

**DIVISION OF THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES  
CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY**

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91125

TOWARD "TOTAL POLITICAL HISTORY"

J. Morgan Kousser



**SOCIAL SCIENCE WORKING PAPER 581**

September 1985  
Revised November 1986

## ABSTRACT

How is the segmented and disoriented world of contemporary historical scholarship, in particular, that of American political history, to be reintegrated and revived? Instead of imposing a substantive synthesis, which would narrow the discipline's focus by excluding many interesting topics, I propose that historians adopt a common approach--rational choice theory--that has proven useful in economics and political science.

Using notions drawn from rational choice and examples primarily from the American Civil War and Reconstruction period, I examine the assumptions behind and arguments for three theories in intellectual/cultural history--republicanism, "political culture," and positive/negative liberalism. I then try to spell out some of the implications of rational choice models for the study of electoral, legislative, judicial, and administrative behavior.

## TOWARD "TOTAL POLITICAL HISTORY"<sup>1</sup>

Political history is at an impasse.<sup>2</sup> As the subjects of history expanded in the 1960s and 70s, and as the prospects of societal change through political means seemed to dim in the 1980s, the study of war, diplomacy, and the writings and sayings of statesmen--the principal raw materials of the old political history--lost favor with students and young professors alike. Despite the emergence of the "new political history" in the 1960s and its spread to British and European, as well as American topics, many, perhaps most of the publishing scholars who remain devoted to political history continue unperturbedly to churn out biographies or narratives of facets of minor administrative or electoral matters that contain no overt theory and reflect little apparent consciousness of larger questions or of parallel studies of other times and places.<sup>3</sup>

The organizing frameworks of politically centered history--Beard's class analysis, Turner's stress on sectional splits, Hartz's Lockean consensus, Benson's ethnoculturalism, Burnham's critical elections theory--have come under telling attack.<sup>4</sup> Calls for synthesis increase in inverse proportion to effective examples of it.<sup>5</sup>

Recent appeals for a revival of interest in power and state formation merely emphasize the impression that political history has become a backwater.<sup>6</sup> Social and economic historians often either assert that political contests and decisions were irrelevant to their subjects' lives or casually project the implications of their studies onto the political plane without performing the detailed research into political events and institutions that would be necessary to sustain their conclusions.<sup>7</sup> Many Marxists dismiss quantitative historians as apologists for bourgeois pluralism, Braudellians scorn all political history as mired in the superficial and transitory, while spokespersons for the New Right condemn the "new history" for shattering myths that they allege are necessary for national unity and legitimacy.<sup>8</sup> Those who can't count and refuse to learn damn cliometric works as boring and elitist, and as futile attempts to apply the methods and modes of the physical sciences to the fundamentally indeterminate thoughts and actions of humans, and they themselves often proceed as if quantifiable evidence were inferior to that from letteristic sources or were inconsequential for all really important questions.<sup>9</sup>

Yet at the same time, many subfields are flourishing. Historians of political thought continue to produce subtle readings of texts and bold reinterpretations of ideational trends.<sup>10</sup> Studies of electoral behavior show steady improvement in methodological sophistication, conceptual clarity, and depth and scope of qualitative as well as quantitative research.<sup>11</sup> Systematic and often explicitly comparative analyses of the adoption and effects of public policies have begun to cumulate.<sup>12</sup> Undoubtedly some of these advances have occurred because scholars could explore tightly demarcated areas more thoroughly than unlimited ones and could follow and respond to a small literature more easily than to an open-ended one. There are benefits as well as costs to fragmentation.

Nonetheless, these costs now seem too great for three reasons. First, ignorance of one subfield may undermine conclusions in another, or, at the least, it may call into question the

generalizability of particular findings. Egalitarian political rhetoric, for instance, may mask anti-egalitarian policies, and conclusions based on the one may be seriously compromised by an examination of the other.<sup>13</sup> Second, concepts developed in one area of a discipline, such as political theory or legislative behavior, may be inapplicable to others, rendering explanations that connect two or more such categories difficult if not impossible. If schemas drawn from symbolic anthropology are assumed to explain voter behavior, for example, then how do elected officials set policy, and what sort of theory could tie the two together? Third, narrowness may feed narrowness. Segmentation within political history may also encourage its divorce from social and economic history, as well as from the adjacent disciplines of economics, political science and sociology. Implications of theories and findings in one division of knowledge may therefore be overlooked. How has geographic mobility affected party loyalty, and what impact have changes in economic conditions had on electoral behavior? Rather than the unifying hub of history that it once was, the study of past politics threatens to become a collection of tidy, segregated subdivisions containing only logically incomplete explanations, isolated from the stimulus and challenge of continuous intra- and inter-disciplinary contacts, overspecialized, and, therefore, ignored by the rest of the historical and social scientific communities.

Perhaps the most common response to a recognition of the present crisis in political and social history has been to advocate some substantive synthesis.<sup>14</sup> To appreciate the inadequacy of this solution, one must first understand how the subdivisions of political history fit together, what models of human behavior underlie several recent constructs, and why these notions are either incomplete or dubious. As long as historians stay wedded to current ways of proceeding, political history can never be unified, and research designs will be fundamentally flawed. Having demonstrated some inadequacies in presently fashionable conceptions, I shall propose in this paper that political historians adopt an approach that offers at least the possibility of a common strategy for understanding political phenomena and that has proven useful in economics and political science--rational choice theory. Besides spelling out some of the implications that may be drawn from that vast, and, to historians, largely unknown literature, I shall illustrate some of the problems of current practice and some of the heuristic leads to be derived from rational choice theory by examining a series of related questions about politics during the period of the American Civil War and Reconstruction.

Each subdivision of political history is incomplete, and each has imperial tendencies. Writers in each tend, at least implicitly, to expand their conclusions into other areas and not to consider the implications of findings or data from the others for their own work. Thus, histories of political thought, ideologies, or cultures often seem to be predicated upon the belief that ideas are sufficient by themselves to explain the motives for political behavior and the implications of those actions.<sup>15</sup> Studies of elites commonly assume that if we know what the really important people said, and perhaps what they did, then we know why they acted, why the masses supported or opposed them, and what produced certain outcomes.<sup>16</sup> Students of extraparliamentary collective action sometimes infer the political preferences and social conditions of the masses from the expressed grievances of a comparative few, and nearly always scorn the quotidian world of conventional electioneering, which may also reflect the

wishes of the masses, and bureaucracy, whose lumbering, unromantic processes may have had more lasting effects on society than more picturesque outbursts did.<sup>17</sup> Electoral histories frequently presume that if we can determine the coalitions that voted for each candidate or did not vote, and the issues that, at least plausibly, shaped those coalitions, then we can deduce what policies were adopted, why they were adopted, and what their impacts were.<sup>18</sup> Treatises on electoral arrangements typically postulate that if we can find out how the rules were shaped and who was responsible for designing them, then we know the constraints on the transformation of social into political alignments and the desired and attained consequences of those lineups.<sup>19</sup> Legislative and judicial histories in many instances start from the results of electoral decisions and reason backward to the electoral formations and forward to the fruits of legal changes.<sup>20</sup> Those who focus on administration routinely infer, rather than determine empirically, the effects of policies as well as their legislative, executive, and judicial preconditions.<sup>21</sup> Impact analysts regularly take all previous stages as if they had already been read.<sup>22</sup>

Consider, for example, three recent and related themes in the history of American political thought--republicanism, political culture, and the notion of positive and negative liberalism. Studies of ideas can focus on one or more of three levels--individuals, small groups, and vast collections of persons, often whole societies. For the first two, texts, letters, and descriptions of behavior usually exhaust the evidence, and the trails of inference are typically short. Data for the latter is generally much thinner and more diverse, and the path from fact to conclusion is usually long and tangled. Gaps between the levels are greater and leaps between them, more perilous than historians sometimes appear to realize.<sup>23</sup> Perhaps reacting against the Progressive historians' muckraking assumption that political rhetoric was almost never a true guide to the motives of political actors, recent historians of political thought sometimes seem to assume that it always is. In any case, it is with the third, societal level that this paper is primarily concerned.

The republicanism thesis doubles as both a consensus and a conflict theory.<sup>24</sup> In Bernard Bailyn's version, Americans absorbed the writings of the eighteenth century English "commonwealthmen" and became hypersensitive to signs of government corruption and to the expansion of state power in general. Thus, the American Revolution was a preemptive revolt against an imagined attempt to extend a big government of grasping, self-interested placemen to the colonies. According to J. G. A. Pocock, the lineage descends from Florentine Renaissance humanists, and its positive aspect was the ideal of civic virtue. Pushing ahead some decades, Sean Wilentz finds "artisan republicanism," with its core beliefs in independence and community, inspiring post-1830 entrepreneurs, who used the individualist cudgel to beat down collective action by employees, as well as workers, who condemned the "egoistic competition" fostered by capitalists as an attack on equal rights and social harmony. In Hegelian fashion, in other words, Wilentz splits the republican synthesis into individualistic thesis and communitarian antithesis. Closer to the mainstream of political history, Mills Thornton depicts a political style common to Alabama's Jacksonians and Whigs, who played on the electors' paranoia about threats to their autonomy, alleged attempts to reduce them to subservience by wealthy planters and urban capitalists within the state and hierarchy-ridden Yankees in the nation. In a related work, covering the whole country, Michael Holt contends that a republican tradition of "self-government, liberty, and equality

for whites," shared by all white Americans, motivated the behavior of both sides in the antebellum sectional conflict. People in each region saw threats to the government's responsiveness to popular opinion as coming from the other.<sup>25</sup>

Although the models underlying the Republicanism thesis have rarely if ever been explicitly elaborated, two might be proposed. In the first, the semiological interpretation, inherited language constrained thought and, therefore, action. American politics developed differently from European not because Americans had a different social or economic structure or greater economic resources, but because they inherited a constricted political language of individualism, equal rights (for Caucasians, at least), and libertarianism. Collectivist, cooperative, or openly hierarchical solutions were simply unthinkable in this country. In the second, the behavioral interpretation, whatever the contrast with other countries, expressed values led straightforwardly to actions. People did what they did for the reasons that their leaders said. If antebellum northern politicians said that they feared a southern conspiracy, that is what they meant and that is why the electorate voted Republican in 1860. Proponents of the various republican theses do not openly seek to refute other possible hypotheses, such as that politicians and voters might have a variety of less well articulated or unarticulated motives, including straightforward economic self-interest, that political structures might constrain the range of feasible options, and that different groups might act for reasons so diverse that they cannot usefully be subsumed under one grand rubric.

A related but even less specific notion, that of "political culture," has recently become all-pervasive. Once one notices it, the phrase crops up everywhere. Political culture might be defined as the understandings with which a group in a particular era approached politics-- Whig or Democratic or working class or American political culture. While the currency of republicanism is the rhetoric of shared ideals, that of political culture is the symbol; the one draws on philosophy, the other is closer to anthropology and literary criticism; the first emphasizes a consensus on values and explains conflict by differences in empirical observations or societal positions, while the second stresses clashes between subcultures. Proponents of republicanism are "lumpers," pointing to similarities across all groups; devotees of political culture explanations are usually "splitters," emphasizing differences between subsets of the population. While one might suppose that both would concentrate on the question of how to assess the importance of such similarities and differences, neither has.

Advocates of cultural explanations of politics often explicitly avow their dependence on symbolic anthropology, and their favorite authors are Clifford Geertz and Victor Turner.<sup>26</sup> In Geertz's Balinese cockfight view of mankind, as reflected in the work of the proto-Geertzians Richard Hofstadter and David Herbert Donald, or the self-consciously Geertzian Jean Baker, political action is symbolic, not instrumentally rational. Populists endorsed inflationism and the subtreasury not to increase their incomes, but in a nostalgic effort to restore a past "golden age;" abolitionists condemned slavery not just because they thought it wrong, but as part of a subtle, oblique attack on the status of rising northern capitalists; northern Democrats opposed racially egalitarian policies such as black suffrage not so much because they feared losing political power as because "the Negro became a code for the despised innovations of Civil War and Reconstruction," a code that historians should interpret by reviewing minstrel shows, not campaign debates or election returns.<sup>27</sup> Elections are most

profitably studied as "rituals," "ceremonies," involving "a series of expressive actions and hidden agendas," not as exercises in purposive choice between public policies.<sup>28</sup>

Another theoretical prop for political culture interpretations derives from Robert K. Merton's concept of "negative reference groups." In this view, people somehow form positive and negative identifications with certain social groups, such as religious or ethnic ones, define others as adversaries, and enter politics to put them down. Issues become merely convenient weapons in largely sham battles over relative prestige and nonmaterial societal position.<sup>29</sup> Neither Merton nor his chief historical follower, Lee Benson, made clear how positive or negative reference groups formed or maintained themselves, how they overcame the "free rider problem," or why they were satisfied with merely play-acted victories or defeats.<sup>30</sup>

Closely related to both the political culture and republican views is the positive and negative liberalism thesis. Here, the Democrats are cast as the heirs of anti-statist republicanism and the Whigs and Republicans as advocates of government intervention to stop drinking, promote economic growth, and deprive the slaveholders of their slaves. In Lee Benson's vision, the roots of these contrary impulses lay in religious tendencies: evangelicals were activist do-gooders, while ritualists opposed the collective imposition of moral codes. Whether these were absolute differences or only proclivities, whether each side's stands were somehow causally related to each other or merely a cluster of similar positions, and how much inconsistency in the behavior of the opposing forces would invalidate the thesis are not spelled out by proponents.

The model of man behind this theory is a variety of cultural determinism. Politics merely reflects the general orientations that people form elsewhere, particularly in church, and then bring with them to the voting booth. The rules of the process and the machinations of politicians do not shape political outcomes.

Although rational choice theorists generally do not attempt to explain how and why people arrive at their preferences, they do pay a great deal of attention to the problems of how opinions are organized and how they should be represented.<sup>31</sup> A brief introduction to one of the best developed tools of rational choice, the spatial model, will not only give the reader some feel for the style of the approach, but will also illuminate some of the difficulties in relating attitudes to each other and to behavior that plague the republicanism, political culture, and positive/negative liberalism approaches.

Perhaps the easiest way to visualize opinion is through the one-dimensional spatial model (Figure 1). In this figure, the endpoints of the scale are the extreme proslavery and antislavery positions, and the points in between reflect possible stances on the issue. Each person is assumed, at any particular time, to have an "ideal point" or "bliss point," that is, a policy that she would like the nation to adopt. William Lloyd Garrison, for example, would prefer point "G"; George Fitzhugh, "N"; Stephen A. Douglas, "P"; David Wilmot, "W"; and so on. Given a choice between all these positions, assuming that each had a substantial probability of winning, and that there were no other significant issues, each person would vote for candidates or proposals nearest her ideal point. That none of these assumptions is plausible emphasizes the difficulty of inferences of attitudes from such behavior as voting, and suggests that more complex models are needed. A political structure biased toward two-

party competition and generally risk-averse politicians who fear to take extreme positions constrain the choice set offered to voters. Many electors may agree with the issue stances taken by minor parties, but vote "strategically" for one of the major parties because the minors' present chances are so small.

(Figure 1 about here)

Figure 2 presents a two-dimensional spatial model, in which a union/secession dimension has been added to the one on slavery. Here, Garrison's point "G" is close to that of the southern fire-eaters (point "F") on the union issue, but very far away on the slavery spectrum. Lincoln (point "L") and the southern Whigs (point "W") also agree on the value of the union and disagree, although not so much as Garrison and the fire-eaters do, on slavery. Buchanan (point "B") is represented as an extreme doughface, indifferent to the union.

(Figure 2 about here)

Adding a second dimension emphasizes three additional features of the analysis of public opinion. First, a person's position on a particular proposal, say, the Wilmot Proviso, may have been a function of his stance on two or more larger issues, which may not have correlated perfectly. It is perfectly reasonable to say that one might prefer to see slavery abolished entirely, but that since such a proposal would induce the south to secede, one would settle for ending slavery in the territories. Therefore, later analysts cannot unambiguously determine attitudes on slavery or any other issue from expressions of opinion or votes relating only to that issue unless all relevant issues were directly correlated.<sup>32</sup> To be perfectly correlated in the two dimensional case, the positions of nearly everyone would have to fall on a line at a 45 degree angle to each axis. Second, the positive and negative liberalism thesis, and perhaps the republicanism thesis, imply that all issues were interrelated in just that manner. This hypothesis might be represented by figure 3, in which the arrows indicate the posited direction of causation.

(Figure 3 about here)

In this model, a fundamental political attitude, based on a pietistic or liturgical religious orientation, is said to induce people to take identical stances on a set of important political issues. These specific stances might either be envisioned as caused by a general orientation toward government action, or as summed up by that orientation.<sup>33</sup> Representing the hypothesis in this manner immediately reveals two difficulties: people may not line up the same way on all issues (pietistic southerners, for example, may oppose prohibition and/or abolition) and the endpoints may not be analogous to each other (Is public funding for parochial schools not intervention by government? Could slavery exist without law?). A third point suggested by the two-dimensional figure is that expressed opinions on policy could shift as a result of the rise or fading of other concerns. After Fort Sumter, northerners' fears of endangering the union by taking extreme positions on slavery vanished. Indeed, by late 1862, the view that victory and reunion depended on abolition united Lincoln

and Garrison. Conversely, by the spring of 1865, some southerners became convinced that only by abolishing slavery could they preserve the Confederacy, while others, no doubt the majority, believed that without slavery, secession was pointless.<sup>34</sup> Events had twisted the union axis by 180 degrees in the north, but Dixie, relatively united on disunionism and proslavery in 1861, had split apart by 1865. Opinions on slavery certainly changed during the war, but the growing popularity of abolitionism during the war, once the constraint of preserving the union was lifted, suggests that northern opinion had been much more fundamentally antislavery before the war than historians have often claimed.

Of course, there are generally more than two issues, people's opinions differ not only on what to do, but on how important each issue is, and people change their minds. Although it is difficult to represent three or more issues geometrically, there is no difficulty in doing so algebraically. Suppose we scale each issue from 1 to 10.<sup>35</sup> Then the positive/negative liberalism thesis can be expressed as the prediction that someone taking position 1 (pietist) on the religious dimension would also be likely to take position 1, or close to it, on the dry, slavery, and school issues, and on any other related ones that cropped up in the future. His ordered "4-tuple" of preferences on the issues would be {1,1,1,1}. But even if people's preferences were correlated across issues, they might differ on the weights they placed on each and on the certainty with which they held their positions. To represent these facets of opinions in our algebraic formulation, we can simply add more lines ("vectors") to the issues vector to form a series of related vectors that might be called an "opinion matrix."

(Figure 4 about here)

In Figure 4, each issue has associated with it a weight, scaled from 1 to 10, and an index of certainty, similarly scaled. The individual portrayed considers the last two issues very important, the first, nearly as important, but the second, relatively unimportant. If she were considering which of two candidates to vote for, she would place much less emphasis on their stances on issue 2 than on issues 3 and 4. Furthermore, while her view on issue 3 is very firm, she is not so sure of herself on issue 4, and even less committed on issues 1 and 2. Thus, she might easily be convinced to change her mind between elections or during an election campaign on the first two issues.

These explicit mathematical representations of attitudes provide a vantage point for evaluating the republicanism, political culture, and positive/negative liberalism approaches. All three theories seek not only to describe attitudes but to explain their genesis and change and their influence on behavior. Not the least of the virtues of spatial models is to remind us of a series of truisms about research design and inference that are too often ignored in practice. First, a leader's attitudes may differ from those of his followers, who may vote for or otherwise signal their allegiance to him because, given the available choices, his position is closer to theirs than that of any other leader. A research design that offers only evidence about leaders' opinions as evidence for the views of the masses is therefore fundamentally incorrect.<sup>36</sup>

Second, people's positions may shift for a variety of reasons. The mobbing of William Lloyd Garrison converted Wendell Phillips to abolitionist activism, the plight of fugitive slaves aroused antislavery feelings in myriad northerners, and southern intransigence and the

contribution of black soldiers and sailors to the war effort shifted northern white opinion in an antislavery direction. Paradoxically, none of the three historical theories accommodates change very well, while that derived from social science offers at least the possibility of modeling alteration over time.

Third, none of the historical theories is easily confined to a specific subset of the population at a single time. Baker and Howe admit that many partisans of the other party shared much of the political culture of Democrats or Whigs, and that many in each party deviated from the party stands. Their descriptions, in other words, are of groups that overlapped considerably on the spectrum of opinion, and they propose no means for determining the central tendency or degree of variation of opinion in each party.

Fourth, expressions of opinion may not be "sincere"--that is, people may not reveal their "true" positions because they wish to move opinion closer to them in a sequence of votes, or because they are not offered a full range of choices, or because they have multiple objectives. For instance, Congressmen may defeat moderate proposals in order to force moderates to join them in later votes against extremists from the other side; voters in winner-take-all elections may opt for their second or third choices to prevent the election of their least favored alternative; politicians aiming at election may stay within the bounds of public opinion.<sup>37</sup> Thus, the failure of the Crittenden Compromise should have startled no one; the fact that men in some northern states made the Know-Nothings, rather than the Republicans temporarily the chief opposition party to the Democrats is no sure sign that they truly weighed nativism higher than antislavery in their preference functions; and the Republicans' unwillingness to move beyond free-soilism until after secession does not prove that they really wished to leave southern slavery alone.<sup>38</sup>

Fifth, since behavior is often an indication of attitudes, any descriptive analysis of attitudes must attempt to distinguish slogans and rationalizations from "true" avowals of belief. The statement of a northerner who claimed to be against slavery, but voted for John C. Breckinridge in 1860 is suspect. Nineteenth century paeans to republican virtue, liberty, and equality should be treated with the same healthy skepticism that we apply to similar orotundities today. The admission of advocates of the republicanism thesis that there was a growing disjunction between "rhetoric and reality" even during the Revolution, and that it widened later should raise suspicions about the accuracy of the description of rhetoric.<sup>39</sup>

All three theories seem to assume that attitudes produce behavior, rather than vice-versa, and all are vague on whether a basic orientation *causes* people to take specific issue stances or whether that orientation merely summarizes positions on a series of related issues.<sup>40</sup> Figure 3 brings these issues to attention and suggests the need for clarification. Recent articles by the social psychologist Thomas F. Pettigrew suggest that in some instances, changed behavior can precede and influence attitudes. Forced by the national government to accept substantial amounts of racial integration in schools and public accommodations, white southerners *subsequently* gave substantially more liberal responses on the desirability of interracial contacts.<sup>41</sup> The failure of secession and the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment seems to have reduced southern white proslavery opinion. Howard Schuman *et al.* found that white attitudes on particular racial issues in America from the 1940s to the 1980s were by no means all of one piece. Trends in survey answers to questions about racial intermarriage or housing were not precisely parallel to those about busing or the integration of public

places.<sup>42</sup> To array all these views under the single rubric of "racism" or to contend that a person's position on a general racist dimension caused her to take specific stands or to behave in a particular manner seems misleading.

Values, thoughts, and attitudes have never been the only dependent variables, the only foci of political history. Seeking synthesis through a concentration on "public culture" and a redemption of the discipline's debt to the public by de-emphasizing "technical" or quantitative expertise, as Thomas Bender proposes, threatens a counterproductive narrowing of the field and a needless renunciation of useful tools.<sup>43</sup> The explanation of political behavior--of masses and elites in and out of government, of policies adopted, and of the effects of those policies on different segments of the polity and the society--surely constitutes a worthwhile area in itself, as well as a reflection of political minds.

The second major concentration in political history, electoral behavior, is particularly twinned with its political science counterpart, probably because, in American political science at least, electoral behavior is the most intensely studied subject. Yet whereas the so-called "new political historians" of the 1960s and early 1970s were fully aware of and drew freely upon developments in their sister subdiscipline, something about political science, perhaps the advances in the typical level of mathematical techniques used in its books and articles, seems to have frightened off historians more recently. Still tied to the early Michigan School's social psychological approach, its stress on party identification, and its contention that the masses of voters have no settled or organized political opinions, political historians have largely ignored the controversy over issue voting, the debate over the effect of economic conditions on elections, advances in such statistical methods as logit, probit, simultaneous equations, and LISREL, and, most significantly, the development of the rational choice perspective.<sup>44</sup>

Paradoxically, at the same time that historians have seemingly ceased to read political science, political scientists have become more historical in outlook. Mesmerized by the powerful tool of survey analysis, possessing only a few scholarly nationwide polls, and mistrusting aggregate data because of the so-called "ecological fallacy," most American political scientists of the 1950s and early 1960s tended to ignore history and to state their findings as timeless generalizations. But the accumulation of three decades of opinion polls in America and other countries, the realization of disadvantages in sample surveys, and the development of statistical methods for overcoming problems of aggregation have led political scientists to pay much more attention to change, to emphasize different and variable factors in their explanations, and to investigate the pre-World War II era.<sup>45</sup>

There is much solid and stimulating research currently being done in American electoral history. Indeed, both the methods and leading concepts of the field have recently become an export item, balancing, to a degree, the American discipline's traditional intellectual trade deficits with Britain and France. Impressive if imperfect books by John Phillips and Kenneth Wald and a forthcoming monograph by Gary Cox raise the hope of settling questions about the development of the British party system and the nature of its social cleavages that traditional narrative and elite histories left forever open.<sup>46</sup> Although the French may have forgotten the pioneering role of Andre Siegfried in electoral studies, books and articles by the Americans Thomas Beck, William Brustein, and Lynn Hunt have used

American-style statistical techniques to investigate questions about the social correlates and continuity of political tendencies in Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary France.<sup>47</sup> Stanley Suval has transferred regression analysis and the ethnocultural thesis to Wilhelmine Germany, and a spate of books and dissertations, mostly American, though some of the best, German, have turned the question of the sources of the Nazi vote into perhaps the hottest current topic in electoral history.<sup>48</sup>

Despite all this commendable work--and there is much that I have left out here as well as a great deal, no doubt, of which I am ignorant--there is a palpable feeling of stagnation in the subfield. The two chief organizing concepts of the so-called "new political history" in America, the ethnocultural and critical elections theses, have ceased to develop theoretically and methodologically, and have been criticized so effectively that they have taken on the traits of what Imre Lakatos called "degenerating research programs."<sup>49</sup> Without precluding attempts to resuscitate them, I suggest that a shift from these social psychologically-inspired hypotheses to one derived from economics--rational choice--would reinvigorate political history and enable it to escape the current cul de sacs.

History and social psychology are so ill-matched that it is a wonder that the affair has lasted so long. The original Michigan School considered political issues as evanescent and of little importance in elections, because voters, Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes found, were usually too wedded to parties, too unconcerned with politics, and too non-ideological and mentally disorganized to respond to ideas.<sup>50</sup> Political historians, on the other hand, have traditionally focused almost exclusively on issues, have generally believed that politics mattered to their subjects, and have tended to treat the beliefs of the mass public as more coherent and standardized than even the most generous studies of modern public opinion find them to be. *The American Voter* took candidate strategies and electoral rules as exogenously given, and elites and local contexts as practically invisible. Historians have lavished attention on just these facets of politics. In the Michigan model, normality is the mode, and anything more than temporary deviations are difficult to explain.<sup>51</sup> Historians gravitate toward change. The socialization literature tells us a lot about how children in general learn about politics, but little about why specific groups of people absorb different lessons, or how adults continue their education--topics with which historians are usually much more concerned.<sup>52</sup> Michigan has little to say about legislatures, committees, bureaucracies, and policies; historians are or should be crucially absorbed in the study of these topics. Most important, Michigan is deterministic--party identification is a supplement to every baby's formula--but historians of nearly every ideological stripe tend to treat individuals or classes of people as having the ability to choose.<sup>53</sup>

In each respect, rational choice theory, which seems increasingly dominant in political science, is a more attractive partner for political history.<sup>54</sup> Social, public, collective, or rational choice theory--no one phrase is yet standard--may be defined as the economic study of nonmarket decision-making, often employing formal logic, game theory, or other mathematical techniques to reach its conclusions. Like other economists, social choice theorists generally, but not always assume that the actors (usually individuals, but possibly groups with identical preference functions over relevant issues) are egoistic, rational utility maximizers.<sup>55</sup> Empiricists often study how well various social choice and other types of models explain actual practices, or laboratory or computer-simulated results.

Two examples may serve to fix the body of theory for those previously unacquainted with it. In his pioneering *Social Choice and Individual Values*, Kenneth Arrow demonstrated that if one posits a few seemingly obvious traits of people's preferences, then in distressingly typical cases, no way of making decisions (such as majority rule) leads to consistent results. Among three proposals, for instance, the one that wins may depend on the order in which they are voted on. This is referred to as "the paradox of voting." The "Prisoners' Dilemma" is perhaps even better known. Two people have been arrested for allegedly committing a crime. Each is questioned separately and is made the following offer: 1) If neither of you confesses, you will both get a year in jail. 2) If both confess, both get five years. 3) If you confess and the other does not, you go free, while he gets ten years. 4) If he confesses and you do not, you get ten years, and he goes free. The dilemma is that each self-interested prisoner would prefer that his partner confesses, while he remains silent. But since both realize this, and since the penalty for "cooperating" (with the other prisoner by not confessing, not cooperating with the police!) if the other "defects" is so high, the only rational strategy if the game is played once is for each to confess. If each is local, therefore, each ends up with his third ranked choice, five years in jail. Studies of this very simple game have yielded interesting insights into wars, strikes, arms races, and other forms of bargaining.<sup>56</sup>

In the field of electoral behavior, social choice treats issues and policies as central, for voters are assumed to minimize the distance between their preferences (which may include opinions about the candidates' personal traits) and the stances of those who seek their support.<sup>57</sup> Candidates, in turn, position themselves to win nominations, and parties, to win elections by moving, or seeming to move toward popular orientations. Electoral politicians, committee chairmen, and bureaucrats shape voting rules and agendas so as to maximize their utilities. Electors adopt short-cuts to reduce the cost of gathering information and making decisions. Shifts in the inclinations of the voters or in candidate tactics modify outcomes and policies. Since all players in the game, particularly the officeholders and officeseekers, continually reassess the positions, past moves, and possible designs of the other participants, there is little stasis or determinism. The one important topic in political history not treated in this mode of analysis is that which neoclassical economics, from which public choice grew, has always slighted--the determinants of taste formation.<sup>58</sup> On this subject, historians will learn little more from social choice than they have from social psychology. Indeed, it is the rational choice theorists' emphasis on preferences, their eagerness to take values seriously, that makes the approach so much more naturally complementary to the history of political ideas than that of social psychology.

To gauge how the substitution of a rational choice for a social psychological or symbolic anthropological viewpoint might alter the way political history is written, one must first make clear how large theories are employed in the discipline. They seem to me to have both Lakatosian and Hemphelian functions. That is, they define research programs and supply covering laws.<sup>59</sup> Less grandly, they suggest topics, point to appropriate data, and provide interpretative glosses. If adults are assumed to identify mindlessly with their parties, then researchers should concentrate on discovering lasting group loyalties and unraveling the socialization process, rather than on issues and elite strategy. Alignments should only gradually erode except when the disruptions of war or depression or a sudden change in the population of electors orients a set of predominantly new voters overwhelmingly in a

particular direction. Likewise, if politics is thought to have a primarily affective importance for the vast majority, then one should attend to the symbols and their manipulators, to campaign rituals and politicians' charisma, rather than to policies and their material effects and the relations in both directions between policy and the electorate. On the other hand, if politics is conceived of as an arena in which voters, politicians, and non-elected officials, all of whom have relatively well-ordered preferences, usually attempt to maximize tangible, rather than expressive benefits, then fluctuations in electoral outcomes and their correspondence with changes in rules, candidate strategies, and policy outputs become the very stuff of politics.

By highlighting differences in the questions, choices of evidence, and ex-post rationales that the theories suggest, I do not mean to imply that such frameworks are noncomparable, disjoint, insulated from tests. Lakatos and Hempel do not necessarily exclude Popper.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, a great deal of political science over the last two decades has been concerned with delineating and assessing the implications of the social psychological and rational choice outlooks, and one of the concerns of political history in the future ought to be contributing to that ongoing controversy.<sup>61</sup>

The widely recognized theoretical and empirical gaps and anomalies in the still developing social choice field make it unlikely that historians will embrace this viewpoint unthinkingly.<sup>62</sup> Disequilibria and counterintuitive notions lie at the very heart of the outlook: Voting paradoxes are not only possible, but prevalent. The logic of free riding makes it difficult to understand why any rational human would ever vote or take part in any group activity unless directly paid to do so. For most realistic political games, there is no dominant strategy, and for most electoral situations, no stable solution. Social choice theorists are a combative and pessimistic lot, and the field contains more proofs of nonexistence and impossibility than certitude about the pattern of human actions. Historians who seek easy answers, miracle cures from the social sciences, should not expect to find them here.

In fact, it is just this skepticism about received notions, this doubting of traditional assumptions and conclusions, that makes social choice seem so appealing for empirical practitioners--it reminds us not to let down our intellectual guard, and it makes us active participants, not passive consumers, in the process of discovery. Why, in light of the free rider principle, do people participate? How, if equilibria do not generally exist, do politicians choose issue stances? Is there empirical historical evidence that cooperation develops, as Axelrod suggests, because self-interested players realize that the political game will be played repeatedly, and that the best strategy for all concerned is what he calls "tit for tat" (i.e., "cooperate" if the other does, but "defect" in retaliation if he defects)? What allows democracies to resolve conflicts without devolving into dictatorships or oligarchies, as many theoretical results predict? Which of the intuitively plausible assumptions of social choice that produce such troubling results should be replaced, which constraints loosened? How is rationality bounded in particular cases, to state the question in Herbert Simon's terms, or, to view it another way, what additional assumptions about information, uncertainty, and decision-making are necessary to model the real world?<sup>63</sup> Like empirical political scientists and experimental economists, historians may play a role in refining general theories.

To draw some examples from the Civil War era, why did turnout rise in the north in the 1850s, and was it higher in states with close elections--where the stake for each voter and

party worker was higher--than in those where one party won overwhelmingly? Why did the Kansas-Nebraska Act, but not the Missouri Crisis of 1819 or the Mexican War of the 1840s lead to the formation of a viable antislavery political party? Why and how did the expectations of politicians as to the potential success of such a party change? Could the breakdown of compromise during the 1850s or during 1865-66 usefully be modeled as the abandonment of cooperative strategies in a prisoners' dilemma game? Does the ability of the national government to avoid dictatorship and to preserve most conventional political procedures during the Civil War and Reconstruction imply that, far from reducing the number of axioms, social choice theorists need to add constitutional rules to their lists of assumptions?

Yet the adumbration of theory will probably be less central in the study of past than of current politics for two reasons. First, the available data is ill-tailored for this purpose, and, unlike political scientists and economists, we cannot add items to future questionnaires or run experiments to generate more relevant information. Data deficiencies will force historians to be somewhat cleverer in devising methods of evaluating these theories than other social scientists usually need to be. Second, non- or anti-QUASSH historians are as unlikely as humanistically-oriented social scientists to acknowledge the importance of this enterprise or to be willing and able to take part in it, and such people compose a larger part of our discipline than of others.

Besides its possible contribution to the production of generalizations about political behavior, a political history influenced by rational choice will differ from current practice in ten other respects, as well. The notions of critical elections and party systems and the ethnocultural thesis will not be abandoned, but their influence will be reduced and they will be seen in a different light.<sup>64</sup> If analysts no longer expect that people chose a party and then adhered to it unshakably, if party identification is considered, rather, a continuous short-hand assessment of party and candidate performance and attractiveness, then patterns of electoral behavior should be expected to vary somewhat from election to election, depending on the degree of similarity of candidates, issues, and economic conditions.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, because the functions of various governments differed and changed over time, and because the sets of candidates and policy stances did as well, election results should often have diverged at the national and sub-national levels. If a critical election is seen as merely an occasion when an unusually large number of voters made untypically great changes in their expectations about which party at either the national, state, or local level was closer to their ideal points and was more likely to run the government competently, then variations in the patterns of voting at each governmental level should not be seen as anomalous, but merely rational. Moreover, the contention that local politics was somehow more fundamental than national politics would no longer make any sense if the two alignments were not assumed to be perfectly correlated.<sup>66</sup> Ethnoreligious issues undoubtedly did dominate many local and state, and some national elections, but their importance should not be assumed constant or universal any more than the significance of class or race or region or corruption or general economic performance or foreign policy or any other issues should be. Rather than trying to decide which of two alignments, usually class or ethnocultural, pervaded all the elections in a whole "era," political historians should be attempting to determine the mix of all issues that voter and candidate decisions propelled to the fore in each election and how these changed

from election to election.<sup>67</sup> Critical elections will continue to attract attention, but if candidates and voters constantly monitored each other, then incremental, homeostatic adjustments should receive more emphasis than they do in current historiography.<sup>68</sup>

Second, collective action unconfined to formal political institutions will be viewed not as a separate, largely emotional or symbolic sphere, but as merely another means of rationally seeking to attain political or economic objectives.<sup>69</sup> Of course, many historians and other social scientists have always considered this kind of behavior as fundamentally instrumental-- labor union organizing and its suppression or discouragement, anti-abolitionist mobs in the pre-Civil War north, violence against southern Republicans during Reconstruction, the formation of producer interest groups and of organizations of consumers or potential consumers of governmental services. But if observers more often see conventional and extra-institutional modes as complementary or as substitutes for each other, the scope of political history will be usefully extended, and questions such as why an individual or group chose a particular mix of actions at a particular time may be harder to ignore. For example, confronted by well-entrenched parties in the 1830s, abolitionists organized primarily as an interest group, as farmers did in the 1920s and 1930s under similar political conditions. The collapse of one major party in the 1850s encouraged antislavery men to stream into a new political party, just as the frailty of state-level opposition parties in the south and west provided an opening for the Populist party in the 1880s and 1890s. Furthermore, employing models more explicitly in this area may lead to better founded generalizations about sets of events. As Charles Tilly has argued, most current collective action models are static and ignore the effects of interactions between participants. If an individual's decision to take part in a movement is contingent on what others do, then only a dynamic theory can explain why any actions get taken at all.<sup>70</sup>

A third major change will be that the study of regulation, policy, and the impacts of the economy on the government and the government on the economy will become more important and more integrated with other areas in political history. A considerable literature has grown up on the degree to which regulatory agencies were created or captured by the interests that they were supposed to regulate, and this body of scholarship will benefit from exposure to the new organizational economics and to theories of repeated prisoners' dilemma games, and from more self-conscious links with studies of elections and legislatures.<sup>71</sup> It may well be that this area is the one in the American research that will eventually have the greatest international impact, because, though not all countries have contested elections, they do have bureaucracies.

Some historians and students of business and bureaucracy have already made impressive starts.<sup>72</sup> While Samuel P. Hays, Robert H. Wiebe, Morton Keller, and others have adopted the functionalist view that the development of the economy or increasing urbanization and industrialization necessarily brought increases in government regulatory activity or in social welfare schemes, Richard L. McCormick has shown that specific campaigns by politicians in New York and other states and by muckrakers across the nation convinced the articulate public and, subsequently, majorities of the voters that business corruption of politics adversely affected their interests and that new regulatory institutions run by "impartial experts" were needed to combat this problem.<sup>73</sup> Terence J. McDonald has demonstrated that progressive politicians in San Francisco broke the consensus that taxes should be kept low and

government services, starved. Robert Margo has modeled racially discriminatory school boards, while Carl Harris has shown how relatively politically insulated administrators could partially mitigate short-term political trends in racial political power.<sup>74</sup> These efforts to pry open the "black box" of functionalism and to expose the individual motives and actions that perpetuated or permuted political institutions or shared understandings have a natural affinity with the individualistic, anti-deterministic theory of rational choice. Some of the freshest and most exciting recent work in political history, like Moliere's bourgeois gentleman, has been "speaking rational choice" without knowing it.

Two related topics where historians can learn much from the other social sciences and where we can make major contributions, the study of the relationship of government to economic inequality and of the impact of economic conditions on voting, also deserve major attention.<sup>75</sup> The attractiveness to candidates of the median voter's position suggests that governments will tend, if they adopt redistributive policies at all, to reward the middling classes, rather than the rich or the poor. To what extent has this been true at different times and places and what accounts for any variations? Models of the so-called "political economy cycle" imply that governments try to pump up the economy in time for national elections. Has this been the case historically, and, if so, for how long, and how did incumbents and voters obtain sufficient knowledge about economic conditions to be able to act and react? How heavily did voters weigh the economic fluctuations of the mid-nineteenth century, particularly the depressions of the 1830s and the 1870s, in comparison with other factors, in making their voting decisions? The hypothesis states that economic growth in countries subject to self-interested intervention in the economy by politicians ought to show a regular pattern of fluctuations. What about these countries in the past, or the economies of nations without competitive elections in both the past and the present?<sup>76</sup>

Fourth, there will be more emphasis on legislatures.<sup>77</sup> Under what circumstances do legislatures make large and small changes in the structures and levels of funding of government? How are these associated with elections?<sup>78</sup> Were the innovations of the Congress elected in 1866 less than those of Congresses that took office after "critical elections"? To what extent are such extraordinary alterations due to elite turnover within or between parties?<sup>79</sup> In the nineteenth century, when there was much more turnover in Congressional seats than there is today, was there more or less legislative policy change than currently? What types of policies were adopted consensually, which ones provoked conflict and delay, how did the mix of these vary from time to time and from place to place, and to what degree did uncertainty and differential access to information and expertise account for such variations?<sup>80</sup> What devices did legislators use to push or block programs? To what degree were they ideologues, and to what degree, opportunists seeking to enhance their chances for reelection or higher office? How did they interact with bureaucrats and interest groups? How did the increasingly professionalized state education departments of the mid-to late nineteenth century, for instance, cooperate with the short-term amateurs who sat on state legislative committees on education? Roll call analyses have sometimes been criticized for diminishing the role of leaders and for understating the contingent and dynamic elements in legislative outcomes. The extensive social science literature on logrolling and vote trading should provide a useful corrective.<sup>81</sup>

Fifth, what strategies did candidates adopt under various conditions? Did they appear to move toward the voter with median opinions, as theoretical models suggest, and if not, why not? Did pressures from their "core constituencies" or from activists' ideologies lead them to take differing stands on issues and to adopt non-consensual policies in office? Did the white and black extremists who constituted the major blocs of the southern Democratic and Republican parties, respectively, inevitably drive the two parties apart during Reconstruction and destroy the chances of moderates?<sup>82</sup>

Sixth, did electors behave as if they had adopted some simple, common decision rule, such as economic retrospective voting or a checklist of performance items, and under what conditions does voting become more concerned with non-pocketbook issues?<sup>83</sup> Seventh, what distortions did electoral and allocation rules introduce into the political process and how consequential were they for the fundamental question of politics--who gets what? How did the rules shape the game that politicians and voters played?<sup>84</sup>

Eighth, the new tools of social choice and principal-agent theories may help to reintegrate judicial into political history. If the courts "follow[ed] the 'illection' returns," did they respond to the median voter? What incentives did judges as principals use to control other judges, litigants, and potential litigants, and how were judges as agents influenced by executives, legislators, and constitution-makers? Did litigants as principals view the courts as separate from other facets of politics, or did they attempt to reach their goals by simultaneously or sequentially playing the game in several political arenas?<sup>85</sup> How did judicial rules and agendas change, and what impacts did such modifications have? Explicit theory may offer some illumination on these and other traditional questions in legal history, and legal history may in turn alter the "stylized facts" that the theorists must attempt to encompass.

Ninth, since social choice inevitably reopens large, often normative questions, a reoriented political history will necessarily counter the criticism that it must be mired in detailed, particularistic studies that ignore broad topics of lasting significance.<sup>86</sup> The value-laden problems of how individuals *should* act to attain their goals, how fair rules should be written, and how political institutions *should* be structured so as to be responsive to public opinion are never far away from the descriptive problems of how, in specified instances, people *did* act, how procedures *were* set out, how bodies *were* organized. By self-consciously attending to "scientific" contemporary theorizing, historians will therefore simultaneously return toward the traditional role of history as "philosophy teaching by example."

Finally, historians will have to refresh their mathematics or learn more in order to be able to acquaint themselves with the new literature in economics and political science. Without a fair acquaintance with calculus, a bit of linear algebra and microeconomics, and a good deal of statistics, many of these works will be inaccessible and their consequences--which should be considered as alternatives to traditional notions even if they are ultimately rejected--will be untestable.

Having specified some of the changes that I hope will come about in political history, let me close by emphasizing what my proposal is *not* designed to do. I do not favor abandoning any subfield. In particular, the history of political ideas will continue to be robust, but it will have to become, as well, more rigorous. Nor would I ban any type of evidence, although that which can most easily and meaningfully be quantified will be privileged in most inquiries,

simply because it facilitates systematic evaluations. I also strongly doubt that it is either possible or desirable to subsume large chunks of history under a single substantive rubric. It seems to me more probable that republicanism, liberalism, sectionalism, class or ethnic or sexual conflict, modernization, the rise of capitalism or large organizations, the growth of the state will all be stressed at various times and places, but none exclusively. While rational choice theory seems to me a most promising framework, I am far from contending that it be the only one. It has its deficiencies, its empty and blind spots, and its critics.<sup>87</sup> What I do insist upon is that the historian explicitly adopt a theory, and that he or she do so in full knowledge of criticisms that have been made of it, not as if theorists were infallible "authorities." A young and still growing research program, social choice should not be exempt from criticism, but it ought, as Lakatos commonsensically urged, to be sheltered from premature rejection.<sup>88</sup>

The historian need not become an economic theorist or an expert on the thought of Machiavelli or Harrington in order to complete her study. Rather, she need only be an intelligent and critical consumer of others' theories and findings, willing and able to assess the implications of those studies for her case, and perhaps vice-versa. The vast majority of works will not span the entire range from thought and culture, through electoral politics, legislative, administrative, and judicial action, to policy outputs and impacts, and some scholars will merely propose, rather than test hypotheses. But the strands of political as well as other histories should be more closely interwoven. In the past, historians have gone to great lengths to examine every relevant document collection. In the future, they should feel just as uncomfortable if they have not mastered the appropriate theory and methods and absorbed the findings of empirical work elsewhere on the spectrum of political history. Moreover, they need to take into account the pertinent implications of social and economic histories. How did the pattern of apparently high geographic mobility in America, for example, affect the stability of political formations or its measurement? How can we reconcile trends in economic inequality, which, according to Jeffrey Williamson and Peter Lindert, rose during the "Age of Egalitarianism" and the "Progressive Era," but not during the "Gilded Age," with interpretations of the politics of those periods?<sup>89</sup>

The realization that a regime or a discipline is in crisis stimulates many conflicting analyses of the reasons for the dilemma, and many proposals for solutions. While most of those who have recently focused on the fragmentation of historical study have suggested, in effect, that coherence be reimposed by concentrating on one aspect of the subject--most often, thought or "culture"--I submit that such projects will only narrow and isolate political history, and that a common approach and a realization of the interrelationships of all the sub-categories of the field is a more promising way to seek unity. More important, viewing politics as a series of conscious decisions by political actors, elite as well as mass, who, constrained by legal and extralegal rules, seek to attain their value-laden goals, offers a better way of understanding political processes and outcomes.

## FOOTNOTES

1. Several friends have taken the time to give me very helpful readings of previous drafts of this essay: David Hollinger, Martin Ridge, Darrett Rutman, Allan Spitzer, Charles Tilly, and Louise Tilly. I have benefited from their suggestions as well as from those of the audiences at the 16th International Congress of Historical Sciences, Stuttgart, Germany, August, 1985, and the University of Maryland, College Park, where earlier versions were delivered.
  
2. Although Richard L. McCormick asserts, in a recent review essay, that "The field of American political history is enjoying a remarkable burst of creative and diverse scholarship," he discusses few examples, his judgments of some recent works may be disputed, and his own comments indicate that his claim of a recent "burst" is exaggerated. "Political Parties in the United States: Reinterpreting Their Natural History," *History Teacher*, 19 (November, 1985), 15-32. Allan G. Bogue's masterful "Systematic Revisionism and a Generation of Verment in American History," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 21 (1986), 135-62, reflecting Bogue's understandable nostalgia for the early days of the "new" post-World War II histories, implies by comparison much less enthusiasm for current scholarship.
  
3. For examples of the internationalization of the "new political history," see, e.g., John A. Phillips, *Electoral Behavior in Unreformed England: Plumpers, Splitters, and Straights* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1982); Kenneth D. Wald, *Crosses on the Ballot: Patterns of British Voter Alignment Since 1885* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1983); Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley, Ca.: Univ. of California Press, 1984), part II; Stanley Suval, *Electoral Politics in Wilhelmine Germany* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1984).
  
4. Lee Benson, *Turner and Beard: American Historical Writing Reconsidered* (New York: Free Press, 1965); Kousser, "The 'New Political History': A Methodological Critique," *Reviews in American History*, 4 (1976), 1-14; Kousser and Allan J. Lichtman, "'New Political History': Some Statistical Questions Answered," *Social Science History*, 7 (1983), 321-44; Lichtman, "Political Realignment and 'Ethnocultural' Voting in Late Nineteenth Century America," *Journal of Social History*, 16 (1983), 55-82; Kousser, "Voters Absent and Present," *Social Science History*, 9 (1985), 215-27; Lichtman, "Critical Election Theory and the Reality of American Presidential Politics, 1916-1940," *American Historical Review*, 81 (1976), 317-48; Lichtman, "The End of Realignment Theory? Toward a New Research Program for American Political History," *Historical Methods*, 15 (1982), 170-88; Paul Goodman, "Putting Some Class Back into Political History: 'The Transformation of Political Culture' and the Crisis in American Political History," *Reviews in American History*, 12 (1984), 80-88. The obvious response to a recent article, Daniel J. Gans, "Persistence of Party Success in American Presidential Elections," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 16 (1986), 221-37--

that persistent national party success is not what the critical elections theorists meant by stability--points up the vagueness and underdevelopment of the theory itself.

5. Bernard Bailyn, "The Challenge of Modern Historiography," *American Historical Review*, 87 (1982), 1-24; Charles Tilly, "Retrieving European Lives," in Olivier Zunz, ed., *Reliving the Past: The Worlds of Social History* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1985), 11-52.
  
6. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, *Fruits of Merchant Capital: Slavery and Bourgeois Property in the Rise and Expansion of Capitalism* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1983), 179-212; Sean Wilentz, "On Class and Politics in Jacksonian America," *Reviews in American History*, 10 (1982), 45-63; Zunz, "The Synthesis of Social Change: Reflections on American Social History," in Zunz, ed., *Reliving the Past*, 53-114.
  
7. Jonathan Weiner, *Social Origins of the New South: Alabama, 1860-1885* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1978), 77-108; Charles L. Flynn, Jr., *White Land, Black Labor: Caste and Class in Late Nineteenth Century Georgia* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1983), 84-149; Stephen Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850-1890* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1983), 204-90.
  
8. Tony Judt, "A Clown in Regal Purple: Social History and the Historians," *History Workshop*, 7 (1979), 66-94; Nancy Fitch, "Statistical Fantasies and Historical Facts: History in Crisis and Its Methodological Implications," *Historical Methods*, 17 (1984), 239-54; Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., "The Two New Histories: Competing Paradigms for Interpreting the American Past," *Organization of American Historians Newsletter* (May, 1983), 9-12; Peter H. Smith, "Political History in the 1980s: A View from Latin America," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 12 (1981), 3-27; Jacques Juilliard, "Political History in the 1980s: Reflections on Its Past and Future," *ibid.*, 12 (1981), 29-44; Gertrude Himmelfarb, "Denigrating the Rule of Reason: The 'New History' Goes Bottom-Up," *Harper's* (April, 1984), 84-90. In a speech to the Association of American Publishers, Undersecretary of Education Gary L. Bauer criticized American High School textbooks for being "hyper-critical of American institutions." In "rebuttal," Marlowe Teig of Houghton Mifflin's text division declared that that firm's 1985 offering, *America: The Glorious Republic*, is ". . . a very affirming book and is written with a real sense of the new patriotism that is valued by us all. . .," *Washington Post*, January 16, 1986, p. A19.
  
9. Lee Benson, "The Mistransference Fallacy in Explanations of Human Behavior," *Historical Methods*, 17 (1984), 118-31; Kousser, "Must Historians Regress? An Answer to Lee Benson," *ibid.*, 19 (1986), 62-81. Of course, there are many more telling criticisms of particular works of quantitative history by other observers. Indeed, cliometricians so readily and often effectively lambaste each others' work as to leave little to be done by non-specialists.

10. The field is vast and my knowledge, alas, is small, but I have in mind works such as Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967); J. G. A. Pocock, *Politics, Language, and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History* (New York: Atheneum, 1973), and *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984).
11. Dale Baum, *The Civil War Party System: The Case of Massachusetts, 1848-1876* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1983); William E. Gienapp, "Nativism and the Creation of a Republican Majority in the North before the Civil War," *Journal of American History*, 72 (1985), 529-59.
12. Robert Margo, "Race Differences in Public School Expenditures: Disfranchisement and School Finance in Louisiana, 1890-1910," *Social Science History*, 6 (1982), 9-33; Carl Harris, "Stability and Change in Discrimination Against Black Public Schools: Birmingham, Alabama, 1871-1931," *Journal of Southern History*, 51 (1985), 375-416. For other studies of policy outputs by historians, see the citations in Kousser, "Restoring Politics to Political History," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 12 (1982), 569-95.
13. Kousser, "Progressivism for Middle Class Whites Only: The Distribution of Taxation and Expenditures for Education in North Carolina, 1880-1910," *Journal of Southern History*, 46 (1980), 169-94.
14. Bailyn, "Challenge of Modern Historiography," is the paradigm example.
15. Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970); Lucian W. Pye, "Culture and Political Science: Problems in the Evaluation of the Concept of Political Culture," in Louis Schneider and Charles M. Bonjean, eds., *The Idea of Culture in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1973), 65-76; John Ashworth, *"Agrarians" and "Aristocrats": Party Political Ideology in the United States, 1837-1846* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1983).
16. Daniel Walker Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1979).
17. Edward P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Gollancz, 1963); Sean Wilentz, "Artisan Republican Festivals and the Rise of Class Conflict in New York City, 1788-1837," in Michael H. Frisch and Daniel J. Walkowitz, eds., *Working Class America: Essays on Labor, Community, and American Society* (Urbana, Ill.: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1983), 37-77.
18. E.g., Phillips, *Plumpers, Splitters, and Straights*; Wald, *Crosses on the Ballot*.

19. Kousser, *The Shaping of Southern Politics: Suffrage Restriction and the Establishment of the One-Party South, 1880-1910* (New Haven, Ct.: Yale Univ. Press, 1974).
20. Ballard Campbell, *Representative Democracy: Public Policy and Midwest Legislatures in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1980); Morton Horwitz, *The Transformation of American Law, 1780-1860* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1977).
21. William R. Brock, *Investigation and Responsibility: Public Responsibility in the United States, 1865-1900* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984).
22. J. Rogers Hollingsworth and Ellen Jane Hollingsworth, *Dimensions in Urban History: Historical and Social Science Perspectives on Middle-Size American Cities* (Madison, Wisc.: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1979).
23. Thus, Perry Miller's *The New England Mind* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961) was largely based on the sermons of only six Puritan ministers, W. J. Cash's *Mind of the South* (New York: Random House, 1960) reflected Cash's experiences and projective fantasies as a mountain journalist, and Henry Steele Commager's *The American Mind: An Interpretation of American Thought and Character Since the 1880s* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1950) relied entirely on elite sources.
24. On the "republican synthesis," see Robert E. Shalhope, "Toward a Republican Synthesis: The Emergence of an Understanding of Republicanism in American Historiography," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., 29 (1972), 49-80, and his "Republicanism and Early American History," *ibid.*, 3rd Ser., 39 (1982), 334-56; Daniel Walker Howe, "European Sources of Political Ideas in Jeffersonian America," *Reviews in American History*, 10 (1982), 28-44; J. G. A. Pocock, "English and European Political Inheritance," in Greene, ed., *Encyclopedia of American Political History*, II, 513-34; Willi Paul Adams, "Republicanism," *ibid.*, 1131-46; John Patrick Diggins, "Comrades and Citizens: New Mythologies in American Historiography," *American Historical Review*, 90 (1985), 628-38.
25. Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*; Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1975); J. Mills Thornton III, *Politics and Power in a Slave Society: Alabama, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1978), xv-xxi; Michael Fitzgibbon Holt, *The Political Crisis of the 1850s* (New York: Wiley, 1978), x-16.
26. Historians who adopt Geertz's stress on symbols, and his aversion to explicit, testable hypotheses and to questions of the representativeness of data without taking into account the extensive critiques of the cultural ecology, structural Marxist, and political economy schools in anthropology may be merely grasping for legitimizing social scientific authority for their preconceived hunches. For references to the critical literature, see Sherry B. Ortner, "Theory in Anthropology Since the Sixties," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 26 (1984),

126-66. On the use of symbolic anthropology by historians, see H. Stuart Hughes, "The Historian and the Social Scientist," *American Historical Review*, 66 (1960), 34; Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., "Clio and the Culture Concept: Some Impressions of a Changing Relationship in American Historiography," in Schneider and Bonjean, *Idea of Culture*, 77-100; Ronald G. Walters, "Signs of the Times: Clifford Geertz and Historians," *Social Research*, 47 (1980), 537-56.

27. Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to FDR* (New York: Knopf, 1955); Donald, "Toward a Reconsideration of the Abolitionists," in *Lincoln Reconsidered: Essays on the Civil War Era* (New York: Knopf, 1956), 19-36; Baker, *Affairs of Party: The Political Culture of Northern Democrats in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca, N.Y. and London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1983), 257. On Baker, see Michael Les Benedict's prescient review in *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 15 (1985), 544-46.

28. Baker, *Affairs of Party*, 262-63, 315. Baker's statement on p.325 that the Irish, transplanted southerners in the Midwest, and other antebellum northerners, "though unfamiliar with specific campaign issues," joined the Democrats in order to experience "a sense of Americanness," is patronizing, impossible to verify, and meaningless.

29. Lee Benson, *The Concept of Jacksonian Democracy: New York as a Test Case* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1961), 285; Benson, "Mistransference Fallacy," 124. For an atheoretical but strikingly similar British version of the negative reference group/expressive politics view, see J. R. Vincent, *Pollbooks: How Victorians Voted* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1967), 44-50. Ronald P. Formisano's partially secularized version of the ethnocultural thesis, in which "center" and "periphery" are substituted for Benson's "puritans" and "non-puritans," makes even clearer the arbitrariness of the social groupings and the lack of a mechanism that would account for the negative feelings of one social set towards another. See his *The Transformation of Political Culture: Massachusetts Parties, 1790s-1840s* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1983). On "natural groups," see also Paul F. Bourke and Donald A. DeBats, "On Restoring Politics to Political History," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 15 (1985), 459-66; Kousser, "Are Political Acts Unnatural?," *ibid.*, 467-80.

30. A free rider asks why he should bother to pay for a ride when the truck driver is going in that direction anyway. In a political context, why should one bother to vote when one vote is extremely unlikely to affect the outcome? For an introduction to this pervasive problem, see Mancur Olson, Jr., *The Logic of Collective Action* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1965). The links between the symbolic ideological school and Benson's assertedly "scientific" and quantitative approach are perhaps made clearest in Robert Kelley, *The Cultural Pattern in American Politics: The First Century* (New York: Knopf, 1979), 3-28.

31. Neither the republicanism, political culture, or positive/negative liberalism theories explains the origin of values, either, but whereas rational choice treats attitudes as proximate

to behavior, but separable, the other notions are considered virtually equivalent to behavior and inseparable from it. It should be noted also that rational choice does *not* assume that all people have equal power or that political actors are motivated only by self-interest, crudely defined. A white voter may, for example, favor racial equality; a rich person might prefer progressive taxation out of a concern for "the public interest." Rationality, in this conception, begins only *after* at least some values are chosen, however thoughtful or irrational the process by which they are arrived at. Cf. Fred Matthews, "Hobbesian Populism': Interpretive Paradigms and Moral Vision in American Historiography," *Journal of American History*, 72 (1985), 101.

32. Historians have often recognized this point. See, e.g., David M. Potter, "Why the Republicans Rejected Both Compromise and Secession," in *The South and The Sectional Conflict* (Baton Rouge and London: La. State Univ. Press, 1968), 243-62.

33. For an example of this position, see, e.g., Gienapp, "Nativism and the Creation of a Republican Majority," 531-32.

34. Robert F. Durden, *The Self-Inflicted Wound: Southern Politics in the Nineteenth Century* (Lexington, Ky.: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1985), 96-106.

35. The endpoints and intervals are arbitrary, or, to speak more technically, valid only up to a linear transformation, but the scale preserves the order on each issue, which is the prime concern.

36. Howe, *The Political Culture of American Whigs*.

37. David Herbert Donald, *The Politics of Reconstruction, 1863-1867* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1965); Lawanda Cox, *Lincoln and Black Freedom: A Study in Presidential Leadership* (Columbia, S.C.: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1981), ch. 5.

38. Cf. Gienapp, "Nativism and the Creation of a Republican Majority," 539-40, 547.

39. Shalhope, "Toward a Republican Synthesis," 72-73; and Shalhope, "Republicanism and Early American Historiography," 340-52.

40. The problem of the connection between attitudes and behavior cannot be finessed. Thus, the suggestion of Gordon S. Wood that ideas should not be treated as causes or effects of actions, but as "mechanisms for perceiving, persuading, manipulating, and ordering the world . . ." substitutes an intractable for a merely very difficult problem. Not only does it divorce ideas from actions, it also makes it impossible to determine which ideas were important and even to describe those ideas, for they are assumed to be the filters through which people strained their impressions. Without another measurement of "reality," one can't discover the characteristics of the filter, or decide which of two or more possible filters was

actually in place. See Wood's "Intellectual History and the Social Sciences," in John Higham and Paul K. Conkin, eds., *New Directions in American Intellectual History* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1979), 35.

41. E.g., Pettigrew, "Prejudice," in Stephan Thernstrom, ed., *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1980), 829.

42. Schuman, Charlotte Steeh, and Lawrence Bobo, *Racial Attitudes in America: Trends and Interpretations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1985), ch. 3.

43. Bender, "Wholes and Parts: The Need for Synthesis in American History," *Journal of American History*, 73 (1986), 120-36.

44. For the continued dominance of the early Michigan School model, see, e.g., Formisano, *Birth of Mass Political Parties*, 11-14; Shade, *Banks or No Banks*, 17; Joel H. Silbey, *A Respectable Minority: The Democratic Party in the Civil War Era, 1860-1868* (New York: Norton, 1977), 5-7; Paul Kleppner, "Critical Realignment and Electoral Systems," in Kleppner, ed., *Evolution of American Electoral Systems*, 5-6; Harry L. Watson, *Jacksonian Politics and Community Conflict: The Emergence of the Second American Party System in Cumberland County North Carolina* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1981), 6; William E. Gienapp, "Politics Seem to Enter into Everything?: Political Culture in the North, 1840-1860," in Stephen E. Maizlish and John J. Kushma, eds., *Essays in American Antebellum Politics, 1840-1860* (College Station, Tx.: Texas A&M Univ. Press, 1982), 53; Jerome M. Clubb, "Murray Murphey and the Possibility of Social Science History," *Social Science History*, 9 (1985), 101; Stanley Suval, *Electoral Politics in Wilhelmine Germany* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1984), 261, n.5. For partial exceptions, see Richard Jensen, "The Last Party System," in Kleppner, *Evolution of American Electoral Systems*, 232-33; Jensen, "Historiography of American Political History," in Greene, *Encyclopedia of American Political History*, 19-20; Paul Kleppner, "Critical Elections and Realignment: A Reexamination and Redefinition of Terms," unpub. paper, June, 1986.

45. See, e.g., Norman H. Nie, Sidney Verba, and John P. Petrocik, *The Changing American Voter* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1976); Gerald H. Kramer, "The Ecological Fallacy Revisited: Aggregate- versus Individual-level Findings on Economics and Elections, and Sociotropic Voting," *American Political Science Review*, 77 (1983), 92-111; Ronald Inglehart, "Aggregate Stability and Individual-Level Flux in Mass Belief Systems," *ibid.*, 79 (1985), 97-116; Helmut Norpoth and Jerrold G. Rusk, "Partisan Dealignment in the American Electorate: Itemizing the Deductions Since 1964," *ibid.*, 76 (1982), 522-37; John A. Ferejohn and Randall L. Calvert, "Presidential Coattails in Historical Perspective," *American Journal of Political Science*, 28 (1984), 127-46; David W. Brady, "A Reevaluation of Realignment in American Politics: Evidence from the House of Representatives," *American Political Science Review*, 79 (1985), 28-49; Eileen L. McDonagh and H. Douglas Price, "Woman Suffrage in the Progressive Era: Patterns of Opposition and Support in Referenda Voting, 1910-1918," *ibid.*, 79 (1985), 415-35; and many of the works either included or cited in Richard G. Niemi and

Herbert F. Weisberg, *Controversies in Voting Behavior*, Second Ed. (Washington: Congressional Quarterly, 1984), which is the most convenient starting place for anyone who wants to catch up on recent political science work on electoral behavior.

46. Phillips, *Plumpers, Splitters, and Straights*; Wald, *Crosses on the Ballot*; Cox, *The Development of Political Parties in Victorian England* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge Univ. Press, forthcoming). Although Phillips effectively counters the Namier thesis that late eighteenth century British mass politics was formless, his failure to publish the varying numbers of voters in his tables or to use more complex statistical models somewhat undermines his conclusions. Wald's comprehensive statistical study of the 1885-1918 elections is a major research effort to bring British political history into the twentieth century. Nevertheless, Wald sets up an unnecessary dichotomy between the religious and class correlates of voting, performs idiosyncratic tests between these two bases, and then exaggerates his results. Cox's game theoretic analysis will further increase the level of sophistication necessary to keep up with the latest British studies, and traditionally trained historians in the United Kingdom will eventually either have to retool or confess that they can no longer understand the basic literature of their own domestic history.

47. Beck, *French Legislators, 1800-1834: A Study in Quantitative History* (Berkeley, Ca.: Univ. of California Press, 1974); Brustein, "A Regional Mode-of-Production Analysis of Political Behavior: The Cases of Western and Mediterranean France," *Politics and Society* 10 (1981), 355-98; Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class*, Part II. Many facets of the beginnings of the French Revolution have been illuminated in a long-term project centered at the University of Pittsburgh. See John Markoff and Gilbert Shapiro, "Consensus and Conflict at the Outset of Revolution: A Quantitative Study of France in 1789," *American Journal of Sociology*, 91 (1985), 28-53, and references therein to other studies by this group. My outside amateur's view of the peripheral importance of political history in France may be incorrect. See Jacques Juilliard, "Political History in the 1980s: Reflections on Its Past and Future," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 12 (1981), 29-44; and Jacques Revel, "Comment," *ibid.*, 49-50. Still, the number of theoretically and methodologically fairly sophisticated political studies in French history appears to be much smaller than in the United States.

48. Suval, *Politics in Wilhelmine Germany*; Jurgen W. Falter, "Radicalization of the Middle class or Mobilization of the Unpolitical? The Theories of Seymour M. Lipset and Reinhard Bendix on the Electoral Support of the NSDAP in the Light of Recent Research," *Social Science Information*, 20 (1981), 4-26; C. Brown, "The Nazi Vote: A National Ecological Study," *American Political Science Review*, 76 (1982), 285-306; Richard Hamilton, *Who Voted for Hitler?* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1982); Thomas Childers, *The Nazi Voter: The Social Foundations of Fascism in Germany, 1919-1933* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1983). For a further listing and partial evaluation of the unpublished and published literature, see Falter, book review, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 16 (1985), 138-40.

49. Imre Lakatos, "Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programs," in Lakatos and Alan Musgrave, eds., *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1970), 91-196. On the ethnocultural thesis, see Kousser, "The 'New Political History': A Methodological Critique," *Reviews in American History*, 4 (1976), 1-14; Kousser and Allan J. Lichtman, "'New Political History': Some Statistical Questions Answered," *Social Science History*, 7 (1983), 321-44; Lichtman, "Political Realignment and 'Ethnocultural' Voting in Late Nineteenth Century America," *Journal of Social History*, 16 (1983), 55-82; Kousser, "Voters Absent and Present," *Social Science History*, 9 (1985), 215-27. On the critical election thesis, see Lichtman, "Critical Election Theory," and "The End of Realignment Theory?" and Walter Dean Burnham's measured defense in "Periodization Schemes and 'Party Systems': The 'System of 1896' as a Case in Point," (unpub. paper delivered at the 1985 Social Science History Association meeting).

50. Angus Campbell, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes, *The American Voter* (New York: Wiley, 1960), and their *Elections and the Political Order* (New York: Wiley, 1966) are the classic sources for the "Michigan" or "social psychological" model. For a rather defensive restatement that understates the theory-laden character of his model and the differences between it and the rational choice approach, see Phillip E. Converse, "Public Opinion and Voting Behavior," in Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby, eds., *Handbook of Political Science* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1975), IV, 75-169. More recent emendations have moved closer to synthesizing the two viewpoints. See, e.g., Gregory B. Markus and Philip E. Converse, "A Dynamic Simultaneous Equation Model of Electoral Choice," in Niemi and Weisberg, *Controversies in Voting Behavior*, 132-53; Morris P. Fiorina, "Explorations of a Theory of Party Identification," *ibid.*, 406-23.

51. See, e.g., Converse, "Public Opinion and Voting Behavior," 138-44.

52. David O. Sears, "Political Socialization," in Greenstein and Polsby, *Handbook of Political Science*, II, 135-39; Charles H. Franklin, "Issue Preference, Socialization, and the Evolution of Party Identification," *American Journal of Political Science*, 28 (1984), 459-78.

53. Thus, the dilution of Gramsci's "hegemonic" variation on the traditional Marxist concept of false consciousness has gone quite far in Genovese and Genovese, *Fruits of Merchant Capital*, 249-64. Classes, like Milton Friedman's isolated individuals, are apparently fairly "free to choose."

54. The best nonrigorously mathematical introductions to the field are the pioneering work by Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1957) and the more recent and comprehensive book by Robert Abrams, *Foundations of Political Analysis: An Introduction to the Theory of Collective Choice* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1980). Somewhat more advanced are Charles R. Plott, "Axiomatic Social Choice Theory: An Overview and Interpretation," *American Journal of Political Science*, 20 (1976), 511-96; and Dennis C. Mueller, *Public Choice* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1979). Despite protestations to the contrary, James M. Enelow and Melvin J. Hinich, *The*

*Spatial Theory of Voting: An Introduction* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984), requires a good deal of math and a tolerance for theorem-proving, but it is the most useful work for voting specialists.

55. Kenneth J. Arrow, *Social Choice and Individual Values* (New York: Wiley, 1951). As the well-known political stances of such contributors to the literature as Arrow, Paul Samuelson, and A. K. Sen imply, social choice is not necessarily either individualistic or politically conservative. If every member of a group has the same preference ordering, or partially so with respect to some issue or policy that they all consider important, then they can be treated as a single actor. If all members of a social class have the same preference ordering, then they would qualify as one player. A class might be divided between two groups, say, A and B, if the members had more similar preferences than either had to another group, C. Then for some purposes (or, in some games), AB might constitute a single actor, even though A and B might disagree on other matters. For example, all members of the working class might agree that labor unions should be legal, but they might divide on ethnic lines over prohibition. It is true, however, that collective choice implies that the sum of the values can be no more than that of the parts--that the collective preference must be somehow compounded of all the individual preferences without anything more added. The collectivity itself, in other words, is assumed to have no preferences--there is no separable "public interest." But since conservatives as well as liberals and radicals may claim a belief in "the public interest" or "the community," this assumption does not tie collective choice to any particular ideology.

56. For an excellent, nontechnical introduction, see Robert Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation* (New York: Basic Books, 1984).

57. It may be rational for voters to try to estimate some traits of candidates, such as honesty, ability to carry out promises, judgment in difficult situations, etc., although probably not others, for example, glamour, taste in clothes, or avuncularity. Whatever one's degree of agreement with a politician's or party's issue stances, unkept promises or those not carried out because of incompetence must be heavily discounted. A mayor without good judgment may incinerate a block, a president, the world.

58. For a thoughtful criticism of neoclassical economics' inattention to preference changes, see Albert O. Hirshman, "Against Parsimony: Three Easy Ways of Complicating Some Categories of Economic Discourse," *Economics and Philosophy*, I (1985), 7-21. The topic of the relation between fundamental values and policy choices is underdeveloped in social choice, and it clearly needs further work. "Preferences" may be thought of as basic aims such as peace or health or prosperity or as proximate goals such as ending slavery or discouraging the drinking of alcohol or preventing government subsidies for Catholic schools. If broad, generally consensual values are emphasized, then theory can yield no predictions about behavior, because every politician will claim to endorse these ends. But if only immediate issues are treated, then the analyst will miss politicians' efforts to convince the electorate or other politicians that certain means, but not others, will actually bring about desired ends, or

that certain issues are more important than others, or that certain objectives are infeasible. As empirical applications of social choice, including historical applications, increase, theorists may realize more clearly how important it is to confront the "level of values" problem. The emphasis of rational choice on candidate strategies, however, suggests that the approach will be more concerned with the problem than traditional social psychology has been.

59. Lakatos, "Falsification"; Carl G. Hempel, *Aspects of Scientific Explanation* (New York: The Free Press, 1965).

60. Mark Blaug, *The Methodology of Economics, or How Economists Explain* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1980) puts Popper into practice against a great deal of economic theory. There are good critiques of Hempel, Kuhn, Lakatos, and Popper in Clark Glymour's *Theory and Evidence* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1980), but Glymour's attempt to replace them and others with a more adequate account of the connections between theory and evidence seems to me unsatisfactory.

61. See, e.g., Benjamin I. Page, "Elections and Social Choice: The State of the Evidence," *American Journal of Political Science*, 21 (1977), 639-68; Norman Frolich, Joe A. Oppenheimer, Jeffrey Smith, and Oran R. Young, "A Test of Downsian Voter Rationality: 1964 Presidential Voting," *American Political Science Review*, 72 (1978), 178-97. Two examples of the estimation of spatial models that should be of particular interest to historians because they use mostly aggregate data are Howard Rosenthal and Subrata Sen, "Spatial Voting Models for the French Fifth Republic," *American Political Science Review*, 71 (1977), 1447-66; and George Rabinowitz, Paul-Henri Gurian, and Stuart Elaine MacDonald, "The Structure of Presidential Elections and the Process of Realignment, 1944 to 1980," *American Journal of Political Science*, 28 (1984), 611-35.

62. Unresolved questions and an uncertain fit between empirical evidence and theory are featured topics in most of the works cited in notes 54 and 61, above.

63. Axelrod, *Evolution of Cooperation*; Herbert Simon, "Human Nature in Politics: The Dialogue of Psychology with Political Science," *American Political Science Review*, 79 (1985), 293-304.

64. The standard works on critical elections are William Nisbet Chambers and Walter Dean Burnham, eds., *The American Party Systems: Stages of Political Development* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967); Burnham, *Critical Elections and the Mainsprings of American Politics* (New York: Norton, 1970); and Burnham, *The Current Crisis in American Politics* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982).

65. Thomas B. Alexander, "The Dimensions of Partisan Constancy in Presidential Elections from 1840 to 1860," in Maizlish and Kushma, *Essays on American Antebellum Politics*, 70-121, overstates his case by artificially fusing Whigs, Free Soilers, Know-Nothings, and all varieties of Democrats into two groups and by disregarding turnout shifts. William J.

Cooper, Jr., *The South and the Politics of Slavery, 1828-1856* (Baton Rouge, La: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1978), and *Liberty and Slavery: Southern Politics to 1860* (New York: Knopf, 1983) establishes his similar thesis more subtly by not considering voting returns systematically at all.

66. See, e.g., Joel H. Silbey, Allan G. Bogue, and William H. Flanigan, "Introduction to Part Three," in their *The History of American Electoral Behavior* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1978), 253-58, and works cited there; Samuel P. Hays, *American Political History as Social Analysis* (Knoxville, Tenn.: Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1980); Kousser, "History as Past Sociology in the Work of Samuel P. Hays," *Historical Methods*, 14 (1981), 181-86; Watson, *Jacksonian Politics and Community Conflict*, 10.

67. Compare Gienapp, "Nativism and the Creation of a Republican Majority," with Dale Baum, *The Civil War Party System: The Case of Massachusetts, 1848-1876* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1983).

68. This conclusion is consonant with much of the analysis in Lee Benson, Joel H. Silbey, and Phyllis F. Field, "Toward a Theory of Stability and Change in American Voting Patterns: New York State, 1792-1970," in Silbey, Bogue, and Flanigan, *History of American Electoral Behavior*, 78-105, although the authors draw other conclusions.

69. Describing action that one disapproves of as irrational may simply be another means of decrying it, as in much of Richard Hofstadter's work, or it may serve (perhaps despite the historian's intentions) as a sort of collective insanity defense--mobs or Klansmen cannot be held responsible if their motives were subconscious and uncontrollable. A decision to treat such activity as purposeful or otherwise does not necessarily imply approval, anymore than it implies disapproval. See Daniel Joseph Singal, "Beyond Consensus: Richard Hofstadter and American Historiography," *American Historical Review*, 89 (1984), 933-93; Charles L. Flynn, Jr., "The Ancient Pedigree of Violent Repression: Georgia's Klan as a Folk Movement," in Walter L. Fraser, Jr., and Winfred B. Moore, Jr., *The Southern Enigma: Essays on Race, Class, and Folk Culture* (Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, ;1983), 189-98; Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1984).

70. Tilly, "Models and Realities of Popular Collective Action," Working Paper No. 10 (March, 1985), Center for Studies of Social Change, New School For Social Research, New York.

71. Terry M. Moe's "The New Economics of Organization," *American Journal of Political Science*, 28 (1984), 739-77 is a fine, non-technical review article on the recent economics literature on this subject. On repeated games, see, e.g., Andrew Schotter, *The Economic Theory of Social Institutions* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1981). For the beginnings of a rational choice view of public bureaucracy, see Thomas H. Hammond and

Gary J. Miller, "A Social Choice Perspective on Expertise and Authority in Bureaucracy," *ibid.*, 29 (1985), 1-28.

72. E.g., Morton Keller, *Affairs of State: Public Life in Late Nineteenth Century America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1977); Naomi R. Lamoreaux, "Regulatory Agencies," in Jack P. Greene, ed., *Encyclopedia of American Political History: Studies of the Principal Movements and Ideas* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1984), III, 1107-17; Thomas K. McCraw, ed., *Regulation in Perspective: Historical Essays* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1981); Stephen Skowronek, *Building a New American State: The Expansion of National Administrative Capacities, 1877-1920* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1982); James T. Patterson, *American's Struggle Against Poverty, 1900-1980* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1981). An interesting recent study with implications for historians is William D. Berry's "An Alternative to the Capture Theory of Regulation: The Case of State Public Utilities Commissions," *American Journal of Political Science*, 18 (1984), 524-58.

73. Hays, *The Response to Industrialism, 1870-1914* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1957); Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967); Keller, *Affairs of State*; McCormick, "The Discovery that Business Corrupts Politics: A Reappraisal of the Origins of Progressivism," *American Historical Review*, 86 (1981), 247-74, and *From Realignment to Reform: Political Change in New York State, 1893-1910* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1981).

74. McDonald, "San Francisco: Socioeconomic Change, Political Culture, and Fiscal Politics, 1870-1906," in McDonald and Sally K. Ward, eds., *The Politics of Urban Fiscal Policy* (Beverly Hills, Ca.: Sage, 1984), 39-68; Margo, "Race Differences in Public School Expenditures"; Harris, "Stability and Change in Discrimination."

75. For a fascinating, nontechnical introduction to the first topic, see Benjamin I. Page, *Who Gets What from Government* (Berkeley, Ca.: Univ. of California Press, 1983). Two excellent introductions to the material inequality literature are Anthony B. Atkinson, *The Economics of Inequality*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, Eng.: Oxford Univ. Press, 1983), and Amartya Sen, *On Economic Inequality* (Oxford, Eng.: Oxford Univ. Press, 1973). On the "political economy cycle" and the responsiveness of voters to economic conditions, good places to start are Edward R. Tufte, *Political Control of the Economy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1978); D. Roderick Kiewiet, *Macroeconomics and Micropolitics: The Electoral Effects of Economic Issues* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1983); and Michael Lewis-Beck, "Comparative Economic Voting: Britain, France, Germany, Italy," *American Journal of Political Science*, 30 (1986), 315-46.

76. Mueller, *Public Choice*, 106. Douglas A. Hibbs, Jr. and Heino Fassbender, eds., *Contemporary Political Economy: Studies on the Interdependence of Politics and Economics* (Amsterdam: North-Holland Pub. Co., 1981) contains essays on several European countries, as well as theoretical papers.

77. For recent comprehensive literature reviews, see Joel H. Silbey, "Delegates Fresh from the People': American Congressional and Legislative Behavior," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 13 (1983), 603-27; and Margaret Susan Thompson and Silbey, "Research on Nineteenth Century Legislatures: Present Contours and Future Directions," *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 9 (1984), 319-50. The newer, more sophisticated spatial procedures for roll call analysis should lead to more interesting conclusions than simple Guttman scaling has. See Keith T. Poole and Howard Rosenthal, "A Spatial Model for Legislative Roll Call Analysis," *American Journal of Political Science*, 29 (1985), 357-84.
78. David W. Brady, "Congressional Party Realignment and Transformations of Public Policy in Three Realignment Eras," *American Journal of Political Science*, 26 (1982), 333-60.
79. Gregory G. Brunk and Thomas G. Minehart, "How Important is Elite Turnover to Policy Change?," *American Journal of Political Science*, 28 (1984), 559-69; Lynn Avery Hunt, *Revolution and Urban Politics in Provincial France: Troyes and Reims, 1786-1790* (Stanford, Ca.: Stanford Univ. Press, 1978), 122-28.
80. Kenneth A. Shepsle and Barry R. Weingast, "Political Preferences for the Pork Barrel: A Generalization," *American Journal of Political Science*, 25 (1981), 96-111.
81. For an introduction to the logrolling literature, see Abrams, *Foundations of Political Analysis*, 103-38. The explicit connections in this literature between unstable outcomes in committees or legislatures and preference structures of members or the public that form a "voters' paradox" suggest connections between the different areas of political life that might tie together various facets of the historical study of politics.
82. This is one possible explanation for the findings of Michael Perman, *The Road to Redemption: Southern Politics, 1869-1879* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1984).
83. Morris P. Fiorina, *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections* (New Haven, Ct.: Yale Univ. Press, 1981). For one attempt to formulate a checklist that voters usually act as if they followed, see Allan J. Lichtman and Volodia Keilis-Borok, "Pattern Recognition Applied to U.S. Presidential Elections, 1860-1980," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 37 (1981), 543-51.
84. For an excellent summary, see Peter H. Argersinger, "Electoral Process," in Greene, *Encyclopedia of American Political History*, II, 489-512.
85. See Kousser, "Making Separate Equal: Integration of Black and White School Funds in Kentucky," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 10 (1980), 399-428; Kousser, *Dead End: The Development of Nineteenth Century Litigation on Racial Discrimination in Schools* (Oxford, Eng.: Oxford Univ. Press, 1985).

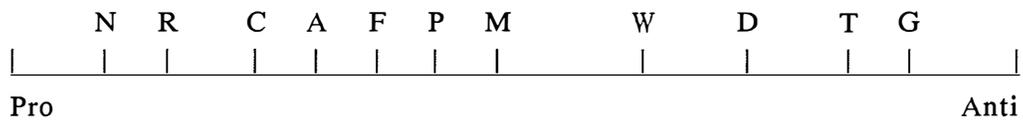
86. Plott, "Axiomatic Social Choice Theory," emphasizes the normative aspects of social choice. The triviality charge is common. See, e.g., Bailyn, "Challenge of Modern Historiography."

87. For instance, Mueller, *Public Choice*, is full of critical comments. For attempts to build altruistic impulses into rational choice theory, see Howard Margolis, *Selfishness, Altruism, and Rationality: A Theory of Social Choice* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1982); Frederick Schick, *Having Reasons: An Essay on Rationality and Sociality* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1984).

88. Lakatos, "Falsification."

89. Kenneth J. Winkle, "A Social Analysis of Voter Turnout in Ohio, 1850-1860," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 13 (1984), 411-36; Jeffrey G. Williamson and Peter H. Lindert, *American Inequality: A Macroeconomic History* (New York: Academic Press, 1980).

Figure 1: A One-Dimensional Spatial Model of the Slavery Issue



**Policies Associated with Points:**

- N = Nationalize Slavery
- R = Allow International Slave Trade
- C = Congressional Slave Code for the Territories
- A = Slavery Allowed in All Territories
- F = Strong Fugitive Slave Law
- P = Popular Sovereignty
- M = Slavery Banned in Territories North of 36 Deg., 30 Min.
- W = No Slavery in Any Territory
- D = No Slavery in District of Columbia
- T = No Interstate Slave Trade
- G = No Slavery in United States

Figure 2: A Two-Dimensional Spatial Model of the Union and Slavery Issues

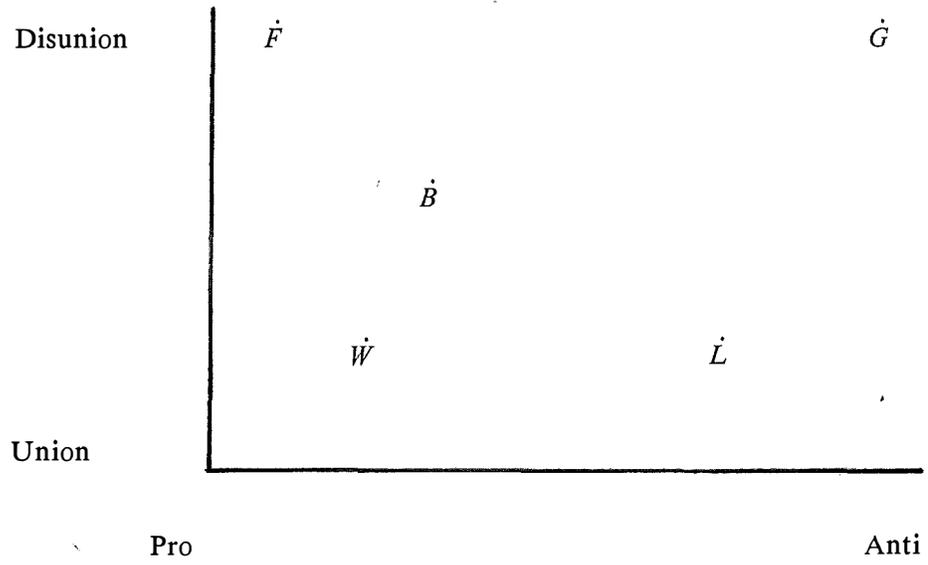
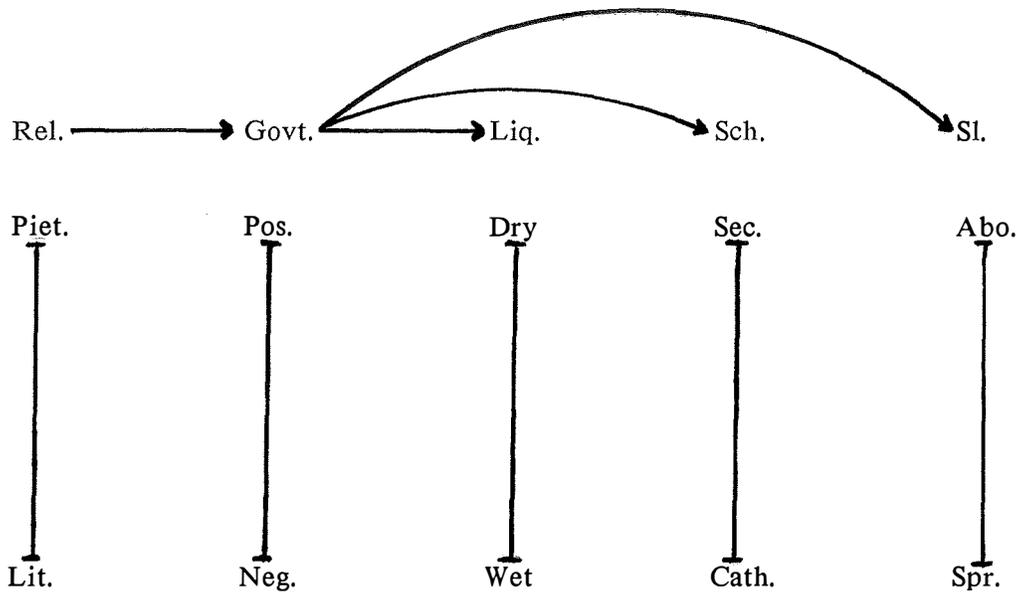


Figure 3: A Spatial Model of the Positive and Negative Liberalism Thesis



## Orientations:

Rel. = Religion  
 Govt. = Government  
 Liq. = Liquor  
 Sch. = Public Funding for Schools  
 Sl. = Slavery

## Endpoints:

Piet. = Pietist  
 Lit. = Liturgical  
 Pos. = Pro-Intervention by Government  
 Neg. = Anti-Intervention by Government  
 Dry = For Prohibition of Drinking  
 Wet = Against Prohibition of Drinking  
 Sec. = Taxpayer Support for Secular Schools Only  
 Cath. = Taxpayer Support for Religious Schools Also  
 Abo. = Abolish Slavery  
 Spr. = Extend Slavery to the North

Figure 4: An Individual's Opinion Matrix

Issue Positions	[	1	1	1	1	]
Weights	[	3	6	2	2	]
Certainty	[	5	4	1	3	]