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FURTHER REFLECTIONS ON "THE ELITIST THEORY OF DEMOCRACY"

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I

An interest in the roles, functions, contributions, and dangers of leadership in popular regimes is not, of course, new among observers of political life. This has, in fact, been an ancient and enduring interest of political theorists. It is possible, however, to distinguish—at least in a rough way—two different streams of thought: one consisting of writers sympathetic to popular rule, the other consisting of anti-democratic writers.

It has always been obvious to practical and theoretical observers alike that even where leaders are chosen by the people, they might convert a democracy into an oligarchy or a despotism. From ancient times, as everyone knows, anti-democratic writers have contended that popular governments were unlikely to provide leaders with wisdom and virtue, and insisted on the natural affinity between the people and the despot. These ancient challenges by anti-democratic writers were, I think, made more formidable in the course of the last hundred years by critics—sometimes ex-democrats turned authoritarian when their Utopian hopes encountered the ugly realities of political life—who, like Pareto, Michels, and Mosca, contended that popular rule is not only undesirable but also, as they tried to show, *impossible*. The failure of popular regimes to emerge, or, if they did emerge to survive, in Russia, Italy, Germany, and Spain could not be met merely by frequent assertions of democratic rhetoric.

Fortunately, alongside this stream of anti-democratic thought and experience there has always been the other. Aware both of their critics and of the real life problems of popular rule, writers sympathetic to democracy have emphasized the need for wisdom, virtue, and self-restraint not only among the general body of citizens but among leaders as well. Thus Aristotle gave his attention to the problems of leadership in popular orders at a number of points in the *Politics*.¹ Machiavelli, a tough-

minded republican who knew from direct observation of Renaissance Europe the despotic propensities of political leaders, was fully aware of the dangers to popular rule generated by the need for and existence of leadership, but his solutions were not always enormously helpful—e.g., that every well ordered republic should elect a succession of virtuous rulers (*principi*).² Although in the *Discourses* he did not elaborate on the problem of leadership in republics, his scattered observations show that he regarded the problem as significant and serious.³

Nor did Rousseau neglect the problem. In fact, it was the impossibility of arriving at all the conditions necessary for direct democracy, including the impossibility of keeping the people constantly assembled in order to decide public affairs, that led Rousseau to conclude that "democracy," in his sense, had never existed and never would. "If there were a people of gods, they would govern themselves democratically. A government so perfect is not suited to men."⁴ Rousseau, no less than Plato,

racies changes are chiefly due to the wanton license of demagogues." *The Politics of Aristotle*, trans. with an introduction, notes, and appendixes by Ernest Barker (Oxford University Press, 1952), pp. 168, 215.

² In the *Discourses*, after noting that two "principi virtuosi" in succession were sufficient to conquer the world—Philip of Macedon and Alexander the Great—Machiavelli goes on to say: "Il che tanto più debba fare una repubblica, avendo per il modo dello eleggere non solamente due successioni ma infiniti principi virtuosissimi che sono l'uno dell'altro successori: la quale virtuosa successione fia sempre in ogni repubblica bene ordinata." *Libro Primo Dei Discorsi Sopra La Prima Deca di Tito Livio*, XX, in *Tutte Le Opere Storiche E Letterarie di Niccolò Machiavelli*, Mazzoni and Casella (eds), (Florence, B. Barbéra, 1929) p. 90.

³ He lamented, for example, that men of true merit (virtù) are sought for in difficult times but in easy times it is not virtuous men who are most favored but those with riches and the proper relations; in peaceful times, other citizens who are jealous of the reputation of the virtuous want not merely to be their equals but their superiors. Book 3, XVI, *Ibid.*, p. 224. See also *ibid.* XXVIII, 239ff.

⁴ *Du Contrat Social*, Cho. IV. "De la démocratie," pp. 280–81. Note his comment: "Il est

¹ See, for example, his comment: "It is popular leaders who, by referring all issues to the decision of the people, are responsible for substituting the sovereignty of decrees for that of laws." See also his comments on "the particular causes of revolution and change" in democracies, e.g. "In democ-

asserted that the best and most natural order is one in which the wisest govern the multitude, provided that the wisest govern for the benefit of the many and not for their own profit.⁵

Although John Stuart Mill emphasized the benefits to personal growth derived from political participation, as an admirer of Mill's like Professor Walker is surely aware, Mill did not advocate *equal* power: "... Though every one ought to have a voice—that every one should have an equal voice is a totally different proposition . . . If, with equal virtue, one [person] is superior to the other in knowledge and intelligence—or if, with equal intelligence, one excels the other in virtue—the opinion, the judgment, of the higher moral or intellectual being is worth more than that of the inferior: and if the institutions of the country virtually assert that they are of the same value, they assert a thing which is not."⁶

One could go on citing other writers generally sympathetic to democracy or representative government, but I hope there is no need. The point is not that I or Professor Walker must agree with their analysis, their solutions, or their descriptions. The point is that writers from the earliest times have understood that popular regimes, like other regimes, would inevitably have leaders—that is to say, men of more authority, and very likely more power and influence, than ordinary citizens. What kinds of leaders will—or should—the people elect? No doubt they should choose men of virtue and wisdom. But will they? How is this to be insured? What will happen if, as may be the case from time to time, they fail? These and similar concerns are ancient; the writers Professor Walker cites as "elitists" did not discover these questions: they sought to answer them in the light of modern experience.

I imagine that the heterogeneous collection of writers whose attention to the problems of leadership in popular orders stirs Professor Walker to regard them as "elitists" were all familiar with these two streams of thought and experience, the democratic and the anti-democratic. But they were also responding to the state of the debate as it seemed to stand around the middle of this century: for both recent history and recent theory had posed an extraordinarily sharp challenge to the validity of

widely prevailing assumptions about popular government.

And unfortunately, despite several thousand years of attention given to the problems of leadership by theorists sympathetic with popular rule, the analysis of leadership in popular orders was unsystematic, incomplete, and based almost entirely on pre-modern experience. Although not all the readers of this REVIEW will agree, and Professor Walker himself may not, it does not seem to me, nor I think to many other political scientists, that the questions raised in this century about leadership in democracies can be met satisfactorily by citing Aristotle, Machiavelli, Rousseau, Mill, or indeed any other theorist deprived of the opportunity to analyze the unfolding experience during the past half century or so with popular government in large, industrial, urbanized nation-states.

II

A number of writers committed to the success of popular regimes have therefore tried to examine the ancient problem of leadership, citizenship, and democracy by directly confronting recent experience. Had Professor Walker been content to make this point, no one, I am sure, would have found much to dispute in his essay—nor, for that matter, much of interest. What he has done, however, is something else: he has tried to reduce a variety of these recent efforts to a single body of doctrine.

Now any attempt to compress the views of many different writers to a simple statement is, I suppose, almost bound to distort their views, perhaps in quite important ways. In outlining what he has chosen to call "the elitist theory of democracy,"⁷ Professor Walker has constructed

⁷ May I register a dissent seemingly so minor that I fear it will appear to be nitpicking: the appropriateness of the label? I realize that Professor Walker has taken the expression "the elitist theory of democracy" from Lipset; but even if Lipset may have had his reasons while writing a preface to the major work of Michels for applying this phrase to Weber, Schumpeter, Parsons, and James Burnham, that is not a good reason for stretching it, as Professor Walker does, to cover others. I, for one, object to being labelled "elitist" not only because—as I hope to show—it would be inaccurate in implication even if it were a neutral term, but even more so because in our language and in our society it is unavoidably, I think, a pejorative, even a polemical epithet.

To substitute epithet for argument was, I am sure, not Professor Walker's intention. Nonetheless, to stick the label "elitist" on someone is to

contre l'ordre naturel que le grand nombre gouverne et que le petit soit gouverné," p. 280 (Paris, Éditions Garnier Frères, 1962.)

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 282.

⁶ *On Liberty and Considerations on Representative Government*, ed. by R. B. McCallum (New York, Macmillan, 1947), pp. 215–216.

a paradigm that his intended victims will all, I feel sure, regard as a caricature. Like every good caricature, it combines verisimilitude with exaggeration and distortion.

(1) It is an ancient academic game to create a "school" by asserting that it exists. But it is misleading to speak of "the" elitist theory of democracy as if such an entity existed. At various places the following writers in addition to myself seem to be construed as advocates of "the elitist theory": Beer, Berelson, Hartz, Lipset, Key, Mayo, Milbrath, McClosky, Morris-Jones, Polsby, Schumpeter, Truman, and somewhat strangely, since he is cited in the first footnote as an authority on the classical meaning of democracy, Sabine. I am puzzled as to what doctrine these writers are supposed to share—other than a belief in the desirability of representative government. I have tested the list against several criteria, each of which leads to absurdities. Is the common doctrine of these writers an emphasis on the empirical proposition that leaders do, as a matter of fact, have

discredit half his argument without saying another word. Moreover, precisely because the term "elite" carries many of the connotations that Professor Walker and most others are inclined to read into it—no matter how much an author may try to sterilize the term by definition—I have generally avoided the term in writing about American politics. Like David Truman and V. O. Key, I have used terms rather more descriptive and discriminating, so it seems to me, such as political leadership, political strata, and the like. It is revealing, incidentally, that in the index to V. O. Key's *Public Opinion and American Democracy* the only reference to "elite" reads as follows: "elite: see political activists." I suggest that this difference in the choice of words is more than a mere matter of taste or distaste for certain labels. It also reflects a conviction on the part of Key, Truman, myself and others that "elitist" interpretations of American political life are inadequate both empirically and normatively. The extent to which Professor Walker has misunderstood the orientation of the late V. O. Key, Jr., is best indicated by the work that Key was writing at the time of his death, and that Professor Walker could not have read, of course, when he wrote his article. "The perverse and unorthodox argument of this little book," Key wrote, "is that voters are not fools. To be sure, many individual voters act in odd ways indeed; yet in the large the electorate behaves about as rationally and responsibly as we should expect, given the clarity of the alternatives presented to it and the character of information available to it." *The Responsible Electorate* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 7.

great weight in large, modern representative systems? If so, are there any students of modern politics who deny the proposition?⁸ I would offer as further candidates for the list of proponents of "the elitist theory of democracy": Jefferson, Lincoln, Marx, Lenin, Mosca, Pareto, Michels, C. Wright Mills, and Professor Walker himself, since he has stressed as forcefully as most of his "elitist" writers the weight of leadership in "democracies." Isn't this too mixed a bag to be useful?

Is, then, the school of thought Professor Walker wishes to identify those writers who emphasize that in representative systems on the scale of the nation-state it is desirable to have leaders committed to democratic norms? If so, then the criterion is as vacuous as the preceding one. Does *anyone*, including Professor Walker, deny the proposition I have just set forth? Alternatively, is the distinguishing criterion a belief in one or both of the following propositions: that *only* leaders ought to be committed to democratic norms, and that "widespread apathy and general political incompetence" are *desirable* features of representative democratic republics? If so, this criterion very seriously misrepresents, I believe, most of the writers he cites, and probably all of them.

(2) One central difficulty with Professor Walker's paradigm is, I think, that he insists upon interpreting as if they were normative or deontological certain writings that were mainly if not wholly intended to set out descriptive, empirical theories. Most (though perhaps not all) of the works cited by Professor Walker are not attempts to prescribe how democracy *ought* to work but to *describe* how some of the political systems widely called by that name do in fact operate and to *explain* why they operate this way. Professor Walker may deplore the neglect of normative questions, as many other political scientists and political philosophers do; but he ought not to confuse attempts at empirical description and explanation with efforts at prescribing how these systems ought to operate in order to attain desirable or ideal ends. I would not argue that every writer cited by Professor Walker has always tried to maintain this distinction or, if he did, has always succeeded; but I do think it is a serious misunderstanding to interpret these writers as essentially normative theorists.

⁸ Why, by the way, not also: Campell, Converse, Miller, Stokes, Downs, Sartori, Almond, Verba, Kornhauser, Lasswell, Lane, Tingsen . . . ? In short: among writers who have examined questions of leadership and participation, who is *not* eligible for Professor Walker's list?

At the empirical level, experience with and systematic study of political life in cities and countries with democratic governments has turned up evidence that, if valid, raises interesting and important empirical questions. To take the most obvious example, there is the enormous mass of evidence, much of it furnished by Professor Walker's colleagues in the Survey Research Center of the University of Michigan, on rates of participation in political life. This evidence seems to demonstrate, rather conclusively I think, that rates of participation vary widely, that a rather large fraction of adults participate in political life barely at all, and that a small proportion of adults participate a very great deal. Confronted by this evidence, political scientists have had either to reject it as factually false, which it is increasingly difficult to do; or to accept it provisionally as factually correct. If it is approximately correct, what do we make of it? As I see it, evidence of this kind confronts us with problems for both empirical and normative theory. Strictly at the level of empirical analysis and explanation we face such questions as: How do we account for these variations in rates of participation? How do these variations affect the outcome of elections, government policy-making, etc.? Even after we have arrived at necessarily tentative and provisional answers to these empirical questions, important normative questions, which I shall not try to formulate here, would still remain unanswered. The point seems too obvious to be worth stressing, but attempts to *explain* should not be confounded with attempts to *prescribe*.

One more example: There is substantial evidence on the distribution of American attitudes toward civil liberties and certain other norms associated with (though perhaps not inextricably bound up with) democratic behavior. As Professor Walker rightly says in a footnote, the evidence is not conclusive. Further research may prove it wrong; I, for one, hope that the present evidence for the existence of considerably less than a widespread and confident commitment to democratic and libertarian norms will be found wrong. Meanwhile, it is the best evidence we have, it cannot be brushed aside, and it cannot be re-written to fit our hopes. If we accept the evidence, even provisionally, it suggests important problems both for empirical analysis and explanation and for normative analysis and prescription. Strictly at the empirical level, the evidence suggests a paradox: In a "democratic" country like the United States, where elections take place regularly, why aren't anti-libertarian and even anti-democratic norms transmuted into national policy more often than they are? How does it

happen that on matters of free speech, for example, some norms that seem to be weakly held or even opposed by a majority of citizens are nonetheless applied vigorously by the Supreme Court, enforced by the executive branch, and at least tolerated by the Congress? The question, you will note, is formulated as an empirical one. Obviously the answer has a bearing on normative theory as well. But Professor Walker, so it appears to me, persists in interpreting an empirical enterprise ("I must try to understand and *explain* this curious phenomenon") as if it were explicitly or implicitly a normative enterprise of mounting a defense of the status quo ("I must try to *justify* this curious phenomenon.").

I may, however, do Professor Walker an injustice, since I confess that his presentation leaves me uncertain as to exactly where he stands: that is, whether (a) he rejects the survey *evidence* on such matters as participation and the distribution of democratic norms; or (b) he accepts the evidence (contingently, which is all anyone can properly do with empirical data) but rejects the *explanations* of Key, Truman, and others; or (c) he accepts both the evidence and the explanation but denies that they describe (or prescribe) a desirable state of affairs in a democracy. If it is the first, which I doubt, we must await his own evidence. If it is the second—I so interpret his argument about apathy—we must await the development of his own theory and his testing of it; I return to this point later on. If it is the third, I heartily concur. I imagine that most of the other people he treats as "elitists" would also concur.

(3) Professor Walker's confounding of empirical explanation with prescription tempts him, I fear, to play the part of Procrustes and force his theorists to fit the bed he has prepared for them. The cut may be small—a half-inch slice off the top of a writer's head may seem important to no one but that author; or it may be rather large—from the ears up, say.

Exquisitely painful as they are to the victims, examples of the first sort are, it seems, so tedious in the telling that the suffering of the persistent reader finally surpasses that of the victims. I shall therefore spare the reader this unpleasantness. But may I offer one or two examples of surgery on a more ambitious scale?

Professor Walker describes the views of the "elitists" as follows: "The elitist theory allows the citizen only a passive role as an object of political activity; he exerts influence on policy making only by rendering judgments after-the-fact in national elections." It is unclear whether Professor Walker regards this as (1) an incorrect empirical statement; (2) a correct—or roughly

correct—empirical statement; or (3) a description of what the authors he cites regard as a desirable state of affairs. I confess that I find it far too simple to be acceptable. And clearly an author who subscribed to this as a roughly accurate empirical statement—indeed, I have the impression that Professor Walker himself believes it to be correct—need not regard this state of affairs as the least bit desirable: unless, perhaps, in the weak sense that even worse states are possible. With the next sentence, Professor Walker renders his elitists more frankly normative: “The safety of contemporary democracy lies in the high-minded sense of responsibility of its leaders, the *only* elements of society who are *actively striving to discover and implement the common good*” (my italics). Strangely, at this point Professor Walker cites no writer who made such a statement; personally, I find the sentence equally preposterous as an empirical statement or as a prescription for a desirable state of affairs.

Finally, Professor Walker concludes his paragraph by hammering his point home with a quotation that, like many other readers, I read initially as a devastating confirmation of his interpretation of the “elitists.” The sentence reads as follows: “The citizens are left to ‘judge a world they never made, and thus to become a genteel counterpart of the mobs which sporadically unseated aristocratic governments in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe.’” In heaven’s name, I thought to myself, which of his “elitists” ever made such an astounding statement! The footnote led me to an article not by any of the writers he is attacking but by Lane Davis, who, like Professor Walker, evidently is also a critic of the so-called “elitist theory.” Thus we enter into the world of the closed circle of mutually reinforcing scholarship, where one critic of X cites a fellow critic of X in order to establish the validity of his own interpretation of X. Soon it will be quite unnecessary to examine what X said or seek to interpret X in the light of what can be understood about X’s intentions. Walker will simply cite what Davis says X means, then Davis can cite Walker’s article citing Davis’ article interpreting X, then, . . . Poor X!

May I offer one more example of Professor Walker’s somewhat uninhibited selection and interpretation? He writes: “It has also been suggested by several elitist theorists that democracies have good reason to fear increased political participation. They argue that a successful (that is, stable) democratic system depends on widespread apathy and general political incompetence.”

Who are the “several elitist theorists” who have made statements equivalent to those two

sentences and particularly the second? We are directed to the whole of Chapter 14 in Berelson *et al.* I find it curious that Professor Walker was unable to cite anything more precise than the whole chapter. As readers of that chapter will recall, a central aspect of it is to contrast a hypothetical normative democratic theory prescribing certain kinds and levels of behavior with the findings on actual behavior in Elmira. The authors then seek to explain how, despite the gap, the system does function. Sometimes they also make normative comments. But I think the reader of this REVIEW will find that even their normative comments do not justify Professor Walker’s statement.⁹

We are also directed to Lipset, but probably as a result of differing printings the pages cited take me to the Table of Contents of my own edition of *Political Man*—or else to two blank pages of the edition of Michels’ *Political Parties* that Lipset edited. However, if Professor Walker had looked through Lipset’s writings for a full and fair interpretation, as I am sure he did, he must surely have noticed some statements that do not support the cynical view of civic participation suggested by the sentence that Professor Walker has written.¹⁰

⁹ Here are some of them, with italics added to emphasize the difference between what they say and what Professor Walker says they say: “The democratic citizen is expected to be well informed about political affairs. . . . By such standards the voter falls short. Even when he has the motivation, he finds it difficult to make decisions on the basis of full information when the subject is relatively simple and proximate; how can he do so when it is complex and remote? . . .” *Voting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954), p. 308. “How could a mass democracy work if *all* the people were deeply involved in politics? Lack of interest by *some* people is not without its benefits, too. . . . Extreme interest goes with extreme partisanship and *might* culminate in rigid fanaticism that *could* destroy democratic processes if generalized throughout the community. . . . *Some* people are and should be highly interested in politics, but not *everyone* is or needs to be. Only the doctrinaire would depreciate the *moderate indifference* that facilitates compromise.”: *ibid.*, pp. 314–315; “*The classical political philosophers were right in the direction of their assessment of the virtues of the citizen. But they demanded those virtues in too extreme or doctrinal a form. The voter does have some principles, he does have information and rationality, he does have interest—but he does not have them in the extreme, elaborate, comprehensive, or detailed form in which they were uniformly recommended by political philosophers*”: *ibid.*, p. 322.

In sum, I have serious reservations as to the validity of Professor Walker's citations on this matter.¹¹ I fear, too, that he is led by his fixed ideas of "elitist theorists" into substituting, albeit unconsciously, extreme interpretations of his authors for their own much more balanced, qualified, and complex formulations. In terms of what I take to be his own aspirations for theory, this is a pity. Cutting down straw men is not going to answer the very hard questions nor overcome the very real deficiencies of democratic theory.

(4) The passage I have just been criticizing illustrates another aspect of Professor Walker's critique that I find particularly painful. Even if we were to assume that he correctly interprets "several" of the writers he calls "elitist," what of the others who hold very different views? If the writers happen to disagree among themselves, by what criterion does Professor Walker determine who is, and who is not, an elitist? Are we to take every item from someone's writings that lends itself to an "elitist" interpretation, and neglect every item that does not?

Speaking for myself, I disagree strongly with the notion that high rates of political participation in democratic orders necessarily lead to, or must inevitably be associated with, "instability." I disagree even more strongly with the view that the rates of political participation that have been characteristic of the American citizen body—or, for that matter, the citizen body of any large national polyarchal system—are desirable. On the contrary, I happen to believe that they are deplorably low. I should like to see much higher rates of political activity, particularly among some segments of the population whose participation has been lowest. But there are worlds of difference among different factors that might lead to higher participation; and worlds of difference in the quality and value of acts of participation. The rapid rise in electoral participation in the late years of the Weimar Republic did not make it a "better"

democracy, nor did it enable that Republic to solve its problems. Instead, it was associated with factors that transformed that experiment in democracy into a monstrous system with very high rates of "participation" of a kind, and where apathy was encouraged only in the concentration camps.¹²

This not a recent point of view on my part, nor, I imagine, is it one with which many of the writers cited by Professor Walker would disagree. I would not expect Professor Walker to have read everything I have written, but I am flattered to think that he has read the books he cites. I should therefore like to remind him of some passages in these books.¹³ One of the curi-

¹² Incidentally, while we may have recently emphasized the conditions of democratic "stability" too much, and the conditions of democratic change too little, I doubt whether anyone who remembers the failure of "stable" democracies to emerge in the USSR, Italy, Germany, and Spain will ever find it in himself to scoff at writers who focus on the conditions of democratic stability. What such writers are likely to have in mind when they think of democratic "instability" is not cabinet changes nor even piddling differences in regime but the possibility of democratic failures eventuating in brutal dictatorships in comparison with which even the worst polyarchy will seem like the promised land.

¹³ In *Politics, Economics, and Welfare*, Lindblom and I wrote: "Polyarchy also requires a relatively high degree of political activity. That is, enough people must participate in the governmental process so that political leaders compete for the support of a large and more or less representative cross section of the population. . . .

"Admittedly this is a rather imprecise formulation; in what follows we shall attempt to refine it a little. But one cannot be very precise. . . . In practice, moreover, even in one country the extent of political activity varies enormously from one policy-making situation to another, from complete apathy to widespread activity. Then, too, political "activity" is itself a difficult kind of behavior to measure. The number of variables is large, including the number of people involved, the intensity with which they pursue their goals, the type of activity they indulge in, the political position and location of those who are active, their status, degree of control over others, and so on. . . .

"... In a very large number of important governmental decisions only a small minority of the electorate expresses or apparently even possesses any definite preferences at all among the alternatives in dispute. And it is equally safe to say that very little specific national policy is ever a product of an expressed preference for a

¹⁰ Like many other writers on politics, including Rousseau, Lipset's writings contain statements which, quoted out of context, might seem to offer faint confirmation for the interpretation offered by Professor Walker. But I do not see how, for example, Lipset's Chapter on "Elections: Who Votes and Who Doesn't?" in *Political Man* could be regarded by anyone who reads the whole chapter as yielding the sentence in Professor Walker's essay: see especially pp. 181, 186.

¹¹ The third citation is to an article by Morris-Jones, which I do not have at hand as I write. If it turns out that he has correctly interpreted Morris-Jones, would that justify his interpretation of Berelson *et al* and of Lipset?

ous ironies of his method of selection is that while he interprets empirical theory as if it were normative or prescriptive, he seems to have overlooked some efforts to formulate normative criteria for the performance of democracies or polyarchies.¹⁴ Thus in *A Preface to*

specific alternative by an overwhelming majority of the electorate. . . .

"... In practice, then, the democratic goal that governmental decisions should accord with the preferences of the greater number of adults in the society is extraordinarily difficult to approximate, and rarely, if ever, is it closely approximated. . . .

"... This discrepancy between polyarchy and democracy arouses anxieties among those who wish to approximate democracy more closely, and rightly so. Keeping this fact in mind, let us suggest some general lines of approach to the question of the level of political activity required as a precondition for polyarchy.

"A considerable measure of political inactivity is not *by itself* a sign that the democratic goal is not being roughly approximated by a polyarchy. . . .

"... The question, then, is not so much whether citizens are active but whether they have the opportunity to exert control through activity when they wish to do so. . . .

"... Therefore the problem is not so much one of insuring that every citizen is politically active on every issue as it is one of insuring that all citizens have approximately equal opportunity to act, using 'opportunity' in a realistic rather than legalistic sense. . . .

"... Equal opportunity to act is not, however, a product merely of legal rights. It is a product of a variety of factors that make for differences in understanding the key points in the political process, access to them, methods of exploiting this access, optimism and buoyancy about the prospect of success, and willingness to act. Some of these factors probably cannot be rationally influenced given the present state of knowledge and techniques. Three that to some extent can are income, wealth, and education. A fourth that may become important as knowledge increases is personality. . . .

"... Nevertheless, many policy decisions cannot actually reflect any specific preferences of the greater number. About the most that can be said for polyarchy is that, if the opportunities for political action are kept open to a representative section of the adult population, specific policies will rarely violate highly ranked, intense, stable, and relatively broad preferences of the greater number for a longer period than about the interval between elections. . . ." (pp. 309-314.)

¹⁴ Thus in *Politics, Economics and Welfare*, Lindblom and I offered "Seven Basic Ends for

Democratic Theory, working out some ideas Lindblom and I had already advanced in *Politics, Economics, and Welfare*, I tried to develop a set of standards against which it would (in theory) be possible to measure the performance of a political system in order to determine the degree to which that system "maximized democracy." The eight standards I laid down were, I thought, extremely severe. In fact, I wrote: "I think it may be laid down dogmatically that no human organization—certainly none with more than a handful of people—has ever met or is ever likely to meet these eight conditions."¹⁵ I defined "poly-

Social Action": freedom, rationality, democracy, subjective equality, security, progress, and appropriate inclusion. Of democracy we wrote as follows:

"The democratic goal is twofold. It consists of a condition to be attained and a principle guiding the procedure for attaining it. The condition is political equality, which we define as follows: *Control over governmental decisions is shared so that the preferences of no one citizen are weighted more heavily than the preferences of any other one citizen.* The principle is majority rule, which we define as follows: *Governmental decisions should be controlled by the greater number expressing their preferences in the 'last say.'*"

"Democracy is a goal, not an achievement. The main sociopolitical process for approximating (although not achieving) democracy we shall call polyarchy. The characteristics of polyarchy, its prerequisites, and its significance as a device for rational social action on economic matters are discussed in a later chapter. If democracy is one of our goals and if polyarchy is a process for approximating that goal, it follows that we must also value polyarchy as a means. But here we are concerned with the democratic goal itself." (p. 41)

¹⁵ (p. 71.) Though I have always tried to write lucidly, I am increasingly appalled by incontrovertible evidence of my inability to do so. If Professor Walker interprets as normative theory what I (and, as I believe, others) wholly or primarily intended to be empirical theory, others have reversed the process by interpreting my ventures in normative theorizing as if I were describing the American political system. Despite the clear warning contained in the sentence just cited, the fact that my model of "polyarchy" and my description of "The American Hybrid" are in the same book, though in separate chapters, is evidently enough to lead to their being confounded. Cf. Robert E. Agger, Daniel Goldrich, and Bert E. Swanson, *The Rulers and the Ruled* (Wiley, New York, 1964), pp. 93 ff. Incidentally, my guess, supported by some data, is that if a number of "democracies" were measured by the standards

archies," however, as political systems in which the eight conditions "exist to a relatively high degree" (p. 84). I advanced the proposition that "polyarchy is a function of the political activity of the members" (p. 81), but also conjectured that "if an increase in political activity brings the authoritarian-minded into the political arena, consensus on the basic norms among the politically active certainly must be declining. To the extent that consensus declines, we would expect . . . that, after some lag, polyarchy would also decline" (p. 89).

Professor Walker may not agree with any of this. But I do not understand why he ignores it in order to construct his paradigm of "elitist theory."

In short, I do not share Professor Walker's confidence that he knows the implicit or explicit normative assumptions of the writers he has tried to summarize. Whether they would agree, in the main, on their empirical descriptions is one thing; whether they would agree, in the main, on their normative standards and conclusions is quite another. My guess is that although they would not agree with Professor Walker's description of them in either case, their actual normative disagreements would prove more profound than their empirical disagreements. But I do not pretend to know.

III

One possible justification for building a man of straw in order to attack it is the methodological (and psychological?) assistance even a straw man may give in designing one's own alternative theory. I cannot help feeling that Professor Walker's caricature is intended for this purpose: it provides him with at least a hypothetical view to react against. Perhaps we should take it in that spirit.

In any case, when Professor Walker turns his attention from his *bêtes noires* in order to speculate about apathy and social movements, he says much with which it is difficult to disagree. Thus when he speaks of "widespread political apathy . . . among many sectors of the American public," who will contest his statement that "it is important to ask why this is so and not simply to explain how this phenomenon contributes to the smooth functioning of the system"?

In fact, it seems to me that in the last two decades there has been more attention paid to

the extent, types, characteristics, and possible causes of varying rates of political participation than in the preceding 25 centuries. Perhaps the best evidence on this point is supplied by Professor Walker himself. Not only does he rely heavily in his own theoretical suggestions on the work of social scientists who, by the standards of the first part of his essay, would surely be classified as "elitists"; but his hypotheses, as I read them, do not go much beyond what is already in the mainstream of the social sciences.¹⁶

Nonetheless, Professor Walker is surely right that we do not know nearly as much as we ought to, that political apathy, alienation, indifference, lack of confidence, and feelings of inefficacy are widespread in the United States among the poor, Negroes, and even many individuals and segments in other strata, and that these feelings create obstacles to effective participation in political life. I assume that Professor Walker and I are at one in wanting these obstacles to be eliminated and in thinking that political scientists may have something to contribute to this task.

If much of what Professor Walker has to say about apathy and participation is, as I believe, pretty much taken for granted by most students of the subject, he has nonetheless contributed some interesting additional hypotheses that have not, so far as I know, been studied. I have in mind, for example, his intriguing speculation that "high crime (or suicide) rates and low rates of voting may very well be related." It is a pity that Professor Walker did not go beyond speculation in order to furnish us with some tests of his hypothesis. To be sure, the problem has formidable aspects, but even a brief survey of the evidence would have been helpful.¹⁷

¹⁶ Many of the factors Professor Walker advances as possible explanations for varying degrees of political involvement-apathy, or political participation-nonparticipation, will be found in the pioneering article, published in 1954, by Lipset, Lazarsfeld, Barton, and Linz, "The Psychology of Voting: An Analysis of Political Behavior," *Handbook of Social Psychology* (Cambridge, Mass., Addison-Wesley, 1954), Vol. II, pp. 1124-1175. A decade later, Angus Campbell presented a compact, succinct, and (to me) potentially powerful explanatory theory that takes into account much of the work in the interval: "The Passive Citizen" in Stein Rokkan, ed., *Approaches to the Study of Political Participation* (Bergen, The Chr. Michelsen Institute, 1962).

¹⁷ Although reported crime rates are, for a variety of reasons, notoriously unreliable indices of actual crime, investigation conceivably might turn up some connections. However, as to the relation between suicide rates and voting rates, an

of polyarchal performance described in the model, the United States would be found to rank well down the list. A highly innovative attempt to undertake such a ranking is Deane Neubauer's *On the Theory of Polyarchy: An Empirical Study of Democracy in Ten Countries* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Yale University, 1965.)

Professor Walker's references to the possible effects of the American political system on participation and apathy call attention to a methodological matter that until recently has generally been ignored: the need to examine the problem in a comparative framework and not exclusively in the American setting. The evidence of a few comparative studies suggests a paradox.¹⁸ Although turnout in elections is rel-

atively low in the United States, political involvement, interest, and participation in politics in ways other than voting is relatively high: quite possible higher than in any other large country. Apathy, alienation, and non-participation are not peculiar to the United States; indeed, a good case could be made out that these phenomena are present to a lesser degree in the United States than in most other democracies. It would be premature to fix on this conclusion. My point is that to understand the problems Professor Walker is concerned with we need more analysis across nations as well as within the United States itself.

IV

examination made at my request by Edward R. Tufte of readily available evidence shows that in the United States the relationship, if any, runs counter to Professor Walker's conjecture. Taking each state as a unit, there is a positive and not a negative relationship between suicides and voting turnout. The correlations are 0.24 with turnout in presidential elections and 0.34 with turnout in off-year elections for governor and Senators. Mississippi has the lowest turnout and the second lowest suicide rate. Rhode Island, which has the lowest suicide rate, has a high voting turnout, while Wyoming, which has about the same turnout as Rhode Island, has the second highest suicide rate. California and New York had almost exactly the same turnout in the 1960 Presidential election, but the suicide rate in California is 16 per 100,000, putting it in the highest group, while New York at 9.7 per 100,000 is among the lowest. Professor Walker's hypothesis would imply that the suicide rate among Negroes is higher than among whites; in fact, for the United States the rate among whites (11.4) is more than twice that among Negroes (4.5). In fact the rate among non-whites is lower than among whites in all states except six with few non-whites. In eleven Southern states the correlation between suicide rates and voting in Presidential elections (which according to the conjecture should of course be negative) is positive and moderately high: 0.47; with off-term elections for governor and Senators, it is lower but still positive: 0.36. The correlation of suicide rates with voting in off-term elections for governor and Senators is practically identical in North and South; with voting in Presidential elections, the correlation in the North is almost non-existent but negative: 0.17. The data are from Louis I. Dublin, *Suicide* (New York, Ronald Press, 1963), pp. 218-219, and Herbert Jacob and Kenneth Vines (eds.), *Politics in the American States* (Boston: Little Brown, 1965), pp. 40, 46. My strong impression is that if the hypothesis were checked against comparative data, it would run into similar difficulties. For example, the Scandinavian countries have similar voting rates; yet while the suicide rate is high in Sweden and Denmark, it is low in Norway. Italy, which has astonishingly high turnout, has a low suicide rate, etc.

¹⁸ I have in mind particularly Gabriel Almond

Professor Walker's suggestions for further study of "social movements" is timely. If we adopt Professor Heberle's definition of a social movement as "a stirring among the people, an unrest, a collective attempt to reach a visualized goal, especially a change in certain social institutions,"¹⁹ surely it is true that parties, pressure groups, interest groups, voting behavior and many other closely related topics have been far more popular than social movements as subjects of investigation by American political scientists. But I wonder if the reasons for this relative neglect are really where Professor Walker locates them. Well defined social movements—the anti-slavery movement of the pre-Civil War period or the agrarian discontent of the 1880's and 1890's—are comparatively rare in the United States. It is no accident that it is mainly historians who have written about American social movements: for the examples are chiefly historical. Social movements are often short-lived, as in the case of the Know-nothings before the Civil War. If they endure, they inevitably become institutionalized; when they do become institutionalized, as in the case of the Prohibition movement, the labor movement, or the Socialist Party, they are more likely to be studied by political scientists, under more familiar rubrics, e.g., pressure groups, interest groups, or political parties.²⁰

and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963); and Philip E. Converse and Georges Dupeux, "Politicization of the Electorate in France and the United States," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 26 (Spring, 1962), 11-13; and Rokkan (ed.), *Approaches to the Study of Political Participation*, op. cit.

¹⁹ Rudolf Heberle, *Social Movements* (New York, Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1951), p. 6.

²⁰ Professor Walker may have been somewhat misled because he has looked for studies of "social movements" under the wrong headings. Standard texts on political parties and pressure

To the extent that social movements have been amorphous and fugitive they have left little permanent evidence to study. Moreover, an older bias in favor of research in the library rather than in the field would probably handicap political scientists. My impression is that today, when political scientists get out into the field more rapidly than once might have been the case, they are more likely to observe social movements in the earlier stages. Thus the Radical Right, whose adherents are not always easy to examine, has nonetheless been the subject of a good deal of recent inquiry.²¹

It is too early to tell whether the civil rights movement, the recent peace and anti-Vietnam-war movements, the New Left and student discontent will receive much professional attention from political scientists. I venture to guess that the amount of attention paid to them by political scientists will depend in very large measure on how long they last.

In any case, Professor Walker is surely right in suggesting that movements like these are important to study. I would only add two cautionary notes. First, as with political participation, the subject cries out for treatment in a comparative and historical framework.²² Sec-

groups have for decades contained descriptions of farmers' organizations, the labor movement, the NAACP, etc., under such headings as "pressure groups" or "interest groups." They have also treated third parties, sometimes extensively. E.g., the third edition of V. O. Key's *Politics, Parties, and Pressure Groups* (New York, Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1952), which had chapters in Part I, Pressure Groups, on "Agrarianism" that included a section on "Cycles of Agrarian Discontent: The Nature of Political Movements"; "Workers," "Business," and "Other Interest Groups," including "Racial and Nationalist Minorities." See also, Chapter 7, "The Party Battle, 1896-1952" and Ch. 11, "The Role of Minor Parties."

²¹ The best known work is, of course, *The New American Right*, ed. by Daniel Bell (New York: Criterion Books, 1955), and the "expanded and updated" version *The Radical Right* (New York: Doubleday, 1963). In 1963, *The Journal of Social Issues* devoted an entire issue to "American Political Extremism in the 1960's" (Vol. 19, April, 1963). And see the results of a direct attempt to interview people at a San Francisco Regional School of Anti-Communism by R. E. Wolfinger, B. K. Wolfinger, K. Prewitt and S. Rosenhack, "America's Radical Right: Politics and Ideology," in *Ideology and Discontent*, David Apter (ed.) (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1964).

²² Comparable, for example, to Otto Kirchheimer's "Confining Conditions and Revolu-

ond, considering the variety of phenomena that might be called social movements and the great variety in the "relationship of challenge and response between the established political system and social movements," to use Professor Walker's phrase, the subject would be unmanageable, I fear, with a framework no more specific than Professor Walker provides us in his essay. Some typologies, some specific hypotheses would, I imagine, go a long way toward making the subject more manageable. Efforts in this direction might be a good deal more productive than a general exhortation to go out and study social movements.

V

There is a danger that the main thrust of Professor Walker's essay will seem to have been lost in all these details. In so far as his essay is an appeal for better normative democratic theory than now seems to be at hand, I most enthusiastically concur.

Even if there is a renaissance of normative theory, as Professor Walker and I hope there will be, I doubt very much whether there will ever be an entity that we can call *the* normative theory of democracy. Despite the frequency and confidence with which the "classic theory of democracy" is often described, there has never been such a theory. Between Aristotle and Paine, as between Rousseau and Mill, there are universes of difference. Along with other people, theorists who believe in popular government have never agreed wholly on the goals or values to be maximized. Equally important, they have never agreed on the kinds and degrees of constraints that have to be treated as fixed by the conditions of man and society, whether for all time or within a given period. Disagreement with respect to these basic assumptions is not going to disappear. We should therefore expect that in the future as in the past there will be not one but a number of differing normative theories of democracy. But I agree with Professor Walker: It is time to get on with the job.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: For further comments by Professor Walker see Communications to the Editor, pp. 391-392.)

tionary Breakthroughs," this REVIEW, 59 (December, 1965), 964-974; or Val R. Lorwin's "Labor Organizations and Politics in Belgium and France," in *National Labor Movements in the Postwar World*, E. M. Kassalow (ed.) (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1963), pp. 142-168; and his "Reflections on the History of the French and American Labor Movements," *Journal of Economic History* (March, 1957), 24-244.