

While Dahl's work is a formidable accomplishment, its strengths are not distributed equally throughout all its parts. I shall mention two weaknesses. First, his justificatory arguments in favor of democracy are less convincing and sharp than they might have been. As Dahl realizes, there are some circumstances in which persons with particular kinds of expertise may plausibly lay claim to a guardianship role within certain domains (e.g., medical professionals). Dahl clearly wants to establish that plausible claims of this sort should not be used to justify any more general guardianship of the kind with which he is most concerned. Yet the principles upon which he relies to make this argument are either too contestible (he places great weight upon a specifically Kantian notion of moral autonomy, apparently without realizing how controversial such notions are) or too general (e.g., his assumption that "no person is, in general, more likely than yourself to be a better judge of your own good or interest or to act to bring it about") to do the work required. Second, Dahl seems unjustifiably unsympathetic toward the work of philosophers interested in understanding substantive principles of justice or the common good. Toward the conclusion of his argument Dahl himself attempts to formulate a way of thinking about the common good, though he admits that the result is "ambiguous." Given the fact that decisions both about matters of policy and about questions of constitutional significance have to be made, however, Dahl's dismissive stance toward the efforts of philosophers like John Rawls to improve upon indecisive efforts like Dahl's seems unwarranted.

Despite these weaknesses, Dahl's book as a whole stands out as an exemplary interpretation and defense of democratic institutions and practices and a powerful argument for the extension of democratic processes from the domain of "public" governments to the "private" governments of business firms. It should be read not only by social scientists, but also by democratic citizens everywhere.

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**Frank R. BAUMGARTNER. *Conflict and Rhetoric in French Policymaking*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989. 287 pages. \$34.95.**

This is a study of 30 decision cases in educational policy in France in the years 1983 and 1984, which may seem a narrow scope, limiting the interest to a few specialists in French educational policymaking. In fact, Baumgartner's book should receive the attention of anyone interested in theories of political decision making. The research is strongly theoretically oriented, and it just happens that Baumgartner takes as his empirical basis French educational policymaking. His approach is highly innovative and contrasts favorably with traditional studies of political decision making.

Traditionally, studies of decision making proceeded in one of two ways. One approach was to take entire countries as units of analysis and to identify a prevailing decision mode, for example pluralism, corporatism, consociationalism, or repression. To take the example of France, some authors characterized its prevailing decision mode as corporatist. Other authors protested vehemently, claiming that France is characterized by a pattern of pluralism. The obvious weakness of this approach is that there is much intra-country variation in how political decisions are made.

The other traditional approach is to write a detailed monograph about one particular decision case, which has of course the disadvantage that there is no variation to be explained. The work of Baumgartner avoids the shortcomings of the two traditional approaches. He can look carefully at individual decision cases, thus not falling into the trap of being superficial. At the same time, 30 cases allow him to explain some interesting variation. He was wise to limit his work to one issue area. Thus, he controls for a number of important factors: the national context of France, a specific time period, and educational policymaking.

Within these given parameters, Baumgartner still finds a great amount of variation. Not even within educational policymaking is there a prevailing decision pattern in France. For some issues, such as the private school reform involving financial aid to Catholic schools, there was much public participation including huge street demonstrations. Other issues were handled by a few experts in the Ministry of Education and from professional associations. Baumgartner's work is a study of agenda setting. He is most fascinated by the question of who decides about the arena in which an issue is decided. Here comes into play the "conflict and rhetoric" of the book's title. According to the careful research of Baumgartner, it is not so much the objective

content of an issue which determines the arena of decision making, but rather the rhetoric of the participants. Policymakers "attempt to influence the policy process by portraying issues in different ways depending on their interests in either contracting or expanding participation. . . . those on the losing side have an incentive to bring others into the battle on their side." Baumgartner presents many theoretical insights about the skills necessary to direct an issue into the arena most favorable to one's interests. In relating his findings to the literature, he is able to demonstrate that they have much broader applications than the 30 cases he studied.  
Jürg STEINER, *The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*

**Subroto ROY. *Philosophy of Economics: On the Scope of Reason in Economic Inquiry*. London: Routledge, 1989. 236 pages. \$37.50.**

According to Subroto Roy, certain and objective knowledge is possible in an indefinite number of contexts and yet there is no proposition of any kind which is immune to being questioned on grounds of reason or evidence. Also, the received theory of economic knowledge at the present time is, he says, dominated by a Humean consensus (that is by the skepticism of David Hume), and he does not endorse this attitude. Such skepticism does not conform with his view that certain and objective knowledge is possible.

When Roy refers to the present received theory of economics, he means that this is the view not only of Chicago, but also of Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Cambridge, England, of Friedman, Samuelson, Myrdal, Hayek, and Joan Robinson. His coverage is broad.

He believes that they all agree that "no normative conclusion . . . about what a private economic agent or a government ought to do or not do, can be validly deduced from a set of solely positive premises" and "if an evaluative statement is made at such a point, then it can express no more than a subjective attitude or feeling of the individual economist towards the subject." It is this view, which he attributes to present day economists of all types and which he says they got from Hume, which Roy is calling into question.

It turns out that the aspect of skepticism with which economists are thought to be primarily concerned is moral skepticism. They are avoiding being dogmatic about values to the extent that they abdicate responsibility for value judgments and do their work on the assumption as to values or policy goals which are given to them from outside, perhaps by a politician who wants them to make a policy recommendation on the assumption that some value, such as the desirability of maximizing the general welfare, holds.

Roy's principal argument in rebuttal of Humean moral skepticism and in defense of the proposition that there is certain and objective knowledge seems to involve resorting to common sense: "We are also justified in relying upon our commonsense beliefs that some things are objectively right and others objectively wrong, without having to deduce how we know what is right or wrong. . . ."

Much less space is devoted in the work to justifying the idea that no proposition of any kind is immune to being questioned on grounds of reason or evidence. In one place he states that it is precisely because it is possible for even a unanimous group of experts to be wrong that we have a reason, an objective reason, why freedom is to be valued. "Freedom is necessary for objectivity."

Roy seems to be unaware that a substantial group of economists, the institutionalists, operates in a somewhat different frame of reference and assumes that the role of economists *in re* value judgments is to explain where those judgments come from.

Whether one agrees or disagrees, one has to be impressed by the knowledge and sophistication involved in Roy's presentation. Involved here is no "run of the mill" carping at the economics establishment. This is a serious thoughtful work.

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**Elliott WEST. *Growing Up with the Country: Childhood on the Far Western Frontier*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989. 343 pages. \$16.95 paper.**

American frontier or Western American history has been changing. No longer is its focus the United States Army and its campaigns against native Americans, or the story of miners or trappers or railroad builders. Historians have offered new topics that have presented a more com-