Contradictions of a Political Discipline

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The Theory and Practice of Democracy

The first generation of political scientists worked from 1880 to 1900, mainly after the fashion of comparative history, and succeeded in firmly establishing the early programs of political studies, such as these were. The second generation pressed forward from 1900 to 1920, setting up the APSA, consolidating collegial departments, and working out a sense of collective identity quite distinct from that of all other disciplines, such as history, economics, and sociology. In the third generation, from 1920 to 1940, the emphasis on science finally came of age, with aspiration turning more and more to practice, as older political scientists gave way to younger men better trained in the techniques of modern research. In America at large, this was an age of disillusionment, of realization that World War I signaled a loosening of forces, both domestic and international, that would make human progress less than automatic and more an objective to be obtained only by extraordinary efforts, if at all. For those interested in politics, it seemed time for taking stock, for seeing where the nation presently stood, where things were going well and where they were not. This they felt after decades of political invention and reform that produced the referendum, the initiative, the recall, nonpartisan elections, city managers, direct election of senators, suffrage for women, and considerable substantive legislation.

Many political scientists, such as Charles Merriam, were active in reform circles prior to 1920. Their commitment to the liberal tradition thereafter persisted, but it was tempered by skepticism concerning the outcome of that tradition in practice. The mood was summed up, in retrospect, by Bernard Crick when he observed that political scholars, together with many other

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Progressive intellectuals, "had worked hard to return politics to the people, and the people had returned Harding." Under the circumstances, there seemed good reason for academics to involve themselves less directly in politics than before the war, and to discharge their civic responsibilities instead by emphasizing scholarly research within the university. By studying political phenomena closely, they said, scientific knowledge would emerge and contribute to improving the quality of public life in America. This renewed dedication to scientific inquiry found formal expression in the APSA's sponsorship of three National Conferences on the Science of Politics, in 1923, 1924, and 1925. It also appeared in the Association's strong support for the creation of a Social Science Research Council in 1923, with the Association entering as one of several founding disciplines.

The 1920s and 1930s came to be marked, then, by a steady flow of empirical research and descriptive studies, designed to enlighten first political scientists, and then their students and the public, as to the condition of American politics and the way in which all citizens might maintain and improve the nation's democracy. A brief survey of some salient points in the literature will suffice to show that, as the years passed, political scientists found themselves confronting the contradictions between scientific form and professional substance; that is, the danger that practitioners might, in a scientifically acceptable way, produce a research product whose effect would be to undermine the very object which the discipline was professionally committed to support, namely, the democratic polity. In uneasy awareness of what their prewar writings had already revealed, and with growing concern for the mounting evidence displayed in their postwar research, political scientists were eventually forced to admit that liberalism's postulates about individual rationality, political groups, and responsible government—matters of common expectation concerning human and institutional behavior in politics—were strongly challenged by the facts.

The Postulate of Rational Men

Liberalism's "most fundamental assumption," as Edward S. Corwin put it in 1929, was the notion "that man is primarily a rational creature, and that his acts are governed by rational considerations." Indeed, upon this assumption rests "the doctrine that the people should rule." Yet the political behavior of real people, when closely analyzed, did not seem rational enough to fit the bill.

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On this point, the findings of psychology could not be overlooked. Sigmund Freud had long claimed that human personality is a complicated alloy of id, ego, and superego, with the id and the ego driven by elemental forces of instinct only weakly constrained by reason and the superego’s injunctions of conscience. Political scientists did not always endorse Freudian categories of analysis, but they did more and more conclude that if human beings were largely irrational, politics could not be far behind. Thus Graham Wallas observed that “representative democracy is generally accepted as the best form of government; but those who have had most experience of its actual working are often disappointed and apprehensive.” For Wallas, the assumption of rationality in politics amounted to what he called the “intellectualist fallacy,” which held “that all motives result from the idea of some preconceived end.” To the contrary, he argued, the “empirical art of politics consists largely in the creation of opinion by the deliberate exploitation of subconscious non-rational inference.” Using the art of advertisement to illustrate his point, Wallas held that both the commercial and the political worlds of persuasion rely on deliberate manipulation of “entities”—like “country” or “party” or “justice” or “right”—which constitute our images of the world but which are in fact complicated mixtures of fact, instincts, and emotions that do not permit orderly and accurate thinking.4

Irrational men, those who respond to manipulation of their instincts and emotions, willful men: what did such people in politics imply for the liberal notion of informed public opinion, which was supposed to instruct government and to hold it in check? A. Lawrence Lowell, in his major work on public opinion, began by noting that “the elder breed of political and economic philosophers erred in regarding man as a purely rational being.” Rather, he said, men act in accordance with their traditions and a weltanschauung, which together mix up opinion, knowledge, beliefs, and so forth, even though the consequent ideas in our heads may be “inconsistent with actual facts or wholly foreign to the real benefits received.” One result, according to Lowell, is that their nature causes citizens to be so ill-informed on most political issues that after an election it is difficult, from the returns, to know which interests they thought to advance; or, as he made the point, “it is often impossible to ascertain on which of the issues involved the people have rendered their verdict.”5 But if the people do not express a clear sense of their interests, for whatever reason, how can representative government be possible, in the traditional sense? This was precisely the question raised by Mer-


rium and Harold Gosnell in their classic work on nonvoting, when they studied the reasons why more than 50 percent of the potential electorate in Chicago’s municipal elections of 1923 either did not register to vote or, once registered, did not cast their ballot on election day. Confronted by the fact that 44 percent of the nonvoters gave “general indifference or some form of inertia” as their reason for ignoring election day, Merriam and Gosnell concluded that every effort must be made to bring more voters to the polls, else the country would be ruled, in effect undemocratically, by the minority who voted regularly but only in order to advance interests narrower than those of the citizenry as a whole.6

In all, the literature on voters and rationality revealed two problems: the first was irrational action spurred by observable impulse, and the second was a failure to act due to patent indifference. To both of these manifestations of behavior as revealed in research, the most comfortable reaction was to claim that with enough additional research the situation might improve. And thus, while conceding that psychological evidence shows human behavior to flow from an amalgam of reason and passion, Merriam argued that intelligence is rooted partly in genetic abilities and partly in environmental influences. We need not be entirely pessimistic, according to him, concerning future political behavior, for scientists may eventually improve intelligence through genetic selection or via the right sort of education, in sufficient quantities.7

This response to revelations of political irrationality was not entirely satisfactory because, apart from its reliance on genetic solutions that have still not materialized, the plea for more education, though natural to educators, too easily slid over into a prescription for offering citizens constant help in order to fulfill their democratic responsibilities—in which case, how much democracy is left? The dilemma was highlighted in Harold Lasswell’s work. “The findings of personality research show that the individual is a poor judge of his own interest,” said Lasswell,8 and he proceeded to study not just voters but also political leaders as irrational individuals. From Lasswell’s psychoanalytic viewpoint, it was logical to conclude that the quality of public life will improve when political activists are guided and advised by social-science professionals, presumably those trained in psychology. It seemed the scientific thing to say, but there was no clear link between this sort of process and that of democracy itself, a matter of free interplay between opinions expressed by men and women from all regions and walks of life. In fact, Lasswell was

both explicit and scientific concerning open discussion of public affairs: he opposed it, charging that such discussion endangered society by expressing interests in such a way as to expose personal problems—irrational fixations and compulsions—and thereby complicate political confrontations unnecessarily. Oddly enough, in his recommendations for overcoming irrationality in the political process, Lasswell came very close to advocating the same sort of techniques for manipulating public opinion that he, among others, had condemned when they were used by propagandists in World War I. After the war, Lasswell deplored the way in which governments on both sides had created consensus by controlling the minds of their peoples, when truth and reason were casualties of a public relations effort unrestrained by “the canons of critical veracity.”9 But concerning the cause of peace he was quick to suggest that, in a world of irrational men, stable order must rely on a “universal body of symbols and practices sustaining an elite which propagates itself by peaceful methods and wields a monopoly of coercion which it is rarely necessary to apply to the uttermost.10 At that point, science had come a long way from democracy, no matter how admirable the intent.

The Unreason of Groups

What science said about irrational men bore directly upon the role of groups within a democratic society since, after all, such groups are but composites of individuals. In contrast to what liberals had long expected from groups in the way of concerted but rational action, observers were struck by the fact that group activity could be as irrational as that of individuals. Robert Michels was a European student of collective unreason who was widely read by American social scientists, and he, arguing from the data of research into political parties, held that there is an “iron law of oligarchy” that works in all organizations. As Michels explained this law, administrative necessity and unequally distributed political talents assure that when men come together to advance their interests, the assemblage will invariably fall under the control of leaders who may, and often do, act against the joint interests of the group’s members in order to protect narrower interests instead, that is, their own.11

Intrigued by such theoretical “laws,” students of American politics turned their attention to political groups of various kinds and discovered many

manifestations of group irrationality or, at least, failure to serve clearly
defined collective interests. Parties, for example, were persistently disappoin-
ting. 12 Thus Frank Kent, who described most voters as knowing little of
public affairs, wrote of people and party machines who play "the great game
of politics." Unfortunately for democracy, machines and their boss leaders
played the game for money, rather than on behalf of the public welfare. 13
They could do this—selling offices and legislative favors—precisely because
voters, instead of thinking for themselves, responded to political slogans
rather than facts, thereby leaving the party in control of a small elite, as
Michels had predicted.

Beyond parties, a particular set of groups caused special difficulty for
political scientists intent on reconciling liberal theory with democratic reality,
and these were the groups advancing special interests, perhaps benign but
certainly not as broad as the public interest itself, whatever that might be.
Thus Frank Kent observed that party leaders were not able to formulate issues
out of rational consideration and then discuss them with the voters, but instead
were forced to consider an agenda of needs created by powerful special
interest groups whose desires had to be placated in order to assure reelection.
And just how many of these powerful groups there were, at the national level
alone, was described by E. Pendleton Herring, in a study of more than one
hundred lobbying organizations with offices in Washington, D.C. 14 Herring
made it clear that such groups, with their offices, public relations experts,
contacts with the mass media, experienced witnesses before congressional
committees, and well-heeled masters of Washington entertaining, were in the
nation's political life to stay. Exactly where they fit into the liberal notion of
democracy, in an era when mass irrationality and voter indifference were
widely recognized, was not so clear.

A final body of political analysis concerning groups centered on the
concept of "publics," which were less organized than parties and formal
interest groups, but which nevertheless played an important role in democratic
theory. Walter Lippmann, who did influential work along these lines, started
from the fact that people tend to think in terms of "stereotypes"—such as the
"wily Oriental," the "Georgian redneck," and the "pedantic professor." These
building blocks of inference convey a simplified picture of our social sur-
roundings, because men cannot acquire and assimilate all the facts available

1929), p. 456, for the standard charges against parties in this era.

13. The Great Game of Politics: An Effort to Present the Elementary Human Facts About
Politics, Politicians, and Political Machines, Candidates and Their Ways, for the Benefit of the
Average Citizen (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Page, and Co., 1924), p. 79.

14. Group Representation Before Congress (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press,
1929).
on public matters. But because by their very nature stereotypes are incomplete, "democracy in its original form never seriously faced the problem which arises because the pictures inside people's heads do not automatically correspond with the world outside."15 What happens, in fact, is that when matters of collective import are considered by the polity, various "publics" will arise, some already organized and long interested, others temporary and only lately concerned. Among these publics, opinions will be expressed and, via political pressures and electoral decisions, leaders will eventually be induced to take one action or another. For Lippmann, the problem was that, given their habit of thinking in stereotypes, most people who belong to publics will not really know what the facts of an issue are. Must we then leave the fate of a democratic society in the hands of these ignorant publics, assuming that the right to vote and act politically cannot be withdrawn because it is an inviolable part of American life? All Lippmann could conclude was that publics should not seek to make government behave according to preconceived plans but should instead vote and thereby express a judgment as to policies and decisions proposed by various small and more knowledgeable groups—elites, really—who have enough of a grasp on the facts to propose some course of action but too much of a stake in the outcome that they might safely be left unrestrained by the larger body of citizens.16 In other words, Lippmann held that America's common men could not chart the nation's path by themselves but should leave the job of conceiving and initiating policy to some other force. It was a realistic theory, firmly rooted in the latest research, but far from the expectation of a liberal tradition.

Responsive Government

Another liberal postulate had to do with democratic government, and with the conviction that even where political power must, of social necessity, be exercised by the nation's leaders, they could, by employing various devices, be held responsible to public opinion and the people's interests. Political science as a discipline thus strongly supported the existing institutions and practices of liberalism. With only an occasional intimation that some individual political scientist might favor an avowedly nondemocratic reform,17 most practitioners continued to write books and journal articles praising constitutional rights, frequent elections, federalism, competitive parties, and so forth. However, as the evidence on individual and group irrationality mounted,

many members of the discipline felt constrained to advocate an approach to American politics designed to compensate for some of democracy's perceived shortcomings, and here they virtually admitted the impossibility of democracy's functioning according to the liberal vision. Specifically, it became commonplace among political scholars to recommend setting aside a certain realm of public activity and, in the name of efficiency, maintaining it beyond the range of day-to-day democratic control.

Woodrow Wilson, in the classic statement of this position, wrote as early as 1887 that political thinkers had spent two thousand years addressing the problem of who should make basic decisions for society. Democrats, of course, had decided in favor of the people. The time had come, Wilson argued, to think more about how the same decisions might be executed well, for it was actually "getting to be harder to run a constitution than to frame one." As he put it, "Administrative questions are not political questions. Although politics sets the tasks of administration, it should not be suffered to manipulate its offices." To make the new concept even clearer, Wilson suggested that "Politics is . . . the special province of the statesman, administration of the technical official."18 In Wilson's scheme of things, it is right that electorates and the elected will exercise ultimate control over America's administrative officials, but not every day and not with direct impact on every conceivable administrative function. Formal democracy aside, his intention was to expound the notion that some specially trained people are necessary for government to operate smoothly, although to the extent that these people and their work come to embody and reflect expertise and specialization, actual democracy is surely attenuated.

Frank Goodnow foreshadowed this eventuality in his book *Politics and Administration*. Following Wilson's lead, Goodnow encouraged the public to play a democratic role by electing many officials and by expressing its will via referenda and initiatives. But he, too, defined administration as an activity requiring people of special training and competence, almost as if they would substitute for the rationality that seemed lacking in democratic practice. As Goodnow put it, government needed "a force of agents" that would be "free from the influence of politics because of the fact that their mission is the exercise of foresight and discretion, the pursuit of truth, the gathering of information, the maintenance of a strictly impartial attitude toward the individuals with whom they have dealings."19

The idea of a realm of administration standing next to that of politics now seems a natural outgrowth of those general trends described by Mary Furner

and Thomas Haskell,\textsuperscript{20} whereby developing professions in the late nineteenth century created specialized knowledge and offered it to society in exchange for status and authority. In the specific case of political science, as we have seen, the discipline committed itself to promoting good citizenship, broadly conceived, and that mission entailed training young people for ordinary political participation and/or government service. What evolved was a program of studies serving two ends, not always entirely compatible with each other. Political science professors taught courses to instruct students in the principles of good citizenship, that is, to believe in democracy’s great institutions and to fulfill their expected role in public life. However, the same professors, or their departmental colleagues, also taught courses in which students learned the principles of administration, or how to run government agencies expertly. As Dwight Waldo has shown, right up to World War II this two-track notion reigned almost unchallenged in the discipline.\textsuperscript{21} It eventually collapsed not because the contradiction between democracy and expertise became intolerable, but when political scientists realized that real-life administration was as political as politics can be.

When political scientists recommended expertise and administrative skill as an antidote to some of democracy’s ills, their specific suggestions reflected the discipline’s persistent and deepening commitment to science itself, which we have already noted as a postwar phenomenon. The reports of the three National Conferences on the Science of Politics, held from 1923 to 1925, were full of exhortations to produce scientific knowledge that would help to improve the quality of political life in America. As Merriam wrote, “unless a higher degree of science can be brought into the operations of government, civilization is in the very gravest peril from the caprice of ignorance and passion.”\textsuperscript{22} Or, “The whole scheme of governmental activity requires a body of scientific political principles for even reasonable efficiency and success. It is the function of political science to provide this science of politics.”\textsuperscript{23}

The general idea, which political scholars shared with other social scientists of the age, was that what Lippmann called “organized intelligence,”\textsuperscript{24} wielded by experts, would help Americans stop “muddling through” and

\textsuperscript{20} Mary O. Furner, \textit{Advocacy and Objectivity} (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1975); and Thomas Haskell, \textit{The Emergence of Professional Social Science} (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977).


\textsuperscript{22} “Progress Report of the Committee on Political Research,” \textit{American Political Science Review} (May 1923): 295.

\textsuperscript{23} “Reports of the National Conference on the Science of Politics,” ibid. (February 1924): 119.

finally “apply scientific methods to the management of society as we have been learning to apply them in the natural world.” 25 In the vocabulary of political science, familiar since Plato used the same concepts under other names, the goal was to let knowledge, rather than mere opinion, rule the realm of public affairs. Many advocates of the new approach seem not to have realized how seriously their clamor for scientific expertise denied the validity of liberalism’s postulates about rationality, groups, and government. And if their enthusiasm for knowledge over opinion implicitly raised the question of who, in the modern era, might serve as latter-day Platonic philosopher kings—or who Lasswell’s “political psychiatrists” might be—they did not see fit to discuss this question at great length. But it was being asked and answered, with stunning effect, in the world at large, and with consequences that American political science could hardly ignore.

The Challenge of Authoritarianism

In 1933, William F. Willoughby, twenty-seventh APSA president, addressed his colleagues and spoke of the weakness of democracy, of “the tendency of the voters . . . to demand or approve the reckless occurrence of debt and extravagance in the expenditure of public funds; . . . of blocs in our legislative bodies to put special or class interests above those of the general welfare. To these may be added the difficulty encountered in making popular government a reality . . . in the sense of preventing real political powers from becoming vested in self-seeking, and often corrupt, political rings.” 26 Willoughby touched upon, albeit unintentionally, the failure of liberal democracy in exactly those three areas—of individual citizenship, political groups, and responsible government—where it was not supposed to fail, according to America’s most fundamental expectations. His remarks indicated, then, that by the early 1930s the discipline as a whole had reached a point where its scientific findings could not be discounted as separate curiosities but constituted, instead, a coherent body of testimony to the notion that something in democracy either needed radical repair or—always a possibility when old faiths are challenged—a new and reassuring explanation.

The Political Scene

The liberal faith certainly was challenged, and severely so, throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Authoritarian governments seemed everywhere on the

march, and Americans were unprepared to confront them, either in theory or in practice.

The existence of modern authoritarianism embarrassed American liberals in two ways. On the one hand, it impressed upon them the fact that democracy had failed almost entirely to take hold in Europe after World War I. This was especially disturbing where it had been established in Eastern Europe after Woodrow Wilson’s calls to make the world safe for democracy and self-determination, although the plague of repression was not confined there. By the mid-1930s, authoritarian regimes held sway in Italy, Germany, Turkey, Austria, Bulgaria, Greece, Portugal, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Yugoslavia, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, and Japan. All this led many Americans to conclude that democracy was not a viable form of government except under special circumstances, or with a development period measured in generations if not centuries. More significantly, this political reality, when considered soberly, suggested that men are not naturally created with a capacity, or even a desire, for self-rule. In consequence, Americans increasingly wondered whether, contrary to their liberal faith, the nation’s institutions might be artificial rather than the model of a natural order for mankind.

On the other hand, not only authoritarian circumstances but also their attendant ideologies, such as Marxism and National Socialism, argued directly against the notion that America’s democratic institutions and procedures were appropriate for modern man. The fundamental rationale for dictatorship, on both the Left and the Right, was that people are not rational, that they are swayed by their emotions, that individuals have no right to congregate in groups such as independent churches or free labor unions in order to express their private interests but must subordinate those as against the nation’s destiny, that parliamentary representation with multiple parties can only lead to confusion and a perversion of the national will, and that countries must therefore be ruled undemocratically either by a single and exclusive party or by a dominant and charismatic leader. In fact, the whole point of authoritarian ideology, as Karl Loewenstein explained, was to claim that people lack sufficient reason to rule themselves temperately with laws and constitutions, wherefore they must be led, on the basis of intoxicating sentiment, by some agent—either party or dictator—who will address them with emotional propaganda and primitive symbols in order to create consent that is apparently spontaneous but actually imposed.27

When liberal, democratic scholars were confronted by these notions, they found, in Brecht’s terms, that “science was unable to define Western civilization by reference to fundamental principle,” for the scientific method

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"does not enable us to state, in absolute terms, whether the purpose pursued by us or by others is good or bad, right or wrong, just or unjust, nor which of several conflicting purposes is more valuable than the other. It only enables us to answer those questions in relative terms."

In a way, it was the triumph of professional creed over liberal context, where the entire corpus of scientific knowledge seemed unable to provide a course for society to follow, and where in 1939 Robert S. Lynd called into question the scientific enterprise itself in the very title of his book, *Knowledge for What?* Nevertheless, many political scientists seemed unable to refrain from persisting in their commitment to the scientific approach, almost as if its shortcomings were irrelevant to their professional objectives. For example, William Munro argued in 1928 that his colleagues’ “immediate goal . . . should be to release political science from the old metaphysical and juristic concepts upon which it has traditionally been based.” We should, he said, “discard our allegiance to the absolute, for nothing would seem to be more truly self-evident than the proposition that all civic rights and duties, all forms and methods of government, are relative to one another, as well as to time and place and circumstance.” Did he really think that, for Americans, loyalty to the Constitution was relative, a matter of fleeting taste? George E. G. Catlin expounded the case for science very plainly when he suggested that “the business of the scientist is to study those methods which a man must adopt to attain this or that end if he happen to choose it.” Was he really ready to let political scientists choose to inquire into the most efficient ways to overthrow America’s government, and then publish the results?

**Triumph and Tragedy**

Consider for a moment how far political science had come by the late 1930s, and what it had done in order to get there. Seeking to work scientifically, so as to acquire a share in the authority generated by the new professions, political scientists organized, did their research, published the results, and generally did what universities expected them to do. It was a triumph of successful adaptation to new circumstances in the world of higher education. This is not to say that every political scholar worked in the approved scientific fashion, but the trend was clear.


All along, as the discipline’s members in effect strove to fulfill liberalism’s further postulate, on the efficacy of science, they knew that the substance of their work was to bolster democratic goals widely endorsed by America’s citizens. Yet, as the commitment to science translated itself into research practice, its results made liberalism’s postulates with regard to expected political behavior seem less and less true. At that point only one liberal tenet, on moral equality, could be considered beyond empirical disproof. Yet as to that precept, even though nothing compellingly persuasive could be said against the moral equality of men, neither could the same proposition be professionally expounded in conclusive fashion. In short, faced with a crisis in the real world, political science had little constructive to say because there was little interface between the enterprise of scientific scholarship and the realm of old-fashioned virtue. And here was the tragic condition—a matter, in literary terms, of pursuing one good end so single-mindedly as to lose out on another.

Thus the conjunction of triumph and tragedy contained a historical irony. The difficulty was not, after all, due to any idiosyncrasy of individual political scholars, since most of them were wholeheartedly committed to American democracy. In fact, the difficulty flowed from success, for, throughout the universities, teachers of all sorts were together consummating their collective victory over the college system of administrative control for curriculum and teaching, whereupon political scholars, along with the rest, finally gained the right to profess what they thought should be professed. Almost immediately, however, political scientists discovered that they did not know where they should stand collectively with regard to some of the most important questions being addressed to their field.

Of course there were many political scientists who responded energetically to the multiple crises of American democracy in the 1930s, to the economic failures at home and the strategic confusions abroad. But what cannot be denied is that, for all their enthusiasm and genuine commitment to liberal values and devices, they were not professionally persuasive in support of democracy in its hour of need. For example, Charles Beard called upon American educators to instruct young people in the ideals and practice of democracy. He admitted, however, that “our democracy rests upon the assumption that all human beings have a moral worth in themselves that cannot be used for ends alien to humanity. This is an assumption and cannot be proved.”

32 Carl Friedrich conceded that academic freedom, when “vindicated in terms of neutral truth” in an age of ideological confrontation, can only be farcical. But he could offer, in place of such truth, only “faith in the develop-

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ment of the free personality as the ultimate ideal of humanity.” For Charles Merriam, there were four principal “assumptions” of democracy, including “the essential dignity of man” and the “perfectability of mankind.” It is clear from his exposition of the subject that he supported every sort of common decency and deplored its absence. But he never explained whether his “assumptions” referred to fact or to aspiration, and what compelling reasons there might be to adopt those assumptions if they were, after all, only aspirations.

In their enthusiasm for the home team, political scientists who supported a free society during the 1930s may have been effective cheerleaders. As professionals, however, in an age so thoroughly committed to science, they advocated the right objectives in terms that carried very little weight. Some members of the discipline recognized the problem and feared that insufficient attention to values would somehow undermine both American patriotism and commitment to democracy. They therefore urged their colleagues to remember that political science must always retain a “normative” character, that it must teach values as well as the facts of political life. Arguments of this sort had some emotional appeal, but the Cassandras were not noticeably effective in changing the discipline’s professional course. Their more forward-looking associates preferred to await a new theory of democracy that could assimilate the results of scientific political research while continuing to find strength in science itself rather than in traditional morals.

35. One persistent critic of the trend toward a scientific political science was William Y. Elliot. See his The Pragmatic Revolt in Politics (New York: Macmillan, 1928); and “The Pragmatic Revolt in Politics: Twenty Years in Retrospect,” Review of Politics (January 1940): 1–11.