

D. SOCIAL SCIENCES

THE CORPORATE DIMENSION OF DEMOCRACY*

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The uncompromising relativity of points of view is evidenced in political analysis by the existence of three typical theories of social organization. These three political points of view, which have become known as Individualism, Corporatism, and Positivism, represent not primarily ideological distinctions so much as differences in methodological analysis of the factual complex of human activity. Each of these analyses lays particular emphasis upon the one area of fact which it considers of primary and elemental importance in the political arena. Thus Individualism stresses analysis of the individual, Corporatism of institution, and Positivism of law; and the sum of these three designated areas of fact may be taken as constituting the irreducible minimum of relevant fact for political speculation.

It is a difference in the method of analyzing fact rather than a distinction in ideology which is largely responsible for the hypostatization of isms; and the attainment of a high degree of relational independence by these three kinds of social analysis has resulted in conflict between and among the systems of social organization which they have traditionally espoused. Democracy rests upon the factual analysis of Individualism; Corporatism is adduced as the ground supporting totalitarian administrations; and Positivism has perpetuated itself in the less institutionalized, but no less effective, tradition of legal formalism. Thus, for example, democracy has inclined to ignore all except the individual area of fact. The possibilities of analysis within this restricted area of observation may be indicated by reference to the three typical levels of analysis within the Individual dimension which are apparent in all democratic thought: the levels of man, social group, and of person. Concentration upon the fact observable at these levels of the Individual dimension has been productive of three theories, each reflecting the significance of its restricted area of observation and analysis: at the level of man the typical analytic theory is that of Hedonism; social group is the subject of Contract theories of organization; and the level of person, comprehending the entire Individual dimension, is given statement by Utilitarianism, the guiding doctrine of democratic liberalism. In this manner, democratic thought has undertaken a thorough investigation and analysis of the factual material in the Individual dimension.

Without questioning the importance of the Individual as an elemental fact of political activity and structure, it nevertheless appears obvious that the individual is not the only primary fact to be taken into account by political analysis. While democratic administration has achieved an admirable respect for the facts of the Individual dimension, it has on the other hand neglected the other two dimensions of fact—Institution and Law. Any adequate political structure must take into account all three dimensions of fact if it is to avoid the inevitable relativity of segmentalism. The assumption here is that the structure of democratic politics manifests the only possibility of thus comprehending in one administrative mechanism all the essential facts of political activity. To this end, we may speculate briefly on the nature of a method which will comprehend, for example, the Institutional area of fact without at the same time contradicting the method and fact of the Individual dimension.

The levels of analysis observed in any dimension represent the more or less arbitrary techniques employed by the particular analysis; but the terminology is secondary to the function of displaying the factual material resident in the area or dimension under observation. The first level of analysis in the Corporate dimension may be said to be that of Nature. The defining concept peculiar to this level of analysis is that of *existence*. This is then the special field of the physical sciences, where concern is with things, material objects—their classification, order, and control. Analysis at the level of Nature is elemental to the political structure in providing the necessary information about the material in and by means of which implementation is to be accomplished, if at all. In politics as elsewhere, the possibility of workable design is definitely limited, not only by the skill of the worker, but equally by the nature and availability of the materials with which he must work.

Improvements in analysis at the first level proportionately enrich and extend the range of possibility for design or speculation. Adequate analysis at the natural level has made possible the political design of projects inconceivable without the knowledge and control of natural material made available by this analysis. In fact, analysis at this level has progressed so rapidly in the contemporary period that speculation has been hard put to it to design rational utilization of all the available material; and we have experienced a great bewailing of scientific progress, profound despairing over the dangers and irrationalities of this machine age. Such over-anxious pessimism concerning the failure of politics to utilize with immediate dispatch the extensive materials made available by efficient scientific analysis indicates a misunderstanding of the problem of political thought and activity. The advocates of a return to nature are no whit more foolish than those who lay the blame for disorder and chaos upon the efficiency of analysis at the level of nature. Efficiency is not productive of chaos. This irrational and segmental emphasis betrays the assumption that the analysis of nature should be extended as a general schema for the analysis of all levels. Now this is not only *not* the task of the sciences concerned with the specific levels—it is quite beyond the scope of their analytic procedures to attempt such a correlation. However difficult that task of correlation may be, it is the function which belongs by definition to political philosophy. It is the job which the politician is doing, for good or ill; and in a democratic society, only the politician can do it.

The first level of Nature thus provides the very substance of political activity; but substance is not enough in itself; and when political theory is confined to this level of analysis, the result is simple materialism, which takes the political form of Historical Materialism. This doctrine, which has exerted more influence than it deserves, results from the extension of categories derived from the first level to a description of the entire material dimension, and hence by extrapolation to the construction of an ideological pattern of political meaning in its entirety.

The second level of the Material dimension appears in the conception of natural things as manifesting the additional significance of use or usefulness. When an object is considered as usable, it is being conceived as more than merely physical; it is now a Property object. The additional relations and complexities which are necessary to constitute the material thing a property object are the subjects of investigation at this level. It is the problem of how the material becomes a material.

It would belabor the obvious to point out in detail the inadequacies of analysis at this level. It is hardly to be denied that the greatest inhibition

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upon rational political activity has resulted from the irrationality of analysis at the Property level. As is always the case in maladjustment, the tendency immediately arises to interpret a negative absence of balance as a positive determining force. Economic Determinism, the doctrine peculiar to the level of Property, betrays the segmental fallacy in proclaiming economic factors as the sole determinants of political activity. There are no sole determining factors, levels, or dimensions.

The intimate rapport between levels and dimensions in the actual situation of fact, if it does not make each his brother's keeper, at least facilitates the spread of irrationality. The third level of the Material dimension, which is Institution, arises out of the integration of the two lower levels of Nature and Property. The persistence of irrationality at the second level of Property has made such an integration in Institution itself irrational. The Person, as the third level of the Individual dimension, represents the integration of Man and Social Group; and certainly it appears that we have achieved the possibility of a higher degree of integration here than in the Material dimension. In other words, we have been more successful in the production of citizens than in the construction of adequate institutions for those citizens.

The concept peculiarly applicable to the Institution is that of *autonomy*. This is the essential feature of institutionalization, and its importance for political organization is plain: it is the source of stability in the social structure. The properties and characteristics of the Institution are distinctly different from those of Person, where the defining concept is that of *activity*. The Institution is autonomous, almost machine-like in nature, in that its continued existence depends not so much upon external factors as upon its own weight and internal mechanism. Institutions are not subject to the changes which can be effected in persons. An Institution cannot cavalierly be destroyed or banished; neither can it be converted and baptized into a new order by a change of heart. So-called liberals, enamored of psycho-analytic technique, who propose to establish democracy by inculcating attitudes, have yet to discover that the Institution is not a mere bundle of attitudes capable of manipulation by suggestion. Changes in Institutions come only by degrees, following slowly upon changes in the supporting factors of the lower levels of the Material dimension. It is this characteristic ponderousness which contributes to the political organization its effectiveness as a stable order; and the degree of that stability will be largely dependent upon the degree of integration achieved at the level of Institution.

The ambiguous term Corporatism has been attached to the political thought which speculates primarily within the Material dimension of fact. As providing the possibility of an ideological pattern for totalitarian administration, it has assumed tremendous importance in current political thought. It is, however, a methodological rather than an ideological concept; but this does not mean that conflict is avoided simply by definition. Corporatism as a method has the advantage of offering to the political structure the necessary and desirable features of stability and power. Thus it manifests a powerful and efficient administrative mechanism while at the same time its legislative activity is farcical and its judiciary knows only the principle of fiat. To be sure it achieves strength and solidity at the almost complete expense of the Person; but when the problems of administration, which a restricted individualism and utilitarian doctrine are incompetent to analyze, become so acute that it begins to appear that activity in the Individual dimension will be fore-stalled and stale-mated—in such crises there will arise prophets demanding the surrender of birth-rights of personality and individuality for the pottage of security and stability.