Oligarchic Structures and Majority Faction

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Philosophical Essays on Morals, History and Politics

By

H.G. Callaway

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Something always escapes. ‘Ever not quite’ has to be said of the best attempts made anywhere in the universe at attaining all-inclusiveness. The pluralistic world is thus more like a federal republic than it is like an empire or a kingdom. However much may be collected, however much may report itself as present at any effective center of consciousness or action, something else is self-governed and absent and unreduced to unity.

William James,
A Pluralistic Universe,
1909.

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PREFACE

Fifteen papers, philosophical treatments of moral, historical and political themes, are assembled in the present volume. Overall, in spite of a significant historical focus, the book represents a summary and commentary on contemporary developments and related philosophical themes. A conviction common to the essays is that human values, including political values, exist in a pluralism of cultural, social and political traditions and that it is therefore important to attend to the variations and distinctiveness of pre-existing traditions in addressing social, moral or political problems. This is an empirically oriented and contextual approach to philosophical problems of values and value theory. Innovations and proposed reforms of political values and practices, are best understood and evaluated by reference to present problems viewed in their appropriate cultural and historical context. Needed reforms always call on commitments to some array of pre-existing values.

The background and perspective of the present collection of essays, include and exemplify themes from my early work, *Context for Meaning and Analysis* (1993), *Meaning without Analyticity* (2008), and the essays collected in *Pluralism, Pragmatism and American Democracy*: *A Minority Report* (2017). As sympathetic readers have understood, a more theoretical interest in linguistic meaning and interpretation (philosophy of language and philosophy of mind more generally) has partly turned in a more practical direction and focused on American moral-intellectual history and developments. The present collection of essays provides a philosophical overview of distinctively American social and political values. Given the world-wide interest in American thought and political developments, it has not usually been difficult to persuade various domestic and foreign colleagues of the interest of American particularities, and the relevance of my predominantly American themes.

To know where we might best go from our present situation, it is important to know where we have been in the past: we require a developed sense of what has worked and what has not.

The papers assembled span the recent decades of intensive economic globalization and international interaction. High hopes of the benefits of trade expansion, international cooperation, growing prosperity and a "rules-based" international order have of late given way to the unpredictable contingencies of human action and history, pandemic, severe economic and social dislocations, domestic divisiveness, frequent political dysfunction and growing threats of intensified international conflict. All of this may suggest to readers that America's post-Cold War roles as "sole remaining superpower," world policeman and advocate of continuous trade expansion is not working for us.

The most recent and title essays, "Oligarchic Structures vs. Democratic Accountability" and "Majority Faction" first appear in the present volume and focus on more theoretical and constitutional issues: problems of democratic accountability, organizational and constitutional structure. The earliest of the papers, Chapter 13, "Universalism and Particularism in European Thought" arose from a conference presentation to the Society for Philosophy and Geography in Atlanta, Georgia in 1996. It chiefly reflects on the prospects and problems of European unity in an earlier, more optimistic period of globalization; and it first appears in print in the present volume.

Of the fifteen papers assembled, four have previously appeared in print, and I am grateful for the publishers' permission to reprint them in the present volume. Chapter 4, "Witherspoon, Edwards and 'Christian Magnanimity'" took its first form as a presentation at a conference devoted to Jonathan Edwards and Scotland held at the University of Glasgow in March 2009. It was subsequently

published in the proceedings of the conference.[1] Chapter 9, "Emerson and the Law of Freedom" first appeared as the Introduction to my edition of R.W. Emerson's 1870 book of essays, *Society and Solitude*.[2] "A.J. Dallas, the War of 1812 and the Law of Nations," was presented at the conference on The War of 1812: Myth and Memory, History and Historiography, held at the Institute for the Study of the Americas, of the University of London's School of Advanced Studies in July 2012. This paper was subsequently published in a Spanish translation.[3]

Chapter 3, devoted to Edmund Burke, Thomas Jefferson, R.W. Emerson and American social and political thought, derives from the Introduction to my 2016 collection of Burke's writings and speeches. It appears in the present volume in more easily accessible form, with renewed emphasis on democratic accountability.[4] Chapter 8, "The Transformation of America, 1815-1848," arose from my review of historian Daniel Walker Howe (2007) *What Hath God Wrought*, a volume in the new Oxford History of the United States. The paper has been expanded and revised for present purposes.

Chapter 10, "Josiah Royce and the Ghost of Hegel" was presented at the International Conference on Josiah Royce, held at Opole University, Opole, Poland in June 2008, and it first appears in print in the present volume. Chapter 14, "Fukuyama on Identity, Dignity and the Politics of Resentment" derives from a study of Fukuyama's recent writings, following his break with the neoconservatives, and from my review of his 2018 book, *Identity*, *the*

1. Kenneth Minkema *et al*., eds. 2011, *Jonathan Edwards and Scotland* (Edinburgh, Scotland: Dunedin Academic Press).

2. H.G. Callaway, ed. 2008, *R.W. Emerson*, *Society and Solitude, A New Study Edition* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press).

3. "A.J. Dallas, la Guerra de 1812 y el derecho de gentes," *La Torre del Virrey, Revista de Estudios Culturales* vol. 14, 2013/2, pp. 33-40.

4. See H.G. Callaway, ed. 2016, *Edmund Burke*, *the Imperatives of Empire and the American Revolution*: *An Interpretation* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing).

Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment, in particular. Among contemporary figures in American political science, Fukuyama is particularly important for his critique of identity politics.

My essay on "Hamiltonian America" is partly a reaction to the renewed celebrity of Alexander Hamilton in the U.S. no doubt arising, indirectly from the publication of Ron Chernow's monumental biography, *Alexander Hamilton* (2004). The chapter draws on themes developed in my recent study of Henry Cabot Lodge's biography of Hamilton and the politics of the American Gilded Age. Chapter 11, "Dewey's Metaphysics Revisited," harkens back to an earlier treatment of John Dewey,[5] with new emphasis on Dewey's conception of individuality, his long debate with philosopher George Santayana and Dewey's admiration for Emerson. Chapter 12, "Isaiah Berlin and the Roots of Romanticism," is my heretofore unpublished review of Isaiah Berlin 1999, *The Roots of Romanticism*. *The A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts*, edited by Henry Hardy. Chapter 15, "Five Masters of International Law" developed from a review and study of Antonio Cassese's 2011 book of that title.

5. See H.G. Callaway 1993, "Democracy, Value Inquiry, and Dewey's Metaphysics," *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, vol. 27, pp. 13-27.

INTRODUCTION:
ON LIBERAL DEMOCRACY AND CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT

An underlying theme of the essays assembled in the present volume is the need of our active sense of political balance in constitutional government—and in American constitutional government in particular. Though we often speak of "checks and balances," the needed, practical and moral sense of balance, has often gone missing, and there is reason to trace many of the current problems back to consequences of the long ordeal of the Cold War—and the subsequent lack of thorough-going reconstruction for civilian purposes. Our awareness of changes and distortions in the American political system, arising in the period since the end of World War II.,[1] cannot properly be understood, however, except in light of the more general sweep of American history; and the following philosophical essays, moral, historical and political aim to supply elements of the needed historical context. Knowing where we have been in the past, what has worked and what has not, we are better able to judge how we might best proceed in the face of present problems.

No one reasonably expects that history will repeat itself exactly, or that the contingencies of social and political life can be fully controlled or eliminated. Though the future course of human events cannot be exactly predicted, we do reasonably expect that past problems, failures and solutions can and do cast light on prospec-

1. See, for instance, the discussion of Arthur Schlesinger's thesis of the "imperial presidency," and my review of Schlesinger 2004, *War and the American Presidency*, in H.G. Callaway 2017, *Pluralism, Pragmatism and American Democracy*: *A Minority Report* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars), Chapter 19.

tive policies and on errors best avoided. In American constitutional government, as is argued below, we best aim to avoid pervasive "oligarchic structures," related, insider, institutional "rent seeking" and the dominance and divisions of political factions. In consequence, we need to understand the social and political factors tending to give rise to oligarchic structures and "elite-economic domination." Growing inequalities over several recent decades are a consequence of pervasive, social and political indifference to growing concentrations of market power and (public and private) corporatist self-insulation: in effect, a new political-economic caste system.[2] It is as though, we thought that any distinctive system of guiding social and political values could only amount to domination by one or another power-elite. Striving for a cultural neutrality or universality, we lack for historical context and balance.

In a famous diagnosis of the state of American society, the sociologist, E. Digby Baltzell (1915-1996), put the matter as follows. "In the first place," he wrote,

> the establishment in America today is not effective, in spite of the fact that it is hated and feared more than ever before. Authority—a hated word in education, in politics, and in all areas of social life—has been more or less replaced by naked power veiled in manipulation and deceit, if not downright fraud. Privacy in sexual, social, and political life in America has declined to an alarming degree; class authority has been largely replaced by manipulation of the mass media, the threat of class ostracism by the threat of public exposure. But most important of all, the American people, as never quite before in our history, are obsessed with one or another conspiracy theory.[3]

It was Baltzell who popularized the term "WASP" (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant), making its usage almost a house-hold term. The

2. Cf. E. Digby Baltzell 1976, "The Protestant Establishment Revisited," *American Scholar*, vol. 45, no. 4, pp. 499-518.
3. Baltzell 1976, "Revisited," p. 500.

quoted passage was published in 1976, at the time of the bicentennial of the American Revolution. It was a reply to prevalent reactions to and misinterpretations of his earlier work on the historical "Protestant establishment;"[4] and reflecting on our then current problems. This passage may now strike the reader as little less than prophetic. The message is that the decline of the cultural authority of the "Protestant establishment," had eventuated, *not* in new, better integrated forms of social and cultural leadership including Catholics and Jews (which Baltzell favored), but in a new "caste system" based on power politics, and on control of the mass media and other major institutions. A recent study has it that,

> "Baltzell … helps illuminate not only why the previous establishment fell, but also many features of today's world, such as the shattering of norms, declining trust in institutions, and the emergence of charismatic populist leaders like Donald Trump."[5]

My argument is not, however, designed to favor a Protestant, religious revival. The point is instead to argue against exclusion of existing and historical sources of moral authority, exclusion of concern for political balance and exclusion of concern with stability and incremental reform. "The 'Anglo-Protestant' settlers of North America contributed to the country's success," as Francis Fukuyama wrote, "not because of their ethnicity, but because of the cultural values they carried, including the Protestant work ethic, belief in Lockean individualism, distrust of concentrated state authority, and other values."[6] As Fukuyama stipulates, these are values widely shared in American society.

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4. See E. Digby Baltzell 1964, *The Protestant Establishment*: *Aristocracy and Caste in America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press); Baltzell 1979, *Puritan Boston and Quaker Philadelphia* (New York: Free Press).
5. See Aaron M. Renn 2021, "Rediscovering E. Digby Baltzell's Sociology of Elites," *American Affairs*, Spring issue, pp. 149-169.
6. Quoted in Mathilde Fasting, ed. 2021, *After the End of History*, *Conver-*

However, insofar as identity politics has become a power struggle between and among contending identity groups, and the positive, historical role of WASPs in the formation of the country is continually forgotten, denigrated and vilified, this represents the serious prospect of undermining and rejecting core American values in favor of those of new immigrants and/or the culturally disaffected. There is again a lack of balance. After all, people and peoples bring their own values with them, and if we are officially and politically neutral concerning cultural values, then this diminishes the guiding roles of our existing populations on the integration of the disaffected and new arrivals, and that, in turn, sharpens the political debates concerning the value and desirability of integration and large-scale immigration.

1. The poverty of historicism and the purpose of the past

In the Preface to *The Poverty of Historicism*, Karl Popper repeats his claim to have refuted historicism, to have shown that "it is impossible for us to predict the future course of history." The argument, given more fully in *The Open Universe* (1982),[7] depends upon the premises that the course of history is strongly influenced by the growth of knowledge and that "we cannot predict, by rational or scientific methods, the future growth of our scientific knowledge." Hence, "there can be no scientific theory of historical development serving as a basis for historical prediction."[8] This conclusion is vital for the development of the social sciences and our understanding of the value and limits of historical studies.[9]

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sations with Francis Fukuyama (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press), pp. 162-163.

7. Karl Popper 1957, *The Poverty of Historicism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul), p. vi. See also, Karl Popper 1982, *The Open Universe* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield).

8. Popper 1957, *Poverty of Historicism*, p. vi.

9. My earlier work explored Popper's thesis, partly because of its value for

According to Popper's arguments in *The Poverty of Historicism*, it is bad methodology to attempt to arrange human affairs in light of utopian plans to remodel the whole of society. No reliable predictions can be had of epochal changes, in human arrangements, to which we might suppose we ought to adapt ourselves. Instead, "piecemeal experiments ... are fundamental for all social knowledge, pre-scientific as well as scientific."[10] Popper teaches a skeptical attitude toward large-scale social prediction extending our expectations into the future as it will be formed and reformed in light of the growth of knowledge. We would be unreasonable, on Popperian grounds, to make historical or sociological predictions of the consequences of the growth of knowledge, whether optimistic or pessimistic; we can have no conclusive grounds for overall optimism or pessimism regarding the growth of knowledge and its consequences for human life. Humanity and human intelligence are in this sense a vast experiment whose outcomes we can influence but not predict; and Enlightenment, broadly understood, will sometimes have distinctly negative consequence—leastwise in the short run.

The thesis is that we cannot predict the future course of history, because what human beings will do depends on what they will know and what they will come to know. The growth of knowledge is an independent variable in all other human development. Although we can take social-institutional (or political) steps to increase the growth of knowledge or to slow it down (by increasing or decreasing funding for basic scientific research for instance), we cannot predict how scientific knowledge will develop. We can only practice science and wait to see the results. But since the future course of history depends on the (unpredictable) results of scientific

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the analytic philosophy of language, the theory of meaning, and the normative ethics which might be based upon contemporary developments in analytic philosophy. See H.G. Callaway 1993, *Context for Meaning and Analysis* (Amsterdam; Atlanta, GA: Rodopi), Chapter Seven.

10. Popper 1957, *Poverty of Historicism*, p. 85.

inquiry, there can be no exact and detailed predictions of the future course of human history.

This conclusion does not rule out all optimisms and skepticism based on projections of present trends and present conditions of development, and here we begin to see the positive value of historical studies. Certainly, we have room for pessimism regarding human proclivities toward war, tribal-like divisions, conflict, violence, and over-population. But we also have room for optimism regarding the growth of human power over nature, our growing self-understanding, and our ability to decide our future. According to Popper, more realistic estimates of the human future depend upon a piecemeal approach to problems, which is modeled on scientific advance. This philosophy is itself largely an expression of the values which underlie scientific practice. Though it does not sponsor the romantic optimisms associated with large-scale historical prediction, it does sponsor a meliorism of piecemeal improvements. Meliorism is the belief that the human world can become better: that human beings are able to make improvements. Lacking this conviction we would have little reason to practice science or to attempt to improve social conditions.

According to historian Gordon S. Wood, the study of history teaches caution and self-restraint.

> By showing that the best-laid plans of people usually go awry, the study of history tends to dampen youthful enthusiasm and to restrain the can-do, the conquer-the-future spirit that many people have. Historical knowledge takes people off a roller coaster of illusions and disillusions; it levels off emotions and gives people perspective on what is possible and, more often what is not possible.[11]

11. Cf. Gordon S. Wood 2009, *The Purpose of the Past* (New York: Penguin Random House), p. 71.

Particularly by teaching the stories of human failures and what is likely not possible, and, in this way, reigning in the excesses of social and political enthusiasms, the study of history helps guide and delimit our individual and collective plans for the future. Knowledge of history contributes to balance and nuance in our plans and estimates of future outcomes and prospects.

2. Freedom of speech and the consent of the governed

"Free speech," wrote conservative political columnist George Will (an ex-Republican and "never-Trumper") "is not free in the sense that it is free of prerequisites, it is not free of a complicated institutional frame";

> Free speech, as much as a highway system, is something government must establish and maintain. The government of a country without the rare and fragile traditions of civility, without education and communications capabilities, could proclaim freedom of speech and resolutely stand back. But the result would not be free speech. It would be mayhem, and the triumph of incivility.[12]

The chief idea here is that "free speech" is properly understood as a normative, political institution and a social-political aim established by constitutional government—and not a natural result of human activities lacking a needed "institutional frame." On the contrary, lacking an appropriate institutional frame, according to Will's view, the result is "mayhem" and "the triumph of incivility." What, then, is the appropriate "institutional frame" of free speech? How are we to avoid a breakdown or degeneration of free speech into incivility and social-political mayhem? Free speech, among much else, is

12. George Will 1983, *Statecraft as Soulcraft*, *What Government Does* (New York: Simon and Schuster), pp. 123-124. Will's book derives from the Godkin Lectures delivered at Harvard University in October 1981.

intended to register the presence and/or lack of public support for government: "the consent of the governed." The people may, for instance, in the words of the First Amendment, "peaceably assemble" and "petition the government for redress of grievances." But free speech does not include the encouragement of or sympathy for violence and street mobs. "Mostly peaceful" demonstrations cannot excuse associated violence and disorder arising from demonstrations; and the leftward slogan, "No Justice, No Peace," must be resolutely rejected. The establishment of justice comes through the law and in the courts of law. As Fukuyama has put a related point, the state "is an instrument for controlling violence, and one of the ways you do that is by shifting the locus of conflict from the streets into a parliament where you can argue and deliberate rather than fighting things out."[13]

It is not that American history contains no periods and episodes illustrating related dangers, possible solutions and resolutions. The dangers have recurred—starting with the factionalism of the 1790's and erupting again in the most severe form in the pre-Civil War period of the 1850's. Though contemporary polarization has frequently been compared to that of the 1850's,[14] the present situation more plausibly invites comparison to the factionalism of the late Gilded Age and the Progressive Era,[15] or the divisions

13. Quoted in Mathilde Fasting, ed. 2021, *After the End of History, Conversations with Francis Fukuyama*, p. 82.

14. For an empirically based analysis of the factors tending to evoke civil wars around the world, see, Barbara F. Walters 2022, *How Civil Wars Start* (New York: Viking).

15. Cf. the Preface of Michael McGerr 2003, *A Fierce Discontent* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press) on the domestic failure of President Wilson's "Progressivism," p. xvi: "World War I. marked the high point of the progressive movement. ... Winning the war abroad, the Wilsonians lost their war at home. The administration's war policies produced disorder instead of order, chaos instead of control. Amid race riots, strikes, high inflation, [and pandemic!] and a frenzied Red scare, Americans turned

between right and left during the Great Depression of the 1930's. Contemporary commonalities with the period from the Gilded Age through the Progressive Era and with the 1930's include not only intensive political divisiveness and discord, but also very significant levels of social-economic distress—conditioned by prior periods of large-scale economic expansion and dislocations: the Gilded Age of mass industrialization and the "roaring 1920's" respectively.

As a country, the U.S. is held together in significant degree by its promise of economic opportunity for ordinary people. This promise has drawn immigrants from around the world over centuries; and the state of the economy has long been a chief indicator of up-coming election results. Situations perceived as a threat to broad economic opportunity evoke public discontent and in the extreme tend to set one demographic group against another. We depend on a free press to keep the public informed, to avoid rationalization of evils or sensationalizing reports. By that standard, large segments of the partisan media are not serving the public interest. There is a lack of needed balance between the commercial interests of the media and their duties to the public.

Looking for the institutional frame of free speech, we naturally first think of the Supreme Court and its decisions under the First Amendment. The First Amendment states that "Congress shall make no law ... abridging freedom of speech, or of the press." It might seem initially that this amounts to a purely *lassez-faire*, renunciation of lawful control or regulation of speech. But it is not.

First of all, the courts have had to decide what counts as constitutionally protected speech. A good deal of this is familiar in terms of what is prohibited by law. You can't legally stand up before an angry crowd, for instance, and urge the crowd to violence. Inciting riot is illegal. Speech is not protected where it evokes a "clear and present danger" of unlawful action. In consequence, you cannot legally incite a mob to violence or falsely shout

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against the progressive blueprint for the nation."

"Fire!" in a crowed theater risking the immediate dangers of a crowd in panic. In certain contexts, speech is regulated in the public interest, chiefly where speech itself becomes a dangerous form of action. But that is not the end of the matter.

Though publicly financed colleges and universities are obligated by the First Amendment to protect freedom of speech on campus, these institutions may and do prohibit disruptive speech in the classroom as a condition of student attendance and educational participation. It is doubtful that higher education would be possible without provisions for the instructor's control of classroom participation. Institutional prohibition of explicitly racist agitation also makes good sense in this context, since there is little or no reason to think that such speech in the classroom would contribute to improvement of the students or improvement of the (factually multiracial) polity. This makes at least as much sense as the instructor refraining from racial agitation. But examining arguments for and against racism is something else again. Provocation in teaching has its just limits. Still provocation in private exchanges is limited only by the criterion of its presenting a "clear and present danger."

There is no sense of constitutionally protected freedom of speech which removes the possibility of someone being offended by what is said in classroom discussion. In consequence, the expanding notion of speech as "micro-aggression," amounts to a rejection of free speech. Since free speech and the freedom of the press are suited to aid the public in defending itself against the abuse of political power, the power to offend cannot be removed without gutting the democratic ideal of government by the consent of the governed. Constitutionally protected freedom of speech is not designed to make everyone feel comfortable, it is instead designed to keep a country and its inhabitants free.

What are the just limits of free speech on campus? Beyond saying in formal terms that one political or controversial opinion cannot be forbidden if its denial or opposite is allowed, it seems

clear that there is a place in these decisions for appeal to existing moral and cultural authority, conceived as guiding good judgment. But this is quite distinct from simply catering or encouraging student hypersensitivities or treating students as "customers" to be pleased and who, like commercial customers are to be viewed as "always right." Good judgment in the classroom, is definitely much called for, not administrative censorship!

The First Amendment closely links freedom of speech and freedom of the press; and freedom of the press is now broadly understood to include freedom of expression in radio, television and the newer electronic media. Regulation of the public media is a long established fact of federal law and court decisions. The laws regulating public media may easily be viewed as contributing to the "institutional frame" (or lack thereof) of press freedom; and they are consistent with the principle of the consent of the governed, insofar as they have been enacted by duly elected representatives of the people in accordance with the constitution. But it may be doubted that the current U.S. regulatory law has kept pace with rapid technological developments and their commercial exploitation. The "consent of the governed" as a principle of liberal, constitutional democracy surely does not require the commercial imperative of mass participation (and mass commercial surveillance) via advertisement supported "free" internet subscriptions.[16]

3. Is political polarization normal?

Associated with politicized multiculturalism and identity politics, one will often find the view that polarization is a natural, if not

16. According to Walters 2022, *Civil Wars*, "the most important driver" or "accelerant" of recent civil wars has been social media, as employed by radical "ethnic entrepreneurs" who foment resentment; and the factions most disposed to political violence are people with long histories in the country who are chiefly rural, and who resent displacement by immigrants and urban elites.

inevitable part of the human condition based in the "tribal" character of human nature. Whatever its plausibilities, this kind of view is pretty much an active, political stance against the prior American tradition based on centuries of immigration and integration: the formation of an American political and cultural identity out of many diverse sources. Viewed in the context of globalizing neoliberalism, and the movement to privatize or marketize solutions to social and political problems, multiculturalism and identity politics are plausibly viewed as amounting to a neoliberal policy of "divide and conquer" directed against the contrary economic interests of domestic labor and domestic manufacturing. This resembles the ways in which the racial divide among nineteenth-century Democratic party reformers in opposition to the policies of the big business, McKinley Republicans resulted in the Democrats' defeats of 1896 and 1900.

"The human mind is exquisitely tuned to group affiliation and group difference," wrote *Vox* editor and policy analyst, Ezra Klein in his 2020 book, *Why We're Polarized*:

> It takes almost nothing for us to form a group identity, and once this happens, we naturally assume ourselves in competition with other groups. The deeper our commitment to our group becomes, the more determined we become to make sure our group wins. Making matters worse, winning is positional, not material; we often prefer outcomes that are worse for everyone so long as they maximize our group's advantage over other groups.[17]

In this statement, Klein makes no evaluation of his quasi-identitarian claim. The idea is that the human inclination to group

17. Ezra Klein 2020, *Why We're Polarized* (New York: Avid Reader Press), p. 135. See my discussion of similar themes in game theory, "Does Language Determine our Scientific Ideas?" in H.G. Callaway 2008, *Meaning without Analyticity* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars) especially, pp. 10-18.

affiliation is a factual matter: something Klein apparently needs neither to advocate nor criticize, but which we are to simply recognize and accept on the basis of behavioral evidence. In some contemporary circles, the theme is unlikely to be contested; *viz*., among demographic groups already predisposed to inward-looking, identitarian configurations. Yet, it is also clear that Klein holds that group affiliations naturally develop into zero-sum conflicts: "*we naturally assume ourselves in competition with other groups*," and "Making matters worse, winning is positional, not material; we *often prefer outcomes that are worse for everyone* so long as they maximize our group's advantage over other groups." Here it seems that Klein verges on claiming the inevitability of communal strife or pernicious conflicts of identity groups: conflicts with outcomes "*worse for everyone*."

Notice that there is a parallel passage in James Madison's *Federalist Papers*, No. 10: "The latent causes of faction are … sown in the nature of man," Madison wrote,

> So strong is this propensity of mankind to fall into mutual animosities, that where no substantial occasion presents itself, the most frivolous and fanciful distinctions have been sufficient to kindle their unfriendly passions and excite their most violent conflicts. But the most common and durable source of factions has been the various and unequal distribution of property. Those who hold and those who are without property have ever formed distinct interests in society.[18]

Madison, in *Federalist Papers* No. 10, immediately sets about to argue that the proposed U.S. Constitution will help "break the violence of faction" and place limits on the "mischief of faction." He is concerned with factionalism generally as an often fatal

18. James Madison 1787, *Federalist Papers*, no. 10, "The Union as a Safeguard Against Domestic Faction and Insurrection." See the Modern Library edition (New York: Random House), p. 56.

"disease" of popular government. A pernicious faction, aiming to invade the rights of citizens and establish its own particular interests in conflict with the common good, may consist of either a minority or a majority; and it is worth noting that a "majority faction" may consist of a collection of minority factions, trading favors among themselves to pass legislation, which in Madison's words, may "invade the rights of citizens" and conflict with "the permanent and aggregate interests of the community."

Ezra Klein's book contains no detailed discussion of factions or factionalism; and in contrast with broad public concern and dissatisfaction with the polarization of American society and politics, he sees things differently. "I don't consider polarization, on its own, to be a problem," he writes, "Just as often it is a solution."[19] In the final chapter of *Why We're Polarized*, he argues as follows:

> America's modern run of polarization has its roots in the civil rights era, in the Democratic Party choosing to embrace racial equality and the Republican party providing a home to white backlash. Surely the polarization that followed that progress was preferable to the oppression that preceded it. In a multiparty system, polarization is sometimes required for our political disagreements to express themselves. The alternative to polarization often isn't consensus but suppression. We don't argue over the problems we don't discuss. But we don't solve them, either.[20]

No doubt, this kind of argument has a certain appeal. We do not want to cast doubt on the achievements of the civil rights era or, for instance, on the passage of the Civil Rights Act (1964) or the Voting Rights Act (1965).[21] But what remains unclear is whether

19. Klein 2020, *Why We're Polarized*, p. 249.
20. Klein 2020, *Why We're Polarized*, p. 249.
21. See H.G. Callaway 2017, "How to Effectively Defend the King Dictum," in Callaway 2017, *Pluralism*, *Pragmatism and American Democracy*, pp. 181-192.

America's racial divisions (or other similar ethnic and demographic divides) *can be* fully resolved by the political means of intensive polarization and exaggerated conflicts of demographic groups—without jeopardizing American national identity and the historical accomplishment of integration of immigrants over centuries. Klein admits that he is "motivated in part by the radicalizing realization that I am often carrying out the biding of a system I dislike," … I am acting more like American politics than like myself."[22] Moreover, he holds that "the debate over PC culture" is really a debate, "in a changing America," over "who holds power."[23] This may suggest a lack of balance between moral conscience and conformity to the demands of social and political affiliation.

The alternative to seeing the country in terms of zero-sum power struggles, and joining in the exaggerated partisan conflicts is to understand America in its pluralistic splendor and genuinely accept pluralism instead of politicizing it into multiculturalism and identity politics.[24] Though we outlaw official and legally mandated segregation, and the Fourteenth Amendment rejected racial definition of citizenship, people still sort themselves out in accordance with their own developed preferences.

Overcoming undesirable and pernicious divisions finally comes to depend on the details of voluntary interaction. Racism and other group antagonisms are not simply going to go away—no matter how many members of protected identitarian groups are placed into elite positions. Diluting the European-settler and European-derived majority in the country by means of further mass immigration is also not going to resolve all the conflicts, tensions and differences among the pre-existing populations. Sometimes,

22. Klein 2020, *Why We're Polarized*, p. xviii.
23. Klein 2020, *Why We're Polarized*, p. 126.
24. See the Introduction, "The Meaning of Pluralism" in H.G. Callaway 2008, William James, *A Pluralistic Universe* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars), pp. xi-l.

we just need to stop looking at differences in the population of the country as problems to be solved by imposition of majority will. However, factionalism combined with continued mass immigration might just serve the purposes of those presently questioning and challenging America's positive heritage of freedom, equality before the law and long-term, political stability—built on the basis of its decentralized political system.

Historically, the country and American identity have been formed on the basis of personal interactions: people accepting each other (or not) on terms of their concrete interests and the need of interaction and successful cooperation. These voluntary, retail-level processes cannot generally be replaced or forced by whole-sale, and large-scale political campaigns or political agitation; and the attempt easily becomes counter-productive—where it excludes and denigrates the moral and institutional standing of the political opposition. Though we cannot completely remove the causes of faction and pernicious discrimination, we can limit their effects. One way to do this, at present, would be to shift focus to the common economic interests of the American public in the face of growing economic inequalities and elite-economic domination.

CHAPTER ONE

OLIGARCHIC STRUCTURES VS. DEMOCRATIC ACCOUNTABILITY

This chapter defends a distinction, developed below, between characteristic and supportive, political and organizational *structures* or systems of relations, contributing to oligarchy—illegitimate rule by a self-selecting few—and democratic networks of actors and participants. The distinction is highly relevant to the oft encountered claim of the "inevitability of oligarchy." The key to understanding the structures contributing or tending to contribute to oligarchy—including the means by which it develops and might be perpetuated—is their comparative rigidity and the exclusionary character of the self-definition and delimitation of elite insiders. This is partly a matter of the degree and the possibility of upward mobility within organizations and in political society. But it is also a matter of the ease of organizational and social-political reconfigurations. More democratic societies and systems of organization are distinguished by their comparative fluidity and flexibility of structure, participation and modifications: in particular, their openness to the formation of effective new sub-groups for new purposes or in the face of emerging problems. Democratic networks of organizational, social and political actors may certainly support economic relationships and development, but they must avoid rigid patron-client dependencies and preserve democratic responsibility, accessibility and accountability.

1. Classical concepts, modern applications

Oligarchy contrasts in numerical terms with monarchy and democracy; oligarchy is traditionally understood to be a matter of rule by

the few, as contrasted with rule by a single sovereign monarch, or rule by the people (in Greek, the *demos*). In a secondary meaning, however, oligarchy implies government of any organization, whether public or private, by a small group *using corrupt means and for selfish purposes*. In this way, oligarchy also contrasts with the ancient concept of aristocracy.

In general terms, if the few come into positions of power and/or maintain their positions by evil, wrongful or illegitimate means, then their rule or government is called an oligarchy in contrast with the classical meaning of aristocracy: rule by the best.[1] In Plato and Aristotle, oligarchy is a matter of the rule of the wealthy few for their own advantage. This makes oligarchy closely akin to plutocracy, though the term "plutocracy," means strictly, rule by the wealthy few, which could still be a matter of aristocracy (in the case that they do not rule corruptly in their own self-interest).

While Plato viewed oligarchy as a degenerate form of *timocracy*, where honor and honorableness are the criteria of the rulers,[2] Aristotle argued for a view of oligarchy as a degenerate form of aristocracy.[3] The two views are closely related and especially on the assumption of the honorableness of a proper aristocracy. In the classical Aristotelian texts, oligarchy is classified as one of three degenerate forms of government (because they *diverge from* concern with the common good), the others being tyranny, the degenerate form of monarchy, and democracy, which is viewed as a degenerate form of what Aristotle calls, "polity"—understood as a form of government midway between oligarchy and democracy.

1. For Aristotle, "the best" are those who cultivate and attain to the virtues. See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*; *Politics*, Bk. III, 1280b39-1281a4: "the object of the state is the good life;" and it "exists for the sake of noble actions." Cf. *Merriam Webster*, "aristocracy": Government by the best individuals or by a small privileged class.
2. Plato, *The Republic*, Bk. VIII, 544c, oligarchy is "a constitution teeming with many ills." Cf. also 550c: Oligarchy is a regime "based on property qualification," where "the rich hold office and the poor man is excluded."
3. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1279b, 4-10.