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Communications

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## COMMUNICATIONS

### A REPLY TO "FURTHER REFLECTIONS ON 'THE ELITIST THEORY OF DEMOCRACY'"

TO THE EDITOR:

Attempts to identify the dominant themes implicit in the work of any political theorist is a difficult and risky enterprise and, as Professor Dahl himself admits, efforts to show that common tendencies are present in several writers are even more hazardous. After reading Professor Dahl's rejoinder, I am convinced that it was a mistake to use the label "The Elitist Theory of Democracy" (even though it came directly from Lipset) to describe the doctrines with which I tried to deal. The word "theory" gives a false precision to what would be more properly identified as a prevailing attitude toward the American political process. The word "elitist" apparently carries, at least in Dahl's view, some objectionable anti-democratic connotations. My intent was not to question Dahl's, or anyone else's democratic *bona fides*. My article was intended as a critique of the prescriptive implications of a set of ideas concerning democratic political systems which can be found, in varying degrees of prominence, in the writings of many contemporary students of politics—Dahl among them.

The doctrines with which I was concerned were: (1) the belief that the political inactivity of the average citizen is a more or less permanent aspect of his behavior, not an artifact of the social and political systems; (2) the related belief that political inactivity is a sign of satisfaction with the operation of the political system, a form of passive consent; (3) the belief that political apathy is not seriously dysfunctional in a democratic system and, on the part of some writers, the belief that widespread apathy may be a prerequisite for the successful functioning of the system; (4) the belief that agreement on democratic norms among political leaders is more important than consensus among the common citizens for achieving political stability; and (5) an overriding concern with maintaining the stability of democratic systems. I meant to analyze this set of ideas and its consequences; I did not set out to write a comprehensive appraisal of the political theory of Professor Dahl, or any other single writer.

Since my principal concern was with the prescriptive implications which I believe have been drawn from these five beliefs, Professor

Dahl misses the point when he complains that I have not dealt with his own normative model, "polyarchal democracy." I never intended to deal with his normative theory; instead, my intention was to analyze the normative consequences of the descriptive and explanatory efforts of Professor Dahl, and several other contemporary political scientists. Ideas and beliefs have manifold consequences, some intended and others wholly unexpected; writings meant by their author to be purely descriptive may still lead their readers to draw normative conclusions, and it is quite possible to study these conclusions without violating the logical distinction between descriptive and prescriptive statements. It would be extremely difficult, perhaps impossible, for any single writer to describe every aspect of the American political system. Each writer must choose among innumerable phenomena which could conceivably be studied. Regardless of the writer's intention, I would argue that the facts he presents and the explanations he proposes may prompt his readers to make certain normative inferences. In the case of the beliefs I considered in my article, the normative impact has been to reduce the urgency of the need to extend the limits of the active political community; and as I argued further, this has tended to divert the attention of political scientists from such phenomena as social movements which appear on the periphery of the organized political system.

Since I was primarily concerned with the normative consequences of contemporary political theory, I had no need to discover the personal values of each writer I studied. But when Americans write about their own political system they frequently reveal the normative implications of their own work. Professor Dahl, in *A Preface to Democratic Theory*, concludes his chapter, "The American Hybrid" with these words:

... the normal American political system . . . appears to be a relatively efficient system for reinforcing agreement, encouraging moderation, and maintaining social peace in a restless and immoderate people operating a gigantic, powerful, diversified, and incredibly complex society. This is no negligible contribution, then, that Americans have made to the arts of government—and to that

branch, which of all the arts of politics is the most difficult, the art of democratic government.<sup>1</sup>

I do not believe I would be alone in asserting that there are normative criteria implicit in these sentences (criteria not analyzed or discussed in Dahl's chapter on "Polyarchal Democracy") which might guide us in evaluating the performance of the political system he has so brilliantly described.

Perhaps the most significant point upon which Professor Dahl and I differ is this final question of the criteria to be used in evaluating the performance of a democratic political system. Professor Dahl places great value on the capacities of a system "for reinforcing agreement, encouraging moderation, and maintaining social peace." The examples of political disaster that spring readily to his mind are the collapse of the Weimar Republic and the Kerensky regime, the awful bloodshed and senseless chaos of the Spanish civil war, and the grotesque displays of mass obedience and total political involvement in Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy. He is part of a generation which has experienced a series of savage attacks on political democracy and his concern with political stability, in light of all that has happened, is certainly understandable. Political stability is indeed a precious commodity; I do not wish to create the impression that I reject its obvious importance. But I do think that both the discipline of political science and American society have suffered from our excessive concern with the protection and maintenance of our political system. I believe that the time has come to direct our attention to the infinitely more difficult task of involving larger and larger numbers of people in the process of government. The theory of democracy beckons us toward an ancient ideal: the liberation of the energies of all our citizens in the common pursuit of the good society.

JACK L. WALKER

*University of Michigan*

TO THE EDITOR:

Although it must cost me precious time away from research, I am obliged to protest against Professor John H. Millett's travesty of my book, *Dulles over Suez*. I suppose a rejection so completely contemptuous as his might be taken as a compliment, since its totality would seem to demonstrate that as a reviewer he wants the capacity for discrimination between the good and the bad in it. Yet, I prefer the discriminat-

ing and responsible judgment as well as expertise to such putative flattery. I hope I may indicate where he has been unjust, unveracious and inexpert. I may be able to sweep away his misrepresentations which can create an insulating wall between this work and the possible needs of my colleagues and students in their study of international politics in practice.

1. He declares that "Finer toys with some of Dulles' basic attitudes . . . but does not explain them fully." What is "fully"? Anyone can say this about anything. I should have thought that some 250 pages on this topic was "fully" enough. He concludes his assault with the assertion that, "The fascinating questions posed by this situation are illustrated not answered." But they are answered, thoroughly, in 500 pages. Professor Millett suffers from some blind spots about some extremely important questions in foreign politics. He has omitted to tell the reader that I treat of such important themes as the nature of alliances; the violation of treaties; the uses made of the United Nations by the U.S.A. and other powers, great and small; the inter-relationship between President, Secretary of State and the U. S. Ambassador to the U. N.; the cooperation between the U.S.A. and the Soviet Union to avert World War III; the effects of U. S. policy on NATO and upon France in particular, and so on.

2. Professor Millett declares that the book could have been cut "one-third," had I left out "constant Finer interruptions" which, "argue with the actions taken . . ." But I am a teacher as well as a discoverer. The book is (a) a narrative of events in diplomatic behavior and (b) a teacher's current reflections on the ecological and personal factors significant in the crucible of the diplomat's mind, the pondering of alternatives, the decisions actually made, and the possibilities and consequences if others had been made instead. I think this is how to teach political science in world politics. It is regrettable that it makes no impression on Professor Millett. Indeed, an additional third might be even more helpful, to judge from the seminars I have led.

3. Professor Millett objects to what he calls "pejorative adjectives," and hence by implication to laudatory ones. It happens, however, that each of my adjectives is a deliberately selected synoptic, one-word description of a number of proven attributes of the actors in the midst of world "forces" (other people!) which I fully describe with abundant evidence (two-thirds of 500 pages). Of course, "pejorative" is only so by Professor Millett's undisclosed standards of value. He offers no counter-evidence.

<sup>1</sup> Robert Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory* (Chicago, 1956), p. 151.

Four examples may be adduced to demonstrate, slightly, the reviewer's incomprehension and unfairness. (a) He cites a sentence that runs: "Dulles had before him a Nasser who not only embraced the Soviet Union, but had recognised *Red China*." His charge is that my italics indicate something derogatory in my attitude towards underdeveloped countries. The inconvenient little ugly fact that spoils this beautiful theory is that I use the italics as a typographical way of describing Dulles' feeling that Nasser had committed a horrible sin. That's all. It is Dulles' state of mind, not mine. (b) He complains that I describe Nasser as a "juvenile." True! But in what regard? I was explaining Nasser's attitude towards one of the most important subjects that have intrigued sophisticated political scientists and diplomats ever since the League of Nations first set up a Secretariat: how can international institutions provide technical and financial assistance through their officials, loyal to the international agency and its purposes, without prejudicing the political independence of the recipient nations? (My two years experience with the I.L.O. emphasises the significance of the question.) In his attitude towards it, Nasser in 1956 demonstrated obstructive, even destructive, unsophistication. Is this a better description than "juvenile"? I cut out two-thirds of the description. But if Professor Millett wants it, he can have it. Or, ought I have used an adjective much more condemnatory? Or, are we, who create, to ignore contexts? (c) Millett reproves me for repeating that India seized Goa by force, that is, (pejorative) war. This unfortunate dereliction from Menon's U. N. speech that nothing could ever justify war, is a truth. Both are truths. Their juxtaposition is necessary for the comprehension of world politics. The repetition is sound teaching, in order that the double standards of nationalist-biased diplomats may be made clear to the jejune. So, also in regard to Kashmir. (d) Professor Millett has somehow omitted or missed my observations that Nasser had practised assassination and later encouraged and financed it. I include a brief essay on this theme. The facts are true. Would it be pejorative to use the word "murder" or "barbarous"? And in Yemen—leadership in Arabs killing other Arabs?

3. Finally, Professor Millett makes only a perfunctory acknowledgment of the scholarship that has gone to the making of this book. His skimpy, even grudging reference, gives not the slightest glimmer of the truth about its substance. That truth is this: my facts and interpretation of the theory and practice of Dulles' diplomacy (the gravamen of the work) are

supported by no less than 400 notes concerning documentary sources, some of them highly complex, providing multiple chapter and verse for the narrative and analysis. Moreover, my personal interrogations of the chief actors were conducted at considerable length, sometimes repeated, by various well-known methods of interview, sometimes with the actors' diaries and files before us, and always in depth. It is possible, if the evidence is read seriously, for a student who prefers to sum up differently from my judgment, to find his evidence in the book. That evidence fully entitled me to graphic adjectives and even nouns and verbs. Professor Millett is far, indeed, from making all this clear, or that I am trying to take the reader along with me into the inner councils of the top statesmen. There, by the way, they use earthy words, few diplomatic suavities, and almost no stone dead textbook gobbledygook. This, I think, is the true behavioralism. (See, for example, Mulford Q. Sibley in *The Limits of Behavioralism*, Symposium, American Academy of Political and Social Science, October, 1962.)

One pejorative used by Professor Millett cannot, surely, have been designed to open my book to those who might need it, say, in a seminar on world politics: "polemical." This word strikes me as an escape-hatch from hard intellectual effort and a fear of the vitality that shows how much Nature in politics among nations is still "red in tooth and claw."

HERMAN FINER

*The University of Chicago*

TO THE EDITOR:

The thrust of my review of Professor Finer's most recent work was that it was part of the events themselves, rather than an analysis of them. I believe his reply has borne out my contention.

JOHN H. MILLETT

TO THE EDITOR:

The recent article by Professors Robinson, Anderson, Hermann, and Snyder dealing with empirical research on the values of the case study and simulation techniques was most welcome. I am impressed with the meticulous and systematic way in which the study was conducted. I note that, other than a brief mention of the McKeachie article (p. 56), the work of educational psychologists in this area goes unmentioned. Perhaps this is because the McKeachie essay is one of the few that deals with case study and simulation techniques with which the political scientist is familiar.

However, research conducted by psychologists on the general problem of learning theory is also applicable and would, I think, help the political scientist to perfect each technique—the case study and simulation—to the point of becoming an increasingly valuable and integral part of classroom instruction. To most instructors, student learning of principles is more valuable than fact mastery, and the authors show that simulation fares slightly better in this respect. The interdependence of facts and concept formation is readily evident and, it can be argued that the latter represents the logical and successful utilization of the former.

In this connection, I think the use by psychologists of stimulus-response analysis is valuable. This analysis has shown that the student has formulated a concept when he can respond to a common property shared by a number of events. Irrelevant factors, unrelated to the principle being taught, often creep into case studies. This may help explain why the authors found that fact mastery tended to predominate in case study situations as against principle predominance with simulation. Further research could well be spent on determining the extent to which commonly used case studies contain irrelevant events which distract

from student assimilation of the principle. There is, of course, a fine line to be drawn here because a certain amount of distraction is necessary in order to teach the student to distinguish between the relevant and irrelevant.

It would also be profitable to extend research to include analysis of the role of "feedback" as it applies to case study and simulation use. Relevant here is the use of programmed instruction, which is procedurally designed to utilize "feedback" to check on the pertinence and accuracy of situations presented to students. Many other disciplines, including psychology, have found programmed instruction quite valuable in this respect. I would not hesitate to say that case studies and simulation are readily adaptable to the programmed instruction concept.

The purpose of a theory of learning is to construct analytic tools which will make it possible to develop models which will, in turn, exhibit the principles which govern the modification of student behavior through training. The authors have made a significant contribution to an area which has heretofore been nearly completely neglected by serious researchers.

WILLIAM L. MORROW

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