if the utilities do not vary, if game theory did provide a good guide as to which moves to make, it would be known by all players, thus becoming self-defeating. Furthermore, even though there is no theoretical impossibility to the lifting of the assumptions of perfect memory, perfect information and perfect unity of purpose among the players, the number of possible strategies under such conditions becomes so vast as to be practically meaningless for the study of actual situations.

The greatest value of game theory, as Shubik states the case, is that: "It helps answer the question, 'How far can one go with formal rational models of political man?' In helping to set the limits and to provide an understanding of why they exist, game theory serves to point out how it connects naturally with other methods in the behavioral sciences." ³⁹

Game theory fails to help in the understanding of decision making because its assumptions are too strong. In order for the theory to be usable, it would be necessary to have fairly constant relationships between moves. In other words, the effectiveness of a given strategy should remain the same, provided that the game remains the same. A threat of non-support by one minister should have the same compelling power on his colleagues. Time and time again this is not so, not only because the same game is never played twice, but also because influence instigation from A to B may be stronger than B to C, while C's influence on A is greater than the previous two. Under such conditions, spelling out a strategy is the same as playing the game itself and one cannot, then, speak of a theory.

Another difficulty unsolved (and probably unsolvable by game theory) is the case in which players play two or more games concurrently. Deutsch explains that: "In making major political decisions, we are always playing at least two games at once, or rather we are playing much more than one game. On the one hand, we are trying to act out our values...On the other hand we are trying to survive...as a group. Almost every culture or political system assumes tacitly that its values are compatible with its continued survival, but history records that in the past such assumptions proved sometimes mistaken." 40

We know that political systems are mortal, that indeed very few of the contemporary regimes can claim more than a half century of existence. Only Sweden, the U.S. and Britain can claim about two centuries or more (then Britain alone) of unbroken usage of the same constitution. This unstable state of affairs, if nothing else, shows that staying in power is extremely difficult and that there is no statesman's guidebook, or if there is, it is not used. That political regimes are mortal does not, however, mean that political decision makers are in a position to evaluate the

probability of mortality of their own regime. It is safe to assume that if they were given a choice between a policy that would endanger their survival as rulers and one that did not, even though the first would have more desirable features, they would pick the former over the latter. If it is true that political systems always play a "game" of survival over and above whatever else they are doing, we can say that the utility of surviving is infinite, so that no decision will be made that entails a calculated risk of non-survival.

Distinction between Risk and Uncertainty.

Risk refers to situations in which the alternative outcomes are known, or can at least be estimated. Uncertainty is present where the unknown outcomes cannot even be predicted in probabilistic terms, that is, it refers to contingencies against which there is no predetermined remedy. 41

It seems much more plausible to consider the decisions made by politicians to be generally made under conditions of uncertainty than under conditions of risk.

Under conditions of uncertainty, with the great number of variables usually present, formal models are simply inadequate. In the words of

C. Hitch, head of the Economics Division of the Rand Corporation:

"I would make the empirical generalization from my experience at RAND and elsewhere that operations research is the art of sub-optimizing, i.e. of solving some lower level problems, and that difficulties increase and our special competence diminishes by an order of magnitude with every level of decision-making we attempt to ascend. The sort of simple explicit model which operations researchers are so proficient in using can certainly reflect most of the significant factors influencing traffic control on the George Washington Bridge, but the proportion of the relevant reality which we can represent by any such model or models in studying, say, a major foreign policy decision, appears to be almost trivial." 42

Formal models, then, despite their attractiveness, simply do not solve the problem of explaining, let alone predicting. Rational behavior in games is not the same as "rational" behavior in politics.

Chapter 3

A Pluralistic View of Decision-Making Rationality

If it turns out that rationality does not help as an assumption about political behavior by decision makers, then one can either give up the political science enterprise, or one can look for other assumptions.

Rationality, after all, is not a goal pursued by the decision maker. His goal, in making a decision, is to achieve results, either in the form of a modification of the status quo or a consolidation of the same status quo. In our time of relative instability, the status quo usually means a continuation of observed trends, although it also means institutional stability.

In this section I wish to argue that the most important factor that explains the behavior of decision makers in the political realm is their particular values or ideology. In order to substantiate my claim I will first of all draw a parallel between politics and science on the one hand and between political science and methodology on the other.

Secondly I will attempt to show that ideology is to politics what theory is to science and that consequently one has to study the ideology of rulers in order to explain politics. That it does not make sense to explain science by studying the behavior of scientists (in the sense of outward manifestation) is evident; similarly, it does not make sense to study politics by studying the behavior of political agents.

Politics and Science

Science can be seen as the most human of games. It consists of a game against nature. Insofar as we are vulnerable and conscious of our mortality, we can try to protect ourselves against premature death, not only

by studying biology and its technical applications in medicine, but more generally by trying to make sense of the universe so as to save unnecessary effort. Whether or not this happens to be the conscious rationalization of actual scientists does not matter very much. Their individual motivations may be to gain fame or fortune, respect or knowledge.

The social cost of practising science, or more generally of increasing knowledge, is always borne out of current consumption in one form or another. As such it is a social activity which must "earn its keep". Knowledge for knowledge's sake seems to be a rationalization to impress the philistines who want a quick return on their investment. If they can be convinced that, on the whole, the "knowledge industry" can be left to its own devices to produce results, they will tolerate (usually) those aspects of scientific inquiry which they cannot understand or even use immediately. I have no doubt, however, that if science were unsuccessful for a long period at solving problems that people (especially powerful people) want solved, it would not survive. Indeed, in cultures which have substitute belief systems (The Middle Ages in Europe, for instance), science practically vanishes, and when it becomes a threat it is suppressed, as in Russia after the 1917 Revolution, or during the French Revolution when some idiot beheading Lavoisier proudly declared that the Republic did not need scientists.

This digression was simply intended to show that societies are willing to pay a certain price to reduce uncertainties. Uncertainties have two major causes. One is God or nature (acts of God in English law); the other is people. Politics deals with uncertainties caused by other people; science with uncertainty due to nature.

The parallel seems most striking when comparing the logic of

scientific discovery and crucial decision making. A decision involves not only what to do, but also what to think. Confronted with a counterexample to a well-established theory, one can either declare that the experiment was inconclusive for any number of reasons (indeed, it is very likely that this is the case), or one can say that the established theory does not account for the phenomenon. In all probability the phenomenon has occurred before, but nobody noticed. Even if somebody did notice, the established theory looked too formidable to be challenged.

Sometimes, however, a theory is refuted, overthrown, or simply superseded. Thomas Kuhn, in his well known The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, gives an historical and sociological account of how such shifts in scientific orthodoxy have taken place. For Kuhn, scientific revolutions are essentially of a sociological or even political nature--he specifically draws the analogy between scientific and political revolutions.⁴³ This view can be criticized as exceedingly conventional, because it cares little about the possible truth or falsity of theories and becomes self-fulfilling, as theories may become subject to decision by majority-rule among the relevant scientific establishment, but this is not our concern here.⁴⁴ What is important to us is that scientists have to make decisions about what to think, decisions that cannot simply be based on facts (bits and pieces of information). Hume, I believe, was the first to show that there cannot be strictly factual knowledge, that we must have theories and theories are the result of conscious decisions. In a sense, Popper says the same thing when he asserts that a theory can never be verified, that no amount of facts or tests are sufficient to declare a theory to be true, although a theory which does not agree with the facts can be said to be false.

In many cases tests are impossible, facts* are non-existent and theories are then to be decided upon according to their internal consistency and perhaps compatibility with other beliefs.

Finally, the criterion of scientificity is the amenability of the theory to criticism. A theory may be true or false independently of our knowing it. As far as the individual or even the collective body of scientists is concerned, a theory is really an opinion. The fact that it is open to criticism reinforces the probability that it may be true, but does not guarantee it. Therefore, accepting a particular theory involves the risk of it being false.

I believe that I have made my point that scientists do have to make scientific decisions under conditions of uncertainty, which are both costly and risky, that indeed they are "paid" to make these decisions.

Politicians also have to make costly and risky decisions under conditions of uncertainty, and they too, in a sense, are "paid" to make them. Facts are just as meaningless to the politician as they are to the scientist unless these facts are understood within a theoretical framework. For example, in the Fail Safe story, radar screens showed objects coming from the north. The radar was unable to tell whether these objects were enemy planes or wild geese. The response had to depend on the "theory" of Russian behavior held by the U.S. President. **

The same march may be seen as a peaceful exercise by some or as a violent riot by others. Was Biafra a sovereign state or a rebellious band? The facts do not provide an answer by themselves. The incapacity of

* Incidentally, the etymology of fact is the Latin "factum", which implies fabrication, or deed.

** E. Bordick and H. Wheeler, New York, Dell, 1962.

governments to decide whether they prefer inflation to unemployment, Keynes or Milton Friedman, is probably due to the fact that neither provide a wholly satisfactory theory. Yet the decision maker cannot act out of pure caprice. When the theories are not good and the situation requires decisions, then another theory must be used. In the case of political economy the ideological choice is usually between the view that goods are scarce or that people are scarce. For some, a healthy economy requires that the rate of profit remains constant, arguing that otherwise growth will stop. For others the rate of profit is a residual category, the important thing being an egalitarian distribution of income, etc.

Depending upon the particular mix of beliefs held, the same "facts" will lead to opposite decisions, both of which can be said to be rational under the circumstances, except that the circumstances include the ideology of the decision maker. Ideology, in this sense, is not some obscure set of arbitrary beliefs held by an "establishment" or by radical revolutionaries. Instead it is often the only substitute available for a theory of political action. A scientific theory is never verified, although it may be expedient to see it as corroborated if it has withstood several tests. 45

An ideology cannot be verified either, but it too is subject to tests; and when it cannot provide an adequate guide for action, it is abandoned.

History is full of discarded ideologies, laissez-faire capitalism, feudalism, Greek mythology and many others. For Marx the ruling ideas were the ideas of the ruling class and we may add that whenever the ruling class changes so do the ruling ideas. As long as a particular ruling class rules, we may disagree on ethical grounds with what they do, but must recognize that their theory of society provides them with an adequate guide for action (deciding).

For Hegel, whatever was real was rational and therefore there was no point

in trying to upset the status quo. The ideology of the ruling class is indeed real and does have practical consequences, but that does not make it rational. Rationality in political decision making is a function of the ends pursued. Unless one sees history, or the sequence of political decisions, as being itself a rational process we must allow for the possibility of the rulers making mistakes. If indeed they make mistakes, as they are bound to, considering that they often have to make decisions which are pure bets with even odds, we cannot say that whatever happens is rational, nor can we say that whatever happens is the result of the will of the ruler.

Up to this point we have argued that both scientific and political decisions entail risk taking by those who make these decisions, that in many cases there is no rational way to decide between alternatives. Decisions, however, are not made at random, but according to some theory; indeed, the perception that there is need for a decision depends on the theory held, explicitly or not.

It follows from this that a strictly behavioral explanation of political phenomena or decisions is not adequate.

Political Science and Methodology

Philosophers of science, who are interested in methodology, have a great advantage over political scientists. Both are interested in explaining the decision-making process under conditions of uncertainty that we have described. But the difference in their respective positions is that the scientists normally state which theory it is they are trying to refute (or confirm), according to which hypotheses, etc., while politicians may or may not state either their goals or their theory of the polity which we have called their ideology.

Watching Newton dropping an apple does not provide us with a theory

of gravitation anymore than watching the President of the U.S. vetoing a bill on hospital construction gives us a clue as to his ideology. Perhaps he felt that the bill called for too much, or too little construction, or that there were more pressing priorities. Even if he "explains" his decision, there is no reason to believe that he is or is not lying.

"So a choice of action alone cannot serve as criterion for a man's holding a belief, since it is combinations of beliefs with valuations or goals that give rise to action...Knowing how a man acts may tell us what he believes if we know what he wants, or what he wants if we know what he believes, but not both at once." 46

How do we go about finding out what a politician wants and/or believes? We saw with Ellul that the active politician has to take into account the propaganda potential of his actions as well as of his pronouncements. We have seen with Freund and Jouvenel that there are a number of limitations to the theoretical arbitrariness of rulers.

We cannot impute goals or beliefs to politicians either, as memoirs, history, and other evidence all concur to show that politicians do pursue very different goals, equipped with a wide variety of beliefs. As far as I know, we do not have a meta-theory of politics which could place and interpret beliefs, goals and means within neat, conceptual boundaries. The methodologist can ask of the scientist "how do you know?" and expect an answer in the form: if a, then b, which can be demonstrated either by deduction from corroborated laws or by reductio ad absurdum. The scientist may also answer by specifying what it would take to invalidate his claim. The political scientist asking the same questions will either receive no answer (it happens to methodologists also) or will receive answers in terms of some historical doctrine or other. Politicians, having to deal with the

the future, cannot help but be historicists. The trouble with historicists is, of course, that they are never wrong. If we consider the major decisions taken by politicians, the definition of "major" being the number of people killed as a result, we cannot help but be struck by the extreme simplicity of the apparent reasoning that motivates them. "Our forces have to remain there so that the others cannot be there". Or, "All power to (1) the people; (2) the well-born; (3) the educated; (4) the ignorant; (5) the young; (6) the old; (7) the Jews; (8) the Gentiles; (9) the..." At other times national survival is "at stake", or "freedom", or some other undefinable abstraction for which people die and that politicians seem to believe. All these principles have in common an attempt somehow to correct past "mistakes", a common example being the frequent observation that generals always prepare for the last war.

In Praise of "Political Thought"

Not only is the political scientist dealing with second-order phenomena, or even third-order if we consider politics themselves to be "above" society, but furthermore at the decision-making level, his generalizations must rest upon metaphysical assumptions, such as rationality or human nature, which he would rather avoid as normative.

Aron makes the point that "Political thought is...equivocal. It is moralizing when it pretends to be scientific. It is influenced by reality when it pretends to be normative." ⁴⁷

Political thought is a better concept than political science. Science implies if/then relationships which are not subject to change (at least in the short run). Political thought encompasses not only the activity of politicians, but also of scholars concerned with politics as well as the activity of ideologues. The separation between these three specialties is too artificial and is probably a cause of confusion as it

rests on the myth that political scholars are disinterested, that politicians are morons and ideologues incapable of self-control.

By subsuming political theory, science, and methodology under the general rubric "political thought" we lose all claims to "objectivity" and to scientific status. Does it mean that there is nothing left worth saying about politics?

Politics as an Art

No, and I believe that it is much more fruitful to look at politics as if it were an Art and at political science as if it were in the position of art criticism than to attempt to gain the authority afforded to scientists.

Good art, like good politics, obeys fairly strict rules and the art critic is also expected to follow certain rules of his trade. But out of deference to the achievements of the natural sciences and to those of politicians and political thinkers, I believe it best to keep the two genres or cultures apart.

The assumption that the methodology of physics is somehow the alpha and omega of rules about knowledge seems as narrow as the imposition of dialectical materialism as the methodology for biology. This does not mean that many of the logical relationships between questions and answers that have been worked out by philosophers of science, such as Popper, have to be dismissed, but it does mean that political scientists-writers-thinkers, or whatever they are called, should be willing to take risks and to stray out of the established methodology when they find it to be too constraining. This is not a license to do any and everything, but rather a frank acceptance of the reality of their art.

For example, rather than claiming scientific status for their

theories, political scientists should perhaps work out the metaphysical consequences of their assumptions about human nature.

Conclusion to Part I

Reviewing some recent literature concerned with politics did not convince us that there can be a "political science". Even when politics is reduced to its smallest unit of analysis, i.e. committee decisions, the number of variables is too large to be construed as a closed system with clear causal relationships.

The absence of scientific laws does not mean that politics cannot be studied, and indeed we found that there are a number of constraints limiting the arbitrariness of decision makers. In particular, the review of the literature points to the necessity for any reflection on politics to make certain assumptions about human nature which set limits on what can be expected of politics, and of political thought.

Perhaps the most important difficulty that we encountered was the impossibility of assuming rationality on the part of politicians, not because politicians are irrational, but because their problems do not have solutions so that there is often no demonstrably optimal policy.

Since there is no way to demonstrate the superiority of a given policy, politicians have to convince themselves and others of the worthiness of their choices and to this end use propaganda and ideology as substitutes for explanations.

Authority backed by force is an extension of this incapacity to demonstrate the absolute superiority of a given policy.

The exercise of authority is costly, however, and this too sets limits on the arbitrariness of what can be done by political means. Indeed, political regimes and ideologies have an ever-shortening life span. But there

is no end to politics in sight, although some authors argue that industrialized societies, by becoming bureaucratized, are more and more administered and less and less governed.

However this may be, political decision making still takes place and is still much more an art than a science. This is to say that political decisions do generate unpredictable situations due to the particular creativity of decision makers. Political scientists thus are not capable of making specific predictions about political decisions, any more than art critics can anticipate creations in their chosen field.

In the second part of this paper we will try to see whether or not this conclusion should mean that political prediction is completely hopeless.

PART II

PREDICTION

Chapter 1

Ideological Bearings

In part one of this paper, I have argued that politics cannot be reduced by some infinite regress to psychology, sociology, economics or whatever. Furthermore, if we are to know about politics, we cannot avoid coming to grips with the decision-making process. However, in order to explain the decision-making process in the single instance, it is necessary to make ad hoc assumptions which prevent knowledge about politics from claiming any kind of "scientific" status in the philosophical sense.

The removal of the notion that somehow knowledge about politics should be organized according to the canons of the established methodology of the natural sciences--as reconstructed by philosophers--has the sociological effect of depriving "political scientists" of the authority they seem to crave, and to return political enquiry to the level of enlightened common sense.

This does not mean that the work of methodologists, especially when it is oriented towards the social sciences, should be ignored, but it means that a scientific methodology can only be an ideal-typical example which may help avoiding gross mistakes, but cannot either lend authority to the findings nor be taken as the only possible mode of inquiry.

The conduct of political affairs, we argued, is best looked upon as an art and the student of politics as an art critic. The difference between the art critic and the political scientist * is that the latter is

* We retain the phrase "political scientist" for convenience's sake.

concerned--or should be concerned--with matters that can and do affect the lives of many more people, including their possible premature deaths. Whether or not a better understanding of politics can prevent politicians from making bona fide mistakes cannot be ascertained, but to give up without trying would be a form of intellectual irresponsibility. Of course, it can be argued that the efforts of political scientists could have the reverse effect and enable politicians to make us worse off.

The Liberating Effect of Knowledge*

At the societal level, the diffusion of knowledge about political affairs is, all things considered, preferable to ignorance or enlightenment through propaganda. This opinion clearly presupposes an ideological choice in favor of liberalism. As such, this opinion cannot be justified on purely logical grounds. Indeed, in the short run, it can often be shown that a secretive government is more effective than its opposite. Treason, which is one of the most severely punished "crimes" in all political systems, consists of providing information about decisions which the powers-that-be wish to keep to themselves. The political scientist, the journalist, and the editorial writer are all dependent upon the liberalism of their societies and governments, and provide the governors and governed with information about each other. The degree to which they are permitted to exercise their professions without being subject to the charge of treason is a fairly reliable indicator of the openness of a given society. It is symptomatic that political science is largely confined to the "Liberal

* This view is not at all uncontroversial. Plato, Rousseau and many others closer to our daily experience fear that increased information and knowledge about politics is dangerous for society and therefore that certain ideas should be censored because they poison the minds rather than liberate them.

Democracies", while the "natural" sciences seem to be able to flourish under almost any political system, with the possible exception of theocracies.

It is therefore reasonable to expect political scientists to favor open societies, if only because they have a vested interest in their continuation.

The Open Society

Our commitment to the open society is, then, a necessary precondition for the possibility of making public political predictions. In the open society, information is relatively easy to gather, not only about the ruled but also about the rulers. This information is publishable and this publicity of the findings of political science distinguishes them from the inside information that rulers have about each other and about their society. In the closed society, we can assume that the rulers know much about their society, either through the workings of special information-gathering agencies such as a secret police, or through "house" social science. A social science which is only concerned about what the ruled are likely to do and which is not made available to those whose behavior is analyzed and predicted may be seen as an instrument of oppression, reinforcing unilaterally the powers-that-be.

To take a recent example, the Labour Government in Britain has blamed their defeat on the polls. It should properly have blamed their defeat on the publication of the polls. Indeed, it is said that the decision to hold elections at this time was based on favorable predictions made by previous private polls. In a closed society, the only kind of polls are private polls. Their publicity in Britain and elsewhere is a measure of the relative independence of social science and of journalism. Following this and other elections, the rulers of various countries have proposed that

the publication of polls should be banned before elections. As it is quite unlikely that these same rulers would abstain from having private polls conducted for their benefit, such a ban could not help but be a regression.* Inasmuch as social science, however unreliable, exists, the only way I can think of to limit the potential damage to the ruled is to organize its diffusion on as broad a scale as possible.

Conventionalism and Open Politics

We saw above that the conventionalist view of science is that we can never know whether any theory is true or false, and that the only safeguard we have against very bad--i.e. very likely to be false--theories is to have an institution called the scientific community. We also said that there cannot be really a political "science", but perhaps we can retain the public character of science as a necessary requirement for political inquiry, distinct from purely partisan political thought and investigation, thus drawing the line between political engineering and political "science". We are not claiming any authority from some supernatural "objectivity" as we believe to have demonstrated that such objectivity is not demonstrable, even if it were possible. Rather, we see political inquiry of an academic nature as justified on the grounds that it is one of the ways to keep the society "open", apart from the usual commitment to the truth and knowledge.

Political predictions, then, have an ancillary quality, helping the society as a whole (rulers and ruled) to either prepare for impending changes or to prepare for a fight against the predicted changes. In order for such a role to be fulfilled, such prediction must be made public, for otherwise they would be part of the normal process of politics where the

* From the liberal ideal of an open society.

various actors evidently act on the basis of their expectations.

Prediction and the Social Sciences

Broadly speaking, there are three main points of view regarding the validity of the endeavor to make predictions in the social sciences. On the one hand is the school begun by August Comte, bent on constructing a "social physics", whereby an appropriate body of scientific laws can and should be developed. Another view is that predictions in the social sciences are inherently impossible because of the nature of the phenomena. This is the Popperian position, which accuses those who claim to be able to predict the course of history to be "historicists", that is to say people devoid of imagination, notably incapable of predicting modifications in the very course of changes. K. Merton, for his part, believes that predictions in the social sciences can be self-fulfilling or self-defeating and that this sets the social sciences apart from other fields of inquiry.

I will argue that all of these positions are tenable, but that they refer to different kinds of phenomena. One must distinguish between predictions about the behavior of anonymous individuals and that of anonymous groups on the one hand, and on the other hand between the behavior of identified--and self conscious--groups and individuals. Another distinction that has to be made is between predictions that something will happen at some specified date and those that do not have such time constraints. Finally, the period under consideration is an important variable. One should also distinguish the prediction that such and such will happen from that stating what cannot. The form of the prediction depends on whether or not one is interested in probabilistic statements. Some argue that a probability statement is not very different from a mere opinion, while others claim that they are the only kind available.

Historicism

Kant observed that only what is permanent can change, otherwise there would be perpetual destruction and rebirth, but never any change. One can of course argue that, in fact, there is such a permanent death and rebirth, that what we perceive as change is only a figment of our imaginations, bent on conceptualizing everything. Certainly our conception of eternity is theoretical, as nobody, by definition, has ever experienced it directly. If our lifespan was much shorter or much longer our conception of what is permanent would certainly be altered. Our conception of what institutions should do and at what speed depends in part on our appreciation of our chances to experience the results. It may be, for example, that what we consider to be a reasonable investment depends on our life expectancy. For example, hereditary monarchies probably meant a very different thing when the average life expectancy was thirty years than now when it is seventy-plus. A new 20 year old king was not likely to last for much more than the usual term of our contemporary prime ministers. With a short life expectancy, the time that could be devoted to the education of the monarch was, of course, much shorter than the time that one can now expect a politician to spend acquiring the necessary experience. We also have a much larger number of experienced politicians to choose from. One could safely conjecture that if life expectancy were to double, the method of selection of rulers could change again. This example shows, I think, that there are certain heavy tendencies in history that change much slower than what is often considered as "history making". Drawing up a list of such "heavy" tendencies could help in setting up the conditions under which history is made.

Game Against Nature

Currently, there is much concern over a possible ecological crisis. While we do not know what solutions will be found to the various ecological problems which are springing up, we can safely conjecture that these problems will require the attention of politicians, and that they will have to make decisions regarding the uses of the world.

While some problems such as the ecology of the planet are very salient, other areas are not equally visible. But it seems plausible that the scholar can draw attention to such future "macroproblems" and safely predict that they will require political decisions. In the case of "heavy" tendencies the future conflict is roughly between nature and society, so that the only required assumptions are that nature will remain subject to the same laws and that political society will continue to exist.

Game Against Society

The extent to which the society as a whole can be considered to be "nature" and the politicians to be involved in some sort of conflict with the society is a little more contentious than the above examples. "Heavy" social tendencies can be discerned, but their permanency is obviously less than in the case of nature. The question of how much change can one allow before declaring a social theory hopeless is a matter of preference which cannot be resolved a priori.^{*} Purists may argue that as soon as any change has been recorded, the theories are inapplicable. The point is that a political predictor is really interested in differential rates of change between the

* Unless one is prepared to argue that a theory about society is meaningless unless it leads directly to actions aimed at modifying the reality thus encompassed. Cf. the famous Marxian phrase "Philosophers have interpreted the world, the point is to change it." (Theses on Feuerbach.)

society and the political system. The relative autonomy of the political system must, of course, be assumed as well as the greater flexibility of the latter over the society as a whole.

In other words, while it is possible to predict the interaction of variables whose rate of change is known, there remains the possibility that changes will occur in the rate itself. The more flexibility in the behavior of one of the parties to a given political conflict, the less predictable the outcome. When both sides have equal flexibility, predictions become impossible. Absolute power can be equated with absolute flexibility, but we have already seen that absolute power does not exist. The amount of power at the disposal of a given party to a political conflict is of course subject to change, but often limits can be set to the likely range of such variations. Where it is possible to gauge the range of such flexibility on the part of the protagonists the outcome of the conflict can also be predicted, within set limits. For example, in a constitutional monarchy, the flexibility of the monarch is very limited as far as the parliament is concerned and vice versa. In case of conflict the outcome can be safely predicted as falling between known limits. The monarch can dissolve parliament, but not abolish it; parliament, in turn, cannot dispose of the monarch, but may make it impossible for him to exercise his functions. Precedural rules are a great help for the would-be political predictor, but it should be recognized that there are many other situations where quasi-procedural rules obtain, and also many situations where changes to procedural rules themselves are subject to rules, either implicit or explicit.

Of course, procedural rules, or institutions are themselves the resultant of previous conflicts and quick changes in the conditions under which such rules are amended are revolutions, that is to say a massive change

in the allocation of political power. Revolutions can be characterized as an extreme acceleration of the rate of change of political institutions, or as the case where the respective flexibility of the parties changes signs, as when the society becomes more flexible than the government. Societies, however, are not monoliths and small groups, other than their governments, can sometimes acquire greater credibility than the government, as if political power was the result of a multiplication of weight by speed of action. When the result of the multiplication is higher for an identifiable group than for the government, a revolution may take place. The identification of such powerful groups is another task of the would-be predictor.

Innovations

One can argue that many of the most significant changes in the respective power of groups has resulted from technical innovations. For example, it is generally agreed that the advent of television has increased the power of chief executive officers in the countries which have generalized this mixed blessing. Popper argues that it is impossible to predict*, because it is likely that such innovations will take place again and that predicting such innovations would be tantamount to making the innovations themselves, which of course is impossible. However, one could argue that it is not the invention of television which is significant, but its widespread use. Of course, there is no reason to assume that a subsequent innovation would require the same length of time before it would become widespread. This is a risk that one cannot avoid, but does it justify the abandonment of all efforts at predicting? The sun may also not rise, or a new plague could appear,

* Historical developments.

or there could be major earthquakes,, or there could even be truly unprecedented events of great political significance. To admit that prediction cannot be complete does not imply that prediction is completely impossible. The maximalist approach to prediction implied by the Popperian position in this respect resembles a debate among philosophers concerned about the true meaning of a word. Making political predictions is indeed an historicist exercise which implies considerable risks and it is quite true that there have been many careless historicists. Unfortunately, there is no alternative but to study the past if we want to make educated guesses about the future. Just how educated are these guesses is the problem.

Marxism

When Popper attacks historicists, he is really attacking Marxism as the principal historicist doctrine, but by no means the only one. Popper's declared intention is to "criticize the doctrine that it is the task of the social sciences to propound historical prophecies, and that historical prophecies are needed if we wish to conduct politics in a rational way."⁴⁸

The distinction between a prediction and a prophecy is that the former is conditional while the latter is not. Also prophecies seem to be longer-term predictions than ordinary predictions.⁴⁹ Another way to make the distinction is to say that we cannot predict the course of history because human society is not a closed, stationary system.

The second point of Popper's objection to Marxism is that once prophecies have been propounded, the task of all reasonable men (presumably Marxists only) is to see to it that the prophecy becomes self-fulfilling. It is the view "that history has a plot and that if we succeed in unravelling this plot, we shall hold the key to the future."⁵⁰ These objections are seductive at first, but one cannot help but suspect that they were produced

by Popper for ideological purposes in one of his weaker moments.

Maurice Cornforth, who has written a book to refute Popper's interpretation of Marx, argues that these objections are not terribly powerful. The following discussion is a summary of his arguments.

First of all, Cornforth argues that the principal aim of Marxism is not to make prophesies but to understand how history is made and consequently to go on making history without any illusions.

"We study the past sequence of events in order to try to discover explanatory generalizations about how later events issue from earlier ones. Marx's discovery was that to explain the historical sequence we must always, first, examine the mode of production and how it develops, and second examine how people acted socially in order to adapt their production relations, and their institutions and ideas, to their forces of production." 51

Marxism, contrary to Popper's belief, does not see societies as a fixed mechanical system obeying deterministic, inexorable processes. It sees societies as constantly changing as the superstructure has to adapt to changes in the relations of production. Consequently, one can say that its predictions are indeed conditional. They say that whenever the conditions of production are in contradiction with the superstructure, the latter has to adjust. The exact form of this adjustment, or of the development of the relations of production, cannot be predicted over the long range, only that the two will have to come to terms.

Popper himself agrees that the proper task of the social sciences is to point out the unintended consequences of our actions. The consequences are necessarily posterior to the action, and it is not at all clear in what sense these predictions are based on more plausible hypotheses than those predictions predicated on the Marxist thesis about the importance of

relations of production.

As for the problem of the conscious effort of "historicists" to bring about the changes which they see as unavoidable, it can be argued that once a plausible prediction is made, people will take a position about the desirability of the predicted state of affairs. Marx believed that once he had predicted the necessity for drastic changes to occur, enough people would agree with him to make it a social movement, which indeed turned out to be true.

The growth of socialism as an ideology and the relation between production relations and the forces of production can be said to be "heavy" tendencies. Having correctly identified two heavy tendencies does not imply that Marx was in a position to draw a detailed calendar of future events. That is beyond the powers of anyone, especially when one argues with Marx and Dahrendorf that political history is made of struggles, the outcomes of which are by definition uncertain.

It seems to be quite legitimate to study how change has taken place in the past to gain some understanding as to how it could happen in the future. Totally unpredictable events can occur and so any political prediction must include reservations of the form: barring unprecedented accidents, the following is plausible. If that is historicist, then we must either be historicists or renounce any attempt at predicting anything.

Chapter 2

We Cannot Live Without Predictions

Everyone's life is based on predictions or expectations of certain actions by others. In most cases, these predictions are very reliable; political institutions, indeed, guarantee the validity of such predictions. It is significant that interest rates are higher in unstable countries than in those that have not experienced many political upheavals. Governments can usually borrow at lower rates of interest than can corporations or individuals. When there is uncertainty about the political future, everything else being equal, interest rates on government bonds tend to increase. Note for example that the various Canadian provinces do not have to pay the same interest rates as the Federal government, and that the Province of Quebec had to offer slightly better terms than those offered by Ontario before the 1970 provincial election.

From the individual citizen's point of view, the State is a guarantee of usually increasing services such as police, defense, education, medical care, welfare, etc. The number of institutions whose behavior can be predicted increases all the time, as more and more relationships are organized along bureaucratic lines. Political decisions often result in the establishment of yet another institution as a solution to a particular conflict. But of course, as more and more institutions are thus brought under political control--at least nominally--⁵² a change in the orientation of the government might affect more and more areas of the citizen's life. For example, when a large proportion of the available employment opportunities are directly controlled by the State, a given regulation applying to all state employment does affect many more people than in a less structured society.

The extension of the non-market sector of the economy does give more leverage to policy decisions affecting the economy. It also extends the number of demands that can be and are put to the state for the reallocation of resources. If a recession or some other disturbance occurs in the economy, it is quite safe to predict that the government will do something. It is also safe to predict that this something will, in order to be successful, have to restore confidence in the future, i.e. control the disturbance and make an area of uncertainty behave predictably in the future. If bank failures are a problem, then we can predict that some control will be instituted to prevent such failures. If wheat does not sell, something will be done to alleviate the condition. It is also safe to assume that if nothing were done in response to such conditions, political disintegration would follow. Indeed, many countries have separatist movements. Quebec, Jura, Wales, Brittany, Biafra, Scotland, the Basque Country, etc. are all regions which feel that they would be better off alone than integrated in their present condition. The breaking up of political units and the forming of new ones does point to the possibility that political entities may break up if their demands are not met, or rather when they can predict that their demands will not be met.

As separatism is clearly an indication of failure on the part of the authority from which a particular group wishes to part, one can expect that such threats will indeed reinforce the likelihood that governments will take seriously their duty as guarantors that the future will be organized along acceptable lines.

Roosevelt or Hitler?

In the previous section, we asserted that the heavy tendencies of political economy, such as mass unemployment or severe regional discontent,

will lead to political action. Bertrand de Jouvenel argues that we can indeed do that. For example, Germany and the U.S. both experienced a severe depression (1929-32) and both found leaders who solved that problem. Both countries had had a paralyzed leadership that could not find solutions; both were federal states, and it was quite legitimate to expect the whole leadership to be replaced and the powers of the federal governments to be expanded as a result of the new economic policies to be implemented. There were, however, some differences between Hitlerism and Rooseveltism which could not be predicted from the nature of the problems they proposed to solve.⁵³ For Jouvenel heavy tendencies do not help the prediction of purely political actions.⁵⁴ This seems to be a refutation of historicism of the sociological variety, in that it rejects the treatment of politics as epiphenomena of socio-economic necessities. It is also a rejection of the various functionalisms which consider society to be a kind of organism with certain needs, such as a little black steering box (Easton) or an information system (Deutsch).

Fascism and antisemitism were not necessary ingredients to a solution to the problems facing Germany in 1932, if these problems are only expressed in terms of the heavy tendency of the economy. Indded they were probably not necessary in the sense of corresponding to widely-held beliefs. And one can conjecture that had there not been mass unemployment and assorted ills Hitler could not have risen to power. Predicting which of several possibilities will occur is clearly more difficult than to set out what the possibilities are. Another way of finding likely possibilities is, of course, to eliminate unlikely ones. In particular, one can conceive of political theory as saying for example you cannot have both complete predictability of public agents and security. As there is no laboratory to make dry runs,

the criteria for eliminating unlikely occurrences cannot help but be a work of enlightened imagination.

The Problem of the Self-Fulfilling, or Self-Defeating Prediction

It is quite evident that people do modify their behavior according to predictions not only about the behavior of others but also about themselves. Popper calls this phenomenon the Oedipus effect⁵⁵ after the legend wherein the prophecy that Oedipus would kill his father led directly to the very crime that was to be averted.

The very realization by social scientists that their predictions might have an effect on subsequent events may lead them to modify the prediction. The social scientist need not be partisan in making such adjustments, but rather may be making a serious effort at avoiding "bandwagon" effects of his prediction. As soon as the political scientist is interested in the outcome of a given situation and is making predictions about this outcome--and one can scarcely visualize a situation where the political scientist did not care at all--the "scientific" status of the exercise is completely destroyed on methodological grounds inasmuch as the necessary distance between object and subject disappears. Indeed the very fact of studying a social or political situation can modify it beyond recognition, as shown in the famous example of the workshop whose productivity increased as long as it was studied, regardless of the nature of the experiment. Lights were brightened, productivity went up, they were dimmed and productivity went up too.

Simon argues that in principle it is always possible to make a public prediction that will be confirmed by the event in the special case of elections.⁵⁶ Sometimes, the prediction has a manipulatory effect, that is to say, modifies the outcome, sometimes not, depending on the strength of the

bandwagon or underdog effect in the particular case.

A special problem of the study of the effects of predictions on the course of events is that as far as political actors are concerned, the criteria for giving credence to a given prediction need not be those of social scientists. For example, more weight will be given to a prediction made by a famous person, regardless of the quality of the theory underlying his prediction. Quite properly, politicians will listen to predictors that they know and who have proven reliable in the past and probably not care very much about John Doe, social scientist. Astrologers are known to have played an important role in advising Hitler and others. They might have been dishonest astrologers and might have relied on information other than a reading of the stars in giving their advice, but we do not know. ⁵⁷

Decision makers and the public at large are usually interested in the prediction, not in the method used to make it. The availability of contradictory predictions cannot itself be predicted. This is part of the problem of distinguishing between predictions which are primarily of an ancillary nature and those which are meant to be part of an exercise in political theory with some claim to "scientific status".

Modifying public predictions so that their effect is minimized rests on another prediction about the diffusion and impact of prediction number one. Similarly, it may be necessary for the predictor to make a whole series of predictions, anticipating the reaction to prediction number two, and so on ad infinitum. It is doubtful that a single theory can account for all these predictions; indeed, the part played by what I cannot help but call intuition in the selection of the sequence of predictions is too large to be discounted.

Chapter 3

A Common-Sense Approach

In this section, I wish to argue that political science, if it is interested in producing interesting political predictions, must renounce its autonomy. As we saw at the end of the previous section and as the daily reading of a good newspaper indicates, political decisions are not usually about politics. In a formal sense, a political decision about politics will entail changes in the procedure used to reach decisions, while, in fact, actual decisions made by politicians mix politics and economics or criminology or psychology or whatever. If we were to predict, say, the fate of the proposed arms sales to South Africa by the British government, we would need information about the make-up of the British Cabinet, about the shape of the British economy, about the balance of payments, the NATO commitments, the availability of alternative suppliers, the trade between Britain and Black Africa, etc., etc. We would also have to discount the effect of our prediction, assess the willingness of Britons to demonstrate against their government over this issue, gauge the likely position that the media would take on such a sale. In other words, we would have to be universal experts. This is clearly not possible. One solution to the problem is to propose theories which are so general that they hardly deny anything. An example of this is the American attempt at producing a "general systems theory" or a "structural functional theory" (Easton, Parsons).⁵⁸ The other alternative is to produce a very partial theory, such as game theory or information theory, which are too specialized to be very useful. As we saw above, their formal requirements are so strong as to make their application exceedingly rare.

Adam Smith, Ricardo, Marx, Pigou, etc. did not seek to insulate

the various aspects of social action from each other. Their basic explanation of how social things worked was to find what they believed to be the basic law of motion of societies. For Smith it was the maximization of personal monetary gain; for Marx the class struggle over the control of the means of production; for Pigou it was the search for general economic welfare. It is relatively easy to show that there is no single law of social motion, that the addition of personal utilities does not necessarily lead to general welfare, or that, as Condorcet showed, the summation of personal preferences can lead to collective nonsense. ⁵⁹

Individualism Versus Uncertainty

However, all these thinkers sensed that the interaction, the tension, the conflict that exists between the individual and the collective, has to be accounted for in some way, and besides, that this tension also exists at the hypothesis-formulating stage of political theory. The purely atomistic view of society of an Adam Smith is rationalized in terms of the collective good, while the collective view of society of the Utilitarians is justified in terms of maximized individual satisfaction.

In methodological terms, the theoretical conflict is between "methodological individualists" and "holists". The Holists claim that social groups, nations, governments, etc. are to be studied as units, that there exist realities such as group spirit (esprit de corps), group traditions, etc. which are independent of the actual membership. Conversely, methodological individualists, while agreeing that there exist social facts such as political parties or wars, argue that in principle all such phenomena can be explained in terms of individual behavior, "that is, it denies that supraindividual group properties can be meaningfully attributed to things or events." ⁶⁰ This methodological conflict also exists for example at the news

media level where a decision will be reported as being the government's or that of the regime or of an individual, depending on the medium's-journalist's sympathies.

The problem is particularly acute for political science, where the phenomena to be explained or predicted often do look like individual feats--the "great men" view of history. It is, I believe, specious to argue that the great men do not count, but it is equally foolish to claim that political phenomena cannot be described, explained or predicted in terms of collectives such as political parties, governments, etc. One of the obvious ways to solve the controversy is to restrict oneself to areas of study amenable to statistical methods. The study of heavy tendencies is a prime example of this theoretical orientation. But many interesting phenomena are too infrequent to be amenable to such techniques of enquiry.

Political phenomena are not so much complex as varied. The political scientist trying to make predictions has to be aware of many aspects of the human experience but cannot really know in advance what will be relevant to a particular case. Confronted with a lack of well-established theory, and it may be that any such theory would be self-defeating, his particular skill has to be defined in loose terms of intuition, acumen and common sense. Marxism is perhaps the most comprehensive political theory extant, yet Popper and others have no difficulty poking wide holes in its scientific claims. Surely many of Marxism's predictions have come true and it is probable--if not certain--that many of the predictions that did not come true failed precisely because of the existence of the theories, and their embodiment in political parties.

The Art of Conjecture - Bertrand de Jouvenel

For Jouvenel, predicting the future is not only natural, but also necessary. In order to distinguish between mere wishful thinking and reasoned conjecture, it is necessary for the predictor to explain his modus operandi. For the great majority of social interaction, almost complete prediction is afforded by morals and tradition, yet change takes place, putting us in the position of a tourist planning a trip with the help of an outdated guidebook.⁶¹ Our knowledge of the past increases qualitatively and quantitatively at a quick pace. Inasmuch as the past is our only source of information from which to predict, our predictions should also improve in quantity as well as in quality. And indeed they do, in economics for example.

Jouvenel sees a kind of symmetry between the past and history as an object of knowledge on the one hand and the future and the art of conjecture on the other.⁶² Note that Jouvenel very carefully distinguishes between knowledge, which by definition applies to the past only, and conjecture, which is a reasoned opinion about the future. The purpose of such conjecture is, of course, to narrow the gap between the desirable and the probable. We can note the parallel between this view and our previous position that there cannot exist an a-ideological predictor. For him, human action is defined in terms of goals. Man does not act because of something but in order to achieve something.⁶³

The structural conditions for future action are often known--even though there remains the possibility of accidents--but accidents are by definition what cannot be predicted. Acts of God, the assassin's bullet, the heart attack are contingencies that have to be neglected by the predictor. Structural certainties are not frequent. For example in France, since 1789

the head of state has been chosen more often by a new rule than by a pre-existing one. An ambitious Frenchman, intending to become President, has to reckon that there is only about one chance out of two that the existing rule of choosing presidents will still apply 20 years from now. ⁶⁴

Contractual certainties, although far less secure than structural ones, are also very important for the predictor. It appears (1971) that more and more relationships are organized through long-term contracts. This is quite evident in the labor-management field everywhere, also in international relations, etc. The success of contractual policies rests on the ability of the parties to control their environment sufficiently for them to be able to fulfill their contractual obligations. The accumulation of such public and private contracts does not preclude change but makes it much more predictable. For Jouvanel many of our problems stem from our desire to achieve both accelerating change and better previsions.

Ignorance Versus Uncertainty

One can take two views about the future: either that whatever happens was necessarily going to happen, and thus that the only reason why we did not predict is is our ignorance, or that the future is indeterminate and that whatever happens depends on what we do. Jouvanel solves the problem by distinguishing between dominant and "dominable" futures, depending on the position on the social map of the knowing and acting subject. ⁶⁵ This distinction leads him to propose a typology of predictions: (1) the prevision of the most likely future, i.e. the earth will be more and more polluted; (2) the advice to the powers that be, which takes the form of a list of possible remedies; (3) a prediction as to the likely action of the powers concerning the problem, which may or may not consist of a long list of possibilities, depending for example on whether or not the predictor thinks

that the power of the powers will remain constant or that other technical innovations are likely. In the pollution case, the ordinary citizen can predict that pollution will increase; the politician that something has to be done, for example curtailing the use of private automobiles; and the predictor that such curtailment will only be a temporary relief and thus that the powers will have to ban automobiles completely unless some new form of energy is made practicable for cars.

The list of alternatives is called futuribles.

Various Modes of Prediction

1. Trends: Generally, we tend to predict changes in the things and institutions which have changed in the past. This is evidently a mistake as there have been in the past many changes in trends. Economic growth, for example, has sometimes accelerated and sometimes decelerated.

2. Analogy: If two initial conditions are demonstrably analogous it follows that the consequences will be the same. The trouble, as far as politics are concerned, is that situations are never the same, notably because we have a collective memory of these analogous situations. But the analogical method is a good analytic starting point. 66, 67

3. The railroad: This mode of prediction is based on the belief that what happened elsewhere will happen here. A prime example of this is the belief that there is one path towards economic development and that the presently underdeveloped countries will have to proceed through the same sequence as the developed ones. This is pure nonsense. (Cf. Trotsky and the "privilege of backwardness" which explains that the underdeveloped countries can learn from the mistakes of the developed ones.)

4. Causality: Jouvanel doubts that causality is helpful in the making of political predictions. He cites a number of examples of predictions

based on supposed causes where the choice of the cause was unwarranted, and does not believe that we can do much better. This is so because we always read history as if it were made up of events caused by our favorite agent, while in fact we can only describe the sequence.

5. A priorism: This is equally dismissed as a method of prediction on the grounds that it fails essentially because it is an unsupported statement.

6. System: A system is a set of covariants which form an organized whole. Any social entity forms a system. If the dynamic of a given system is known, then it is tautologically true that the future state of the system can be known. Unfortunately, the dynamics of a system are rarely known or invariant. For instance, Marx was right most of the time, but because he had not set the boundaries of his system correctly, the secular tendency of the rate of profit to fall did not materialize ⁶⁸ and thus his conditional prediction turned out to be false. Jouvanel explains the failure of Marx's prediction slightly differently, by saying that the value added grew faster than the necessary investment.

7. Form: The central idea here is taken from Galileo, who showed that the size of an object or animal cannot be changed without a concomittant change in structure. Similarly, the increase in the size of human organizations require structural changes as well. If one can predict that an institution will grow, one could also predict the other changes that will be necessary.

All these modes of prediction, however helpful, do not really enable us to forecast the drama, the explosion, the riot. Many argue that such historical accidents do not modify the course of history in the long run. Jouvanel disagrees and points out that such events do often signal new beginnings, in particular the creation of new myths. For him, predictors

should pay particular attention to impending dramas, if only because of all the suffering that can be avoided by transforming future drama into peaceful reforms. "Social scientists tend to exclude drama because of what I believe their psychological disposition to be. First of all, drama is a scandal for reasonable men, a time of repugnant frenzy during which absurdity reigns." 69 But, he goes on to argue that often the social scientist senses the impending drama, yet does not reveal his sentiment as it is impossible to explain such feelings. The practising politician, however, does not have such scientific scruples and may very well base his actions on such visceral perceptions.

On the Moral Status of Prediction

Having sketched above the various ways of approaching knowledge about the future state of political affairs, there remains the problem of being heard by the powers-that-be.

For Jouvenel, the exercise of power seems to make men blind to the future, busy as they are dealing with the immediate. The predictor, on the other hand, tends to be modest and to hope those in power see what he does. If, however, he insists on being heard he is likely to encounter the polite put-off that men in power reserve for unsolicited if well-meant advice. Unheard, a prediction spoils and the predictor gets discouraged or bitter. In the latter case he will make his prediction public in vulgarized form, thus discrediting himself and the whole predictive effort. 70

As a guide to the value of predictions for the decision maker, Jouvenel borrows from Modigliani and Cohen the following maxim: "Do not allocate resources to the estimation of specific aspects of the future if... such estimation is not going to modify your behavior in any case." 71 This maxim evidently disqualifies the long-range public prediction, in which we are primarily interested because such long-range predictions do not

require an immediate modification in the behavior of the powers that be. Jouvanel suggests the creation of a market similar to the stock market, where predictions could be exchanged and compared. This prediction market should be particularly interested in the ecology of political ideas. The analogy with ecology is that one can regard the population as an area inhabited by all kinds of species of ideas. Some ideas make progress, others regress, some ideas depend on others just like predators depend on a weaker species. The predicting of ideas is very important, according to Jouvanel who quotes Keynes: "The ideas of philosophers and economists, false as well as true, are more powerful than is generally recognized. Practical men who believe to be exempt from any intellectual influence usually parrot some defunct economist."⁷² We should predict the diffusion of ideas in the fashion of top ten contests where we are not asked about our favorite stars but about which stars we believe will be the majority's favorites.

Jouvanel concludes his book by urging the social sciences to become prediction-conscious, despite the risk involved. If the social sciences do not try to become predictive, the alternative is a technocratic society which will be more and more manipulated by men without imagination who will be content to extrapolate present trends, or conversely by senseless revolutionaries without any notion of the limitations of societies.

Jouvanel does not give us the key to political or even social prediction any more than Deutsch or Easton did. He tells us that the future has to be imagined systematically and cautiously in order to avoid undesirable developments. Politicians have always done this except that they have proven fairly inept. The phenomenal increase in the amount of data pertaining to the social and political realms have made this ineptitude much more visible. Jouvanel recognizes that the methodology of prediction does not have the

logical consistency of that of the natural sciences. But the goal of the predictors are not the same either. The natural scientists seek confirmation or infirmation of an established hypothesis; the political scientist is only able to present probabilities and perhaps to recommend specific courses of action.

PART III

CONSEQUENCES

Chapter 1

Introduction

Broadly speaking, political scientists engage in three main kinds of activity. They collect, analyze and organize data about politics; teach on the basis of their collective research; and give or sell advice to the society. Insofar as these activities are oriented towards describing and explaining past phenomena, it seems quite legitimate for the discipline to continue its use of historical methods as well as the more rigorous statistical and quasi-scientific new theories which have been flourishing in the past two or three decades. Indeed, there is considerable room for improvement, and the work of Easton, Deutsch and Almond to name but a few of the better-known "empirical theorists", as Easton calls himself and his peers, has already had a considerable impact upon the thinking of many political scientists. However, we believe that there is in fact no particularly reliable method of making political predictions that can be described in normal methodological terms. The view that politics is and in all likelihood will remain an art, that making political predictions is, if anything, even more unscientific, has some radical implications, especially for teaching and advising.

Teaching

It is not within the framework of this paper that a philosophy of education can be elaborated. It seems, however, that one can draw a distinction between teaching about parts of the human experience that do not change, such as nature and history, and those that do, such as politics.

The changes that one can expect in the natural sciences and in history depend on the changing explanation of unchanging phenomena (leaving aside the problem of evolution). Teaching about politics is an entirely different proposition. Evidently, a considerable amount of time must be devoted to history, not so much for history's sake as because the teaching of history is usually limited, or concerned with other past events than those that the teacher of politics may deem relevant. Indeed, many political scientists limit their teaching to a reconstruction of the past according to their own theories or ideologies, leaving to the students the task of making their own predictions if they are so inclined.

It seems to me that students legitimately expect more from their political science teachers than history courses, or rather they expect something different. Granted that they may be naive if they expect to be given a theoretical framework to enable them to make predictions, they nevertheless deserve a much more open confrontation with the problem of prediction. The easy way out for the teacher is to present a methodologically devastating critique of the very notion of political prediction, calling it historical prophecy, supported by a few jokes about Marxists and others, and followed by sound advice about the sanctity of scientific * methods, hopefully corroborated by some references to the virtues of empiricism.

But if politics is an art, the political scientist an art critic, and predictions about politics a work of imagination, students should be told so. Once it is understood that political science among other things is concerned with a conscious effort to propose conjectures which are somehow not quite opinions, yet not scientific either, the construction of scenarii

* The term is borrowed from Hayek.

could become a useful teaching method. Students could then see much more clearly not only what the assumptions of competing schools are, but also what the consequences of a practical nature can be expected from particular theories. Of course, the consequences do not directly follow from the adoption of one theory over another, yet conjectures are not elaborated in an ideological vacuum. If one believes that political ideas have some bearing upon the actual conduct of politics, then working out the implications of conjectures provides a basis for discrimination among systems of thought.

The refusal to engage in the art of conjecture is dishonest on the part of teachers in that they may thus fail to provide their students with elements to judge politics, and conflicting claims.

It has often been said that the war of 1914 was made possible on the French side at least by the teaching of the public school teachers after the generalization of free, compulsory primary education. If this is true, and if political science at the undergraduate level has a similar influence on the thinking of collegians, it would seem advisable indeed to make explicit references to the future envisaged by the teachers. The point being not to impose one's view of the future, which would be not only unethical, but probably impossible, but rather to encourage students to think about the future as critically as they can.

Advising

Advising the powers that be has always been one of the favorite activities of intellectuals. Sometimes the advice is requested, sometimes not. Whether it is requested or not, such advice can only be concerned about the future. The practical politicians, inasmuch as they modify "natural" trends, are of course interested in finding out what the trends are and also in means to alter these trends to their liking. The advisor is then, by

definition a predictor. Indeed, the descriptions of social and political realities can hardly avoid formulas such as: the increasing importance of ecological considerations, the deteriorating state of North American cities, etc. The language of social science as vulgarized in publications such as Fortune, U.S. News & World Report, The Financial Post, etc., which pose as advisors to decision makers, constantly uses the progressive tense. For practical, "hard-nosed" decision makers, the worth of an advisor is his delivery of reliable predictions; he is not interested in the methodology used in arriving at them. To the extent that political scientists are interested in being heard, they must produce predictions. As there is every reason to believe that political scientists might have some clearer notion of what can and cannot be achieved by political means, one could hope that their advice could save their societies some unnecessary experiments. Furthermore, if they do not provide reliable predictions, somebody else will. To use the old Platonic argument: rule if you don't want lesser men to rule you.

Unfortunately, there is very little to lean on for the political predictor. His work has to be creative, imaginative and risky, which is almost the antithesis of what academics are supposed to be. Except for the Rand Corporation, the Brookings Institute and a few other "think tanks", political science is largely confined to the universities. It is extremely unlikely that one would have customers by hanging a plaque on one's door: John Doe, Political Scientist.

There are certainly people who make political predictions on behalf of the powers that be, but insofar as it can be ascertained, their academic training, if any, seems to be varied. Political scientists certainly do not enjoy the professional monopoly enjoyed by economists.

There is nothing particularly distressing about this state of affairs. Many other disciplines are in the same position on the marketplace. Philosophy, for example, is seldom marketable. If political science can neither be academic nor commercial, at least when it is concerned with actual predictions which are really an art form, it becomes understandable that political scientists are concerned about their status in societies which have never been particularly kind to artists. On what basis can a political scientist who wishes to practise the art of conjecture claim the ear and the time and the money of a politician? On what basis can he claim the attention of the general public?

If our arguments so far have been sound, the basis of such claims is that those to be advised like--for whatever motive--what the artist tells them. An unsuccessful painter or musician may always have the enjoyment of recognition in his old age. The political predictor who is not heard has no such possible consolation prize. His alternatives are either to become a decision maker himself or to join the ranks of academia where recognition is not often gained by imaginative statements.

Consequences for Research

The conscious effort to formulate predictions about future political actions, either by large or small groups, aside from exposing the inherent limitations of political science as an academic discipline, may nevertheless produce some interesting results. Politics is an art, but it is not practised in a vacuum. Indeed, the specification of the range of possible decisions, the description of likely unintended consequences of the possible actions, which are very plausible does help in the sharper definition of alternatives and perhaps to a better measurement of externalities.

Some authors, notably Hayek and Popper, insist that the proper task of the social sciences is not to make predictions of a prophetic nature, but rather to point out the unintended consequences of actions. It seems to me that this is really an artificial distinction inasmuch as decision makers are not bound to announce the intended consequences of their actions, and secondly, that in order for the description of unintended consequences of given actions to be useful advice, these actions must not have taken place.

As it would be clearly impossible to list all the unintended consequences of all possible political actions, even Popper and Hayek must have some notion of which actions are at least probable. The distinction between actions and their consequences in the political realm is not all that clear either. An action without consequences does not modify anything and thus is really a non-action. Imagine Lichtenstein declaring war on Paraguay.

Rather than to distinguish between intended and unintended consequences, it would be better to claim that political science should investigate the likely consequences of political actions as fully as possible. Which is a truism.

The predictions of the consequences of a contemplated action are hard to distinguish from either advocacy or opposition to the action in question, especially from the point of view of the recipient of the advice. The ranking of the effects itself cannot be done without recourse to a value system. The confrontation of various value systems, however, is informative and whereas the individual political scientist cannot claim that his own ranking is preferable to any other, the discipline does provide the provisional forum that Jovenel advocates. Insofar as political scientists may be expected to have a certain expertise in dealing with political concepts

and institutions, their advice and their research may be expected to provide their society with some precious information.

Consequences for Various Segments of Society

The notion that something is useful for the society as a whole in the political realm seems a bit far-fetched. Governing always results in the allocation of values from the society as a whole to smaller, identifiable groups. Consider simply the taxation systems as a clear-cut example. Even though there is considerable disagreement among the experts in the field as to the net effect of various taxes, all agree that they do indeed alter the distribution of income and thus of power. Since the exercise of political power is discriminatory and arbitrary by nature, predicting as many as possible of the likely consequences of such actions, if they are made public, can presumably help those who suffer from such discrimination to fight back.

Another possibility is of course that those who benefit will organize even more to retain their privileges, but I believe that there is some value in arguing about just how much a particular policy is going to cost whom, rather than argue about the good life or the just society or whatever slogan politicians choose to describe their operations.

CONCLUSION

This Paper is a Failure

When we set about investigating the possibilities of making political predictions, we assumed that it would be possible to point out the various means through which political scientists could make predictions about future political events. It turns out that this is not the case.

Political science as a body of knowledge does not have the well-corroborated theories which are prerequisite to the making of conditional predictions.

Two Main Reasons for the Failure

Conditional predictions cannot be made even when there are fairly well-established regularities because of the character of social life, wherein predictions tend to be self-modifying. In addition there is always the possibility that the pattern of change may itself change abruptly. Thus, in order to make conditional predictions, it would be necessary to assert that there are constants, such as human nature, which are not subject to change and furthermore that everything else, besides the phenomenon being predicted, remains constant too. Both assertions are untenable. The controversy about the "true" human nature has been raging from time immemorial with no signs of abatement, while the "everything else being equal" proviso is untenable in an age of voluntary and involuntary rapid change in almost all aspects of social life.

Therefore, complete information is unobtainable by decision makers at any price. Acting under conditions of uncertainty not only about their data but also their means of action, decision makers have to rely on their common sense, good fortune, charisma, or force. This is so because their

solutions to problems are not self-evident. Politics, in short, is not a science but an art. There may be some analogy between the art of politics and the logic of scientific discovery, in that if we could anticipate the discovery, then we would have made it. (As opposed to technological developments, where one can expect, say, pollution-free automobiles without actually inventing one.)

Political Predictions are Nevertheless in Demand

Within the framework of uncertainty surrounding politics as an art, it is to be expected that men, in and out of power, will attempt to limit the arbitrariness of those in power, i.e. make them behave predictably. The first and foremost guarantor of political certainties is the building up of institutions, traditions and procedures which are intended to be quasi-unchangeable. However, we know that constitutions have varying life-expectancies.

As for the decisions which are not predicted by constitutional means, outguessing the decision makers can: (1) be very profitable; and (2) help the decision makers themselves identify the alternatives. There is every reason to believe that such predictions are made privately every day and that many actions are based on just such guesses.

If there is to be a discipline concerned with political phenomena, such predictions must be made public and arguments about the merits of the predictions will tend to be seen as arguments for or against given policies. Which is as it should be.

Political Scientists Should Argue About Politics

If politics is an art and if political scientists cannot gain authority from the scientific status of their pronouncements, then they

collectively become a specialized group of people paid by the society to think about politics with as little vested interest as possible.

Because they are free from the responsibilities of office or of administration, one could hope that their irresponsible visualization of possible futures and the confrontation of such visions would help make political conflicts less mystical and more manageable. And, who knows? peaceful conflict resolution could become a self-fulfilling prophecy. After all, once the economists decided that depressions could be controlled, it has become much more difficult for governments to let depressions take place. The predictions of economists have often been false, their mistakes have often been methodological, but because their collective values were oriented towards a lessening of unnecessary dislocations of their economic system, they have managed to convince their fellow citizens that their economic welfare was a matter of choice, not of fatality. I see no reason why political science could not similarly de-mythify political conflicts.

NOTES

1. May Brodbeck (ed.), Readings in the Philosophy of the Social Sciences (New York: Macmillan, 1968), p. 681.
2. B. de Jouvenel, L'Art de la Conjoncture (Monaco: Editions du Rocher, 1964), p. 304.
3. K. Popper, Conjectures and Refutations (New York: Basic Books, 1963), p. 344.
4. R. Dahrendorf, "Out of Utopia: Toward a Reorientation of Sociological Analysis", American Journal of Sociology, Volume LXIV, No. 2, Sept. 1958.
5. D. Easton. Passim in all his works.
6. D. Easton, The Political System (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1953), pp. 129-134.
7. K.W. Deutsch, The Nerves of Government (New York: The Free Press, 1966), pp. 255-256.
8. G. Almond & J. Coleman (eds.), The Politics of the Developing Areas (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960).
9. D. Easton, A Framework for Political Analysis (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1965), pp. 20-22.
10. J. Ellul, The Political Illusion (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1967), p. 24.
11. J. Ellul, Op. Cit., pp. 25-26.
12. J.F. Revel, En France l'Opposition (Paris: Julliard, 1965); R. Presthus, The Organizational Society: An Analysis and a Theory (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1962); H. Marcuse, One Dimensional Man (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1964).
13. J. Freund, L'Essence du Politique (Paris: Sirey, 1965).
14. B. de Jouvenel, The Pure Theory of Politics (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963).
15. de Jouvenel, Pure Theory; and Freund, L'Essence.
16. T.D. Weldon, The Vocabulary of Politics (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1953), p. 22.
17. J. Freund, p. 72. Translation mine.
18. P. Winch, The Idea of a Social Science (London: Routledge & Kegan, 1958), pp. 86-87.

19. J. Freund, p. 94.
20. Ibid., p. 640
21. Ibid., p. 640
22. Ibid., pp. 410-411.
23. B. de Jouvenel, The Pure Theory of Politics, pp. 46-47
24. Ibid., p. 45
25. Ibid., p. 45
26. Ibid., p. 53
27. Ibid., p. 83
28. Ibid., p. 112
29. Ibid., p. 152
30. Ibid., pp. 157-158
31. Shelling, in J.C. Charlesworth (ed.), Contemporary Political Analysis (New York: The Free Press, 1967), p. 237. The whole discussion is based on this article and on the following one in the same reader by M. Shubik.
32. Ibid., p. 213
33. W.H. Riker, The Theory of Political Coalitions (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962).
34. Ibid., p. 32
35. Ibid. p. 33
36. M. Shubik in J.C. Charlesworth, Contemporary Political Analysis, p. 261.
37. E.J. Meehan, The Theory and Method of Political Analysis (Homewood, Illinois: The Dorsey Press, 1965), p. 299, note.
38. Ibid., p. 3.
39. M. Shubik in J.C. Charlesworth, Contemporary Political Analysis, p. 272.
40. K. Deutsch, The Nerves of Government, p. 60.
41. W.S. Baumol, Economic Theory and Operation Analysis (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1961), p. 550.

42. Quoted by C.E. Lindblom in Polsby, Dentler & Smith (eds.), Politics and Social Life (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1963), p. 340.
43. T.S. Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).
44. Ibid., pp. 91-92.
45. For a discussion of conventionalism see L. Boland, "Conventionalism versus the Sociology of Science". (Unpublished paper)
46. R.B. Braithwaite in Decision Making (B.B.C. publisher), p. 28.
47. R. Aron, Polémiques (Paris: Gallimard, 1955).
48. K. Popper, Conjectures and Refutations, p. 336.
49. Ibid., p. 339
50. Ibid., p. 338
51. M. Cornforth, The Open Philosophy and the Open Society (New York: International Publishers, 1968).
52. See the above discussion of J. Ellul.
53. B. de Jouvenel, L'Art de la Conjoncture, pp. 300-301.
54. Ibid.
55. K. Popper, The Poverty of Historicism (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 13.
56. H. Simon in May Brodbeck (ed.), Readings.
57. Recently, I wrote a paper predicting movements on the price of gold, which turned out to be true. The professor who read the paper bought gold as a result and then asked for a second advice as to when to sell. For the second occasion, I had not studied the situation, but even though I told him so, he pressed me for advice until I said something; and again he followed my recommendation.
58. W.J.M. Mackenzie, Politics and Social Science (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967), p. 83.
59. Ibid., p. 142
60. May Brodbeck (ed.), Readings, p. 286.
61. B. de Jouvenel, L'Art de la Conjoncture, p. 22
62. Ibid., p. 26

63. Ibid., p. 40
64. This is not a precise calculation.
65. B. de Jouvenel, L'Art de la Conjoncture, p. 71
66. c.f. P. Winch
67. B. de Jouvenel, L'Art de la Conjoncture, p. 87.
68. See Lenin on the pauperization of the colonized to insure the prosperity of the workers in the developed countries.
69. B. de Jouvenel, L'Art de la Conjoncture, p. 159.
70. Ibid., p. 190
71. Ibid., p. 191
72. Ibid., p. 193

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