



The Behavioral Approach in Political Science: Epitaph for a Monument to a Successful Protest

Robert A. Dahl

The American Political Science Review, Vol. 55, No. 4. (Dec., 1961), pp. 763-772.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0003-0554%28196112%2955%3A4%3C763%3ATBAIPS%3E2.0.CO%3B2-Z>

The American Political Science Review is currently published by American Political Science Association.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/apsa.html>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is an independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to creating and preserving a digital archive of scholarly journals. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE BEHAVIORAL APPROACH IN POLITICAL SCIENCE: EPITAPH FOR A MONUMENT TO A SUCCESSFUL PROTEST*

ROBERT A. DAHL

Yale University

Perhaps the most striking characteristic of the "behavioral approach" in political science is the ambiguity of the term itself, and of its synonym "political behavior." The behavioral approach, in fact, is rather like the Loch Ness monster: one can say with considerable confidence what it is not, but it is difficult to say what it is. Judging from newspaper reports that appear from time to time, particularly just before the summer tourist season, I judge that the monster of Loch Ness is not Moby Dick, nor my daughter's goldfish that disappeared down the drain some ten years ago, nor even a misplaced American eight heading for the Henley Regatta. In the same spirit, I judge that the behavioral approach is not that of the speculative philosopher, the historian, the legalist, or the moralist. What, then, is it? Indeed, does it actually exist?

I

Although I do not profess to know of the full history of the behavioral approach, a little investigation reveals that confusing and even contradictory interpretations have marked its appearance from the beginning. The first sightings in the roily waters of political science of the phenomenon variously called political behavioral approach, or behavioral(ist) research, evidently occurred in the 1920s. The term "political behavior," it seems, was used by American political scientists from the First World War onward.¹ The honor of first adopting the term as a book title seems to belong, however, not to a political scientist but to the American journalist Frank Kent, who published a book in 1928 entitled *Political Behavior, The Heretofore Unwritten Laws, Customs, and Principles of Politics as Practised in the United States*.² To Kent, the study of political behavior meant the cynical "realism" of the

tough-minded newspaperman who reports the way things "really" happen and not the way they're supposed to happen. This meaning, I may say, is often implied even today. However, Herbert Tingsten rescued the term for political science in 1937 by publishing his path-breaking *Political Behavior: Studies in Election Statistics*. Despite the fact that Tingsten was a Swede, and his work dealt with European elections, the term became increasingly identified with American political science.

The rapid flowering of the behavioral approach in the United States no doubt depended on the existence of some key attitudes and predispositions generated in the American culture—pragmatism, factmindedness, confidence in science, and the like.³ But there were also at least six specific, interrelated, quite powerful stimuli.

One was Charles E. Merriam. In his presidential address to the American Political Science Association in 1925, Merriam said:

Some day we may take another angle of approach *than the formal, as other sciences do*, and begin to look at *political behavior* as one of the essential objects of inquiry.⁴

During the next decade under Merriam's leadership at the University of Chicago, the Department of Political Science was the center of what would later have been called the behavioral approach. A number of the political scientists who subsequently were widely regarded as leaders in introducing that approach into American political science were faculty members or graduate students there: for example, Harold Lasswell as a faculty member and V. O. Key, Jr., David Truman, Herbert Simon, and Gabriel Almond, all graduate students in Merriam's department before the Second World War. Chicago was not the only place where the new mood of scientific empiricism was strong. At Cornell University, for ex-

³ Cf. Bernard Crick, *The American Science of Politics, Its Origins and Conditions* (London, 1959).

⁴ "Progress in Political Research," this REVIEW, Vol. 20 (February, 1926), p. 7, quoted in David B. Truman, "The Implications of Political Behavior Research," *Items* (Social Science Research Council, December, 1951), p. 37. Emphasis added.

* A paper presented at the Fifth World Congress of the International Political Science Association, Paris, September 26, 1961.

¹ David Easton, *The Political System* (1953), p. 203.

² Kent's earlier book, *The Great Game of Politics* (1924), made no pretence of being systematic and continued to be widely read by students of American politics, but within a few years *Political Behavior* fell into an obscurity from which it has never recovered.

ample, G. E. G. Catlin was expounding similar views.⁵ But the collective impact of "the Chicago school" as it was sometimes called, was greater than that of a single scholar.

A second force was the arrival in the United States in the 1930s of a considerable number of European scholars, particularly German refugees, who brought with them a sociological approach to politics that strongly reflected the specific influence of Max Weber and the general influence of European sociology. American political science had always been strongly influenced by Europeans. Not only have Americans often interpreted their own political institutions most clearly with the aid of sympathetic foreigners like de Tocqueville, Bryce, and Brogan, but American scholars have owed specific debts to European scholarship. The first American university chair in political science (actually in History and Political Science), established in 1858 at Columbia, was occupied by the liberal German refugee Francis Lieber. In the second half of the nineteenth century, many of the leading academic advocates of a "science of politics" sought to profit from the methods and teachings in some of the leading European universities.⁶

In the 1930s, there was once again an abrupt revival of European influences as the life of American universities was enriched by the great influx of refugee scholars.

A number of these scholars who came to occupy leading positions in departments of sociology and political science insisted on the relevance of sociological and even psychological theories for an understanding of politics. They drew attention to the importance of Marx, Durkheim, Freud, Pareto, Mosca, Weber, Michels and others. Although some of them might later reject the behavioral approach precisely because they felt it was too narrow, men like Franz Neumann, Sigmund Neumann, Paul Lazarsfeld, Hans Speier, Hans Gerth,

⁵ See Catlin's, *Science and Method of Politics* (1927). Another early example of the behavioral approach was Stuart Rice, *Quantitative Methods in Politics* (1928). Rice had received his Ph.D. at Columbia University.

⁶ Cf. Bernard Crick, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-31. Crick notes that "The Fifth Volume of the Johns Hopkins University *Studies in Historical and Political Science* published a long study, edited by Andrew D. White, 'European Schools of History and Politics' (December, 1887). It reprinted his Johns Hopkins address on 'Education in Political Science' together with reports on 'what we can learn from' each major European country." *Fn. 1, p. 27.*

Reinhard Bendix and many others exerted, both directly and indirectly, a profound influence on political research in the United States. Political sociology began to flourish. Political scientists discovered that their sociological colleagues were moving with speed and skill into areas they had long regarded as their own.

The Second World War also stimulated the development of the behavioral approach in the United States, for a great many American political scientists temporarily vacated their ivory towers and came to grips with day-to-day political and administrative realities in Washington and elsewhere: a whole generation of American political science later drew on these experiences. The confrontation of theory and reality provoked, in most of the men who performed their stint in Washington or elsewhere, a strong sense of the inadequacies of the conventional approaches of political science for describing reality, much less for predicting in any given situation what was likely to happen.

Possibly an even bigger impetus—not unrelated to the effects of the War—was provided by the Social Science Research Council, which has had an unostentatious but cumulatively enormous impact on American social science. A leading spirit in the Council for the past two decades has been a distinguished political scientist, E. Pendleton Herring. His own work before he assumed the presidency of the Council in 1948 reflected a concern for realism, for breaking the bonds of research confined entirely to the library, and for individual and group influences on politics and administration. In the mid-1940s Herring was instrumental in creating an SSRC committee on political behavior. The Annual Report of the SSRC for 1944-45 indicated that the Council had reached a

... decision to explore the feasibility of developing a new approach to the study of political behavior. Focused upon the behavior of individuals in political situations, this approach calls for examination of the political relationships of men—as citizens, administrators, and legislators—by disciplines which can throw light on the problems involved, with the object of formulating and testing hypotheses, concerning uniformities of behavior in different institutional settings. (Emphasis added.)

In 1945 the Council established a Committee on Political Behavior, with Herring as the chairman. The three other members⁷ were also

⁷ Herbert Emmerich, Charles S. Hyneman, and V. O. Key, Jr.

well known political scientists with a definite concern about the state of conventional political science. In 1949, the Council, together with the University of Michigan's Department of Political Science and its Institute for Social Research held a week's conference on Research on Political Behavior at Ann Arbor. The topics covered help to provide an implicit definition of the term: papers were presented on regional politics, the possible contributions of related social sciences (*e.g.*, George P. Murdoch, the anthropologist, discussed the "Possibility of a General Social Science of Government"), voting behavior, political attitudes, groups, and methodological problems.⁸

Near the end of 1949, a new SSRC Committee on Political Behavior was appointed, with V.O. Key, Jr., as the chairman. In 1950, this committee succinctly defined its task: "The committee is concerned with the *development of theory and improvement in methods* which are needed if *social science research on the political process* is to be more effective."⁹ This committee has been an active stimulant in the growth of the behavioral approach down to the present time; indeed, in recent years (under the chairmanship of David Truman) the committee has also awarded research grants.

The fifth factor was the rapid growth of the "survey" method as a tool available for the study of political choices and attitudes, and specifically of the behavior of voters. Where Tingsten had necessarily relied on aggregate voting statistics, the survey method provided direct access to the characteristics and behavior of individuals: an advantage that anyone who has ever labored with aggregate data is quick to recognize. As survey methods became more and more "scientific," particularly under the auspices of the Survey Research Center of the University of Michigan and the Bureau of Applied Social Research at Columbia, political scientists found their presumed monopoly of skills in the scholarly interpretation of voting and elections rudely destroyed by sociologists and social psychologists who in a series of path-breaking studies of presidential elections began to convert the analysis of voting from impressionistic—even when it was brilliant—history or insightful journalism to a more pedestrian but occasionally more impressive and convincing empirical science. To political scientists

dissatisfied with the conventional methods and manners of the discipline, the new voting studies offered encouragement. For in spite of obvious defects, the voting studies seemed to provide ground for the hope that if political scientists could only master the tools employed in the other social sciences—survey methods and statistical analysis, for example—they might be able to go beyond plausible generalities and proceed to test hypotheses about how people in fact do behave in making political choices.

A sixth factor that needs to be mentioned is the influence of those uniquely American institutions, the great philanthropic foundations—especially Carnegie, Rockefeller, and more recently Ford—which because of their enormous financial contributions to scholarly research, and the inevitable selection among competing proposals that these entail, exert a considerable effect on the scholarly community. The relationship between foundation policy and current trends in academic research is too complex for facile generalities. Perhaps the simplest accurate statement is that the relationship is to a very high degree reciprocal: the staffs of the foundations are highly sensitive to the views of distinguished scholars, on whom they rely heavily for advice, and at the same time because even foundation resources are scarce, the policies of foundation staffs and trustees must inevitably encourage or facilitate some lines of research more than others. If the foundations had been hostile to the behavioral approach, there can be no doubt that it would have had very rough sledding indeed. For characteristically, behavioral research costs a good deal more than is needed by the single scholar in the library—and sometimes, as with the studies of voting in presidential elections, behavioral research is enormously expensive.

In the period after the Second World War, however, the foundations—reflecting important trends within the social sciences themselves, stimulated by the factors I have already mentioned—tended to view interdisciplinary and behavioral studies with sympathy. The Rockefeller Foundation, for example, had helped finance the pioneering panel study by Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet of voting in the 1940 presidential election in Erie County, Ohio, and it has also, almost singlehandedly, financed the costly election studies of the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan. In the newest and richest foundation, Ford, the short-lived Behavioral Sciences Program probably increased the use and acceptability of the notion of behavioral sciences as something both more behavioral and more scientific than

⁸ Alexander Heard, "Research on Political Behavior: Report of a Conference," *Items* (Social Science Research Council, December, 1949), pp. 41-44.

⁹ Social Science Research Council, *Items* (June, 1950), p. 20. (Emphasis added.)

the social sciences (I confess the distinction still remains cloudy to me despite the earnest attempts of a number of behavioral scientists to set me straight). The most durable offshoot of the Behavioral Sciences Program at Ford is the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Palo Alto. Although the Center has often construed its domain in most catholic fashion—the “fellows” in any given year may include mathematicians, philosophers, historians, or even a novelist—in its early years the political scientists who were fellows there tended to be discontented with traditional approaches, inclined toward a more rigorously empirical and scientific study of politics, and deeply interested in learning wherever possible from the other social sciences.

All these factors, and doubtless others, came to fruition in the decade of the 1950s. The behavioral approach grew from the deviant and unpopular views of a minor sect into a major influence. Many of the radicals of the 1930s (professionally speaking) had, within two decades, become established leaders in American political science.

Today, many American departments of political science (including my own) offer undergraduate or graduate courses in Political Behavior. Indeed, in at least one institution (the University of Michigan) Political Behavior is not only a course but a field of graduate study parallel with such conventional fields as political theory, public administration, and the like—and recently buttressed, I note enviously, with some fat fellowships.

The presidency of the American Political Science Association furnishes a convenient symbol of the change. From 1927, when Merriam was elected president, until 1950, none of the presidents was prominently identified as an advocate of the behavioral approach. The election of Peter Odegard in 1950 might be regarded as the turning point. Since that time, the presidency has been occupied by one of Merriam's most brilliant and intellectually unconventional students, Harold Lasswell, and by three of the four members of the first SSRC Committee on Political Behavior.

Thus the revolutionary sectarians have found themselves, perhaps more rapidly than they thought possible, becoming members of the Establishment.

II

I have not, however, answered the nagging question I set out to answer, though perhaps I have furnished some materials from which an answer might be derived. What is the behavioral approach in political science?

Historically speaking, the behavioral approach was a protest movement within political science. Through usage by partisans, partly as an epithet, terms like political behavior and the behavioral approach came to be associated with a number of political scientists, mainly Americans, who shared a strong sense of dissatisfaction with the achievements of conventional political science, particularly through historical, philosophical, and the descriptive-institutional approaches, and a belief that additional methods and approaches either existed or could be developed that would help to provide political science with empirical propositions and theories of a systematic sort, tested by closer, more direct and more rigorously controlled observations of political events.

At a minimum, then, those who were sometimes called “Behaviorists” or “Behavioralists” shared a mood: a mood of skepticism about the current intellectual attainments of political science, a mood of sympathy toward “scientific” modes of investigation and analysis, a mood of optimism about the possibilities of improving the study of politics.

Was—or is—the behavioral approach ever anything more than this mood? Are there perhaps definite beliefs, assumptions, methods or topics that can be identified as constituting political behavior or the behavioral approach?

There are, so far as I can tell, three different answers to this question among those who employ the term carefully. The first answer is an unequivocal yes. Political behavior is said to refer to the study of *individuals* rather than larger political units. This emphasis is clear in the 1944–45 SSRC report (which I quoted earlier) that foreshadowed the creation of the Political Behavior Committee. This was also how David Easton defined the term in his searching analysis and criticism of American political science published in 1953.¹⁰ In this

¹⁰ “To precisely what kind of research does the concept of political behavior refer? It is clear that this term indicates that the research worker wishes to look at participants in the political system as individuals who have the emotions, prejudices, and predispositions of human beings as we know them in our daily lives. . . . Behavioral research . . . has therefore sought to elevate the actual human being to the center of attention. Its premise is that the traditionalists have been reifying institutions, virtually looking at them as entities apart from their component individuals. . . . Research workers often use the terms . . . to indicate that they are studying the political process by looking at the relation of it to the motivations, personalities, or feelings of the

sense, Tingsten, Lasswell, and studies of voting behavior are prime examples of the behavioral approach.

The second answer is an unequivocal no. In his recent *Political Science: A Philosophical Analysis* (1960), Vernon Van Dyke remarks: "Though stipulative definitions of *political behavior* are sometimes advanced, as when a course or a book is given this title, none of them has gained general currency."¹¹ Probably the most eloquent and resounding "No!" was supplied three years ago by an editorial in *PROD*, a journal that some American political scientists—and many of its readers—probably regarded as the authentic spokesman for the newest currents among the *avant garde* of political behavior. As an alumnus both of Merriam's Chicago department and the SSRC Committee on Political Behavior, the editor of *PROD*, Alfred de Grazia, could be presumed to speak with authority. He denied that the term referred to a subject matter, an interdisciplinary focus, quantification, any specific effort at new methods, behaviorist psychology, "realism" as opposed to "idealism," empiricism in contrast with deductive systems, or voting behavior—or, in fact, to anything more than political science as something that some people might like it to be. He proposed that the term be dropped.¹²

The third view is perhaps no more than an elaboration of the mood I mentioned a moment ago. In this view the behavioral approach is an attempt to improve our understanding of politics by seeking to explain the empirical aspects of political life by means of methods, theories, and criteria of proof that are acceptable according to the canons, conventions, and assumptions of modern empirical science. In this sense, "a behavioral approach," as one writer recently observed, "is distinguished predominantly by the nature of the purpose it is designed to serve. The purpose is scientific. . . ."¹³

If we consider the behavioral approach in political science as simply an attempt to make the empirical component of the discipline more scientific, as that term is generally understood in the empirical sciences, much of the history that I have referred to falls into place. In a wise, judicious, and until very recently neg-

participants as individual human beings." David Easton, *The Political System* (1953), pp. 201–205.

¹¹ As we shall see, Van Dyke distinguishes the term "behavioral approach" from "political behavior."

¹² "What is Political Behavior?," *PROD*, July, 1958.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

lected essay entitled "The Implications of Political Behavior Research," David Truman, writing in 1951, set out the fruits of a seminar on political behavior research held at the University of Chicago in the summer of 1951. I think it is not misleading to say that the views Truman set forth in 1951 have been shared in the years since then by the members of the Committee on Political Behavior.

Roughly defined, [he wrote] the term political behavior comprehends those actions and interactions of men and groups which are involved in the process of governing. . . . At the maximum this conception brings under the rubric of political behavior any human activities which can be said to be a part of governing.

Properly speaking, political behavior is not a "field" of social science; it is not even a "field" of political science.

. . . Political behavior is not and should not be a specialty, for it represents rather an orientation or a point of view which aims at *stating all the phenomena of government in terms of the observed and observable behavior of men*. To treat it as a "field" coordinate with (and presumably isolated from) public law, state and local government, international relations, and so on, would be to defeat its major aim. That aim includes an eventual reworking and extension of most of the conventional "fields" of political science . . .

The developments underlying the current interest in political behavior imply two basic requirements for adequate research. In the first place, research must be systematic. . . . This means that research must grow out of a precise statement of hypotheses and a rigorous ordering of evidence. . . . In the second place, research in political behavior must place primary emphasis upon empirical methods. . . . Crude empiricism, unguided by adequate theory, is almost certain to be sterile. Equally fruitless is speculation which is not or cannot be put to empirical test.

. . . *The ultimate goal of the student of political behavior is the development of a science of the political process . . .*¹⁴

Truman called attention to the advantages of drawing on the other social sciences and cautioned against indiscriminate borrowings. He argued that the "political behavior orientation . . . necessarily aims at being quantitative wherever possible. But . . . the student of political behavior . . . deals with the political institution and he is obliged to perform his task in *quantitative terms if he can and in qualitative*

¹⁴ Social Science Research Council, *Items* (December, 1951), pp. 37–39. (Emphasis added.)

terms if he must." (Emphasis added). He agreed that "inquiry into how men ought to act is not a concern of research in political behavior" but insisted on the importance of studying values as "obviously important determinants of men's behavior."

Moreover, in political behavior research, as in the natural sciences, the values of the investigator are important in the selection of the objects and lines of inquiry. . . . A major reason for any inquiry into political behavior is to discover uniformities, and through discovering them to be better able to indicate the consequences of such patterns and of public policy, existing or proposed, for the maintenance or development of a preferred system of political values.

Truman denied that "the political behavior orientation implies a rejection of historical knowledge . . . Historical knowledge is likely to be an essential supplement to contemporary observation of political behavior." Finally, while suggesting that the conventional graduate training of political scientists needed to be supplemented and modified, Truman emphatically opposed the notion that the behavioral approach required "the elimination of . . . traditional training."

Any new departure in an established discipline must build upon the accomplishments of the past. Although much of the existing literature of politics may be impressionistic, it is extensive and rich in insights. Without a command of the significant portions of that literature, behavioral research . . . is likely to be naive and unproductive. . . . Many attempts made by persons not familiar with the unsystematized facts [have been] substantively naive even when they may have been methodologically sound.

I have cited Truman's views at length for several reasons: because I wholeheartedly agree with them; because they were expressed a decade ago when the advocates of the behavioral approach were still searching for acceptance and self-definition; because they have been neglected; and because I believe that if the partisans and critics of "political behavior" and "the behavioral approach" had read them, understood them, and accepted them as a proper statement of objectives, much of the irrelevant, fruitless, and ill-informed debate over the behavioral approach over the past decade need never have occurred—or at any rate might have been conducted on a rather higher level of intellectual sophistication.

III

Thus the "behavioral approach" might bet-

ter be called the "behavioral mood" or perhaps even the "scientific outlook."

Yet to explain the behavioral approach as nothing more or less than an emphasis on the term "science" in the phrase "political science" leaves unanswered whatever questions may be raised as to the present or potential achievements of this mood of protest, skepticism, reform, and optimism. Fortunately, there is an element of self-correction in intellectual life. The attempt to increase the scientific competence of political studies will inevitably be judged by results. And the judges of the next generation will share the skepticism of the past. If closer attention to methodological niceties, to problems of observation and verification, to the task of giving operational meaning to political concepts, to quantification and testing, to eliminating unproductive intervening variables, to sources of data, hypotheses, and theory in the other social sciences; if all of these activities do not yield explanations of some important aspects of politics that are more thoroughly verified, less open to methodological objections, richer in implications for further explanation, and more useful in meeting the perennial problems of political life than the explanations they are intended to replace; if, in short, the results of a scientific outlook do not measure up to the standards that serious students of politics have always attempted to apply, then we may confidently expect that the attempt to build an empirical science of politics will lose all the impetus in the next generation that it gained in the last.

The representatives of the "scientific outlook" are, it seems to me, right in saying that it is a little early to appraise the results. We shall need another generation of work before we can put the products of this new mood and outlook in political science in perspective. Nonetheless, I believe it may be useful to make a tentative if deliberately incomplete assessment.

The oldest and best example of the modern scientific outlook at work is to be found in studies of voting behavior using survey methods. These begin with *The People's Choice*,¹⁵ a study of the 1940 presidential election first published in 1944, and end—for the moment at least—with the magnificent study of the 1956 election entitled *The American Voter*.¹⁶ It is no

¹⁵ Paul F. Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet, *The People's Choice* (New York, 1944).

¹⁶ Angus Campbell, Philip Converse, Donald Stokes, and Warren Miller, *The American Voter* (New York, 1960), a study extended and refined

exaggeration to say that in less than two decades this series of studies has significantly altered and greatly deepened our understanding of what in some ways is the most distinctive action for a citizen of a democracy—deciding how to vote, or indeed whether to vote at all, in a competitive national election. Each study has profited from the last; and as broadly trained political scientists have begun to work on these studies together with sociologists and social psychologists, the contributions of the studies to our understanding of politics—rather than of individual psychology—have greatly increased. On many topics where only a generation ago we had not much beyond impressionistic evidence, today we can speak with some confidence.

Although in a field as ambiguous and rich in contradictory hypotheses as political science, it is nearly always possible to regard a finding as merely confirming the obvious, in fact a number of the findings point in rather unexpected directions: *e.g.*, that “independent” voters tend to be less interested, involved, or informed than partisan voters;¹⁷ that socio-economic “class” whether objectively or subjectively defined is not a factor of constant weight in American presidential elections but a variable subject to great swings; and that only a microscopic proportion of American voters can be said to bring any ideological perspectives, even loosely defined, to bear on their decisions. Where once one might have asserted these propositions or their contraries with equal plausibility, the evidence of the voting studies tends to pile up in a single direction. Moreover—and this is perhaps the most important point of all—these studies are cumulative. The early studies were highly incomplete and in many ways unsatisfactory. They were subject to a good deal of criticism, and properly so. Even the latest ones will not escape unharmed. Yet it seems to me there has been a steady and obvious improvement in quality, range, and depth.

The voting studies may have provided an

indirect stimulus to the “scientific outlook” because of a psychological effect. It seems to be beyond much doubt that some political scientists, particularly younger ones, compared the yield produced by the methods used in the studies on voting with the normal yield of conventional methods and arrived at the inference—which is probably false—that the application of comparable new methods elsewhere could produce a comparable gain in results.

A closely related topic on which the scientific outlook, has, in my view, produced some useful and reliable results of great importance to an understanding of politics is in the general domain of political participation. A listing of some of the chapter headings in Robert E. Lane's *Political Life* (1959) indicates the sort of question on which our knowledge is very much better off than it was only a few years ago: “Who Takes Part in Elections and What Do They Do?,” “Who Tries to Influence Public Officials and How Do They Do It?,” “Political Discussion: Who Listens to What? Who Talks to Whom?,” “Why Lower-Status People Participate Less than Upper-Status People,” “The Way of the Ethnic in Politics,” etc.

Since I am not responsible for a complete inventory, I shall limit myself to mentioning one more subject where the behavioral mood has clearly made itself felt. This is in understanding the psychological characteristics of *homo politicus*: attitudes, beliefs, predispositions, personality factors. The range of “behavioral” scholars and research in this area is very great, though the researchers and the research may not always bear the professional label “political science.” A few scattered names, titles, and topics will indicate what I have in mind: Lasswell, the great American pioneer in this area; Cantril; Lane; McClosky; Adorno, et al, *The Authoritarian Personality*; Almond, *The Appeals of Communism*; Stouffer, *Communism, Conformity and Civil Liberties*; and Lipset, “Working Class Authoritarianism” in *Political Man*. The fact that these scholars bear various professional labels—sociologist, psychologist, political scientist—and that it is not easy to read from the professional or departmental label of the author to the character of the work itself may be regarded by some political scientists as an appalling sign of disintegration in the distinctive properties of political science, but it is also a sign of the extent to which a concern by “behavioral scientists” with similar problems now tends to transcend (though not to eliminate entirely) differences in professional origins.

by the same authors in “Stability and Change in 1960: A Reinstating Election,” this REVIEW, Vol. 55 (1961), pp. 269–280.

¹⁷ A finding, incidentally, that may have to be revised in turn. A recent re-analysis of the data of the voting studies, completed after this paper was prepared, has turned up new evidence for the active, interested independent voter. William Flanigan, *Partisanship and Campaign Participation* (Ph.D. dissertation. Yale University Library, 1961).

IV

What of the yield in other matters that have always been of concern to students of political life? There are a number of important aspects of political studies where the behavioral mood has had, is having, or probably soon will have an impact, but where we must reserve judgment for the time being simply because the results are too scanty.

A good example is the analysis of political *systems*. The most distinctive products of the behavioral mood so far have dealt with *individuals*—individuals who vote, participate in politics in other ways, or express certain attitudes or beliefs. But an individual is not a political system, and analysis of individual preferences cannot fully explain collective decisions, for in addition we need to understand the mechanisms by which individual decisions are aggregated and combined into collective decisions. We cannot move from a study of the attitudes of a random sample of American citizens to a reasonably full explanation of, say, presidential nominations or the persistent problems of policy coordination in the United States.

Yet one classic concern of students of politics has been the analysis of *systems* of individuals and groups. Although the impact of the scientific outlook on the study of political systems is still unclear, there are some interesting straws in the wind. In *Union Democracy*, Lipset, Trow and Coleman brought the behavioral mood and the intellectual resources of three highly trained social scientists to bear on the task of explaining how it is that a legitimate two-party system is maintained, as it is not in other American trade unions, in the International Typographers' Union. Recently a number of political scientists have followed sociologists into the study of local communities as systems of influence or decision-making.¹⁸ Deutsch reflects the behavioral mood in his study of international political systems.¹⁹ A number of other studies are in process that may help us formu-

¹⁸ Cf. Janowitz, ed., *Community Political Systems* (1961); Edward Banfield, *Political Influence* (1961); and the English study by Birch and his colleagues at the University of Manchester, *Small Town Politics* (1959).

¹⁹ E.g., in his *Nationalism and Social Communication* (1953). See also his recent article with the economist Alexander Eckstein, "National Industrialization and the Declining Share of the International Economic Sector, 1890-1959," *World Politics* (January, 1961), pp. 267-299; and his "Social Mobilization and Political Development," *this REVIEW*, Vol. 55 (September, 1961), pp. 493-514.

late some new, or if not new then more persuasive, answers to some ancient questions.²⁰ But until more evidence is in, anyone who does not believe he knows *a priori* the outcome of this present expression of the scholar's age-old quest for knowledge will perhaps be pardoned if he reserves judgment and awaits the future with skepticism—mixed, depending on his prejudices, with hope or dread.

V

Where will the behavioral mood, considered as a movement of protest, go from here? I think it will gradually disappear. By this I mean only that it will slowly decay as a distinctive mood and outlook. For it will become, and in fact already is becoming, incorporated into the main body of the discipline. The behavioral mood will not disappear, then, because it has failed. It will disappear rather because it has succeeded. As a separate, somewhat sectarian, slightly factional outlook it will be the first victim of its own triumph.

Lest I be misunderstood in what I am about to say, let me make clear that the present and probable future benefits of the behavioral revolt to political studies seem to me to outweigh by far any disadvantages. In retrospect, the "behavioral" revolt in political science was, if anything, excessively delayed. Moreover, had that revolt not taken place, political science would have become increasingly alienated, I believe, from the other social sciences. One consequence of the behavioral protest has been to restore some unity within the social sciences by bringing political studies into closer affiliation with theories, methods, findings, and outlooks in modern psychology, sociology, anthropology and economics.

But if the behavioral revolt in political science has helped to restore some unities, it has shattered others; and the fragments probably cannot ever again be united exactly along the old lines. There are, so to speak, five fragments in search of a unity. These are: empirical political science, standards of evaluation, history, general theory and speculation.

The empirical political scientist is concerned

²⁰ For an interesting example of an application of the behavioral mood to comparative politics, see Stein Rokkan and Henry Valen, "Parties, Elections and Political Behavior in the Northern Countries: a Review of Recent Research," *Politische Forschung* (1960). Probably the most ambitious attempt to apply survey methods to comparative politics is represented by a study of political socialization and political values in five nations, conducted by Gabriel A. Almond; this study has not yet been completed.

with what *is*, as he says, not with what *ought* to be. Hence he finds it difficult and uncongenial to assume the historic burden of the political philosopher who attempted to determine, prescribe, elaborate, and employ ethical standards—values, to use the fashionable term—in appraising political acts and political systems. The behaviorally minded student of politics is prepared to *describe* values as empirical data; but, *qua* “scientist” he seeks to avoid prescription or inquiry into the grounds on which judgments of value can properly be made. To whom, then, are we to turn for guidance on intricate questions of political appraisal and evaluation? Today, probably no single professional group is qualified to speak with wisdom on all important political alternatives.

It may be said that this is the task of the political philosopher. But the problem of the political philosopher who wishes to engage in political evaluation in a sophisticated way is rendered ever more formidable by the products of the behavioral mood. An act of political evaluation cannot be performed in a sterile medium free from contamination by brute facts. Surely no one today, for example, can intelligently consider the relative merits of different political systems, or different arrangements within a particular political system, unless he knows what there is to be known about how these systems or arrangements work, what is required to make them work, and what effects they have on participants. No doubt the specialist who “knows the facts”—whether as physicist, physician, or political scientist—sometimes displays great naïveté on matters of policy. Still, the impatience of the empirical political scientist with the political philosopher who insists upon the importance of “values” arises in part from a feeling that the political philosopher who engages in political evaluation rarely completes all his homework. The topic of “consensus” as a condition for democracy is a case in point; when the political philosopher deals with this question, it seems to me that he typically makes a number of assumptions and assertions of an empirical sort without systematic attention to existing empirical data, or the possibility of gaining better empirical data.²¹ Obviously some division of labor will

always be necessary in a field as broad as the study of politics, but clearly the field needs more people who do not regard rapid shifts of mood—I mean from the behavioral to the philosophical—as a symptom of severe schizophrenia.

Second, in his concern for analyzing what *is*, the behavioral political scientist has found it difficult to make systematic use of what *has been*: *i.e.*, with history. In a trivial sense, of course, all knowledge of fact is historical; but I am speaking here of the history of the historian. Despite disclaimers and intentions to the contrary, there seems to me little room for doubt that the actual content of almost all the studies that reflect the behavioral mood is a-historical in character. Yet the scientific shortcomings of an a-historical theory in political science are manifest, and political scientists with “behavioral” predispositions are among the first to admit them. As the authors of *The American Voter* remark:

In somewhat severe language, theory may be characterized as a generalized statement of the inter-relationships of a set of variables. In these terms, historical description may be said to be a statement of the values assumed by these variables through time . . .

If theory can guide historical descriptions, the historical context of most research on human behavior places clear limitations of the development of theory. In evolving and testing his theoretical hypotheses the social scientist usually must depend on what he is permitted to observe by the progress of history. . . . It is evident that *variables of great importance in human affairs may exhibit little or no change in a given historical period*. As a result, the investigator whose work falls in this period *may not see the significance of these variables and may fail to incorporate them in his theoretical statements*. And even if he does perceive their importance, *the absence of variation will prevent a proper test of hypotheses that state the relation of these factors to other variables of his theory* (pp. 8–10, emphasis added).

There are, I think, a number of nodes around which a unity between behavioral political studies and history may be expected to grow. Because it is unreasonable to suppose that anything like the whole field of history will lend itself successfully to the behavioral approach, both historians and political scientists might profitably look for targets-of-opportunity on which the weapons forged by modern social science can be brought to bear. In this respect the work of the American historian, Lee Benson, seems to me particularly promising. By the application of rather elementary methods, which the historian has not been prone to em-

²¹ In 1942, in *The New Belief in the Common Man*, C. J. Friedrich challenged the prevailing generalizations about the need for consensus (ch. 5). However, his challenge seems to have met with little response until 1960, when Prothro and Grigg reported the results of an empirical study of consensus on “democratic” propositions in Ann Arbor, Michigan and Tallahassee, Florida. See their “Fundamental Principles of Democracy,” *Journal of Politics* (May, 1960), pp. 276–294.

ploy, including very simple statistical analysis, Benson has shown how the explanations of five eminent American historians of four different presidential elections are dubious, if not, in fact, downright absurd.²² The sociologist, S. M. Lipset, has also contributed a new interpretation of the 1860 election, based upon his analysis of Southern voting patterns in the presidential election of that year and in referenda on secession a few months later.²³ Benson has also turned his attention both to Charles A. Beard's famous interpretation—which Beard called an economic interpretation—of the creation and adoption of the American Constitution, and to the latter-day critics of Beard's somewhat loosely stated theory; he demonstrates convincingly, at least to me, some of the gains that can arise from a greater methodological sophistication on matters of causation, correlation, and use of quantitative data than is customary among professional historians.²⁴

In addition to these targets-of-opportunity that occur here and there in historical studies, a problem that obviously needs the joint attention of historian and "behavioral" political scientist is the matter of political change. To the extent that the political scientist is interested in gaining a better understanding of political change—as, say, in the developing countries, to cite an example of pressing importance—he will have to work with theories that can only be fully tested against historical data. Unfortunately, the a-theoretical or even anti-theoretical biases of many historians often make their works a storehouse of data so vast as to be almost unmanageable for the theorist. Rather than demand that every theorist should have to become his own historian, it may be more feasible to demand that more historians should become theorists, or at any rate familiar with the most relevant issues, problems, and methods of the modern social sciences.

I have already implied the third unity that needs to be established, namely a unity between empirical political studies and a concern

for general theory. The scientific outlook in political science can easily produce a dangerous and dysfunctional humility: the humility of the social scientist who may be quite confident of his findings on small matters and dubious that he can have anything at all to say on larger questions. The danger, of course, is that the quest for empirical data can turn into an absorbing search for mere trivialities unless it is guided by some sense of the difference between an explanation that would not matter much even if it could be shown to be valid by the most advanced methods now available, and one that would matter a great deal if it should turn out to be a little more or a little less plausible than before, even if it still remained in some considerable doubt. So far, I think, the impact of the scientific outlook has been to stimulate caution rather than boldness in searching for broad explanatory theories. The political scientist who mixes skepticism with methodological rigor is all too painfully aware of the inadequacies of any theory that goes much beyond the immediate data at hand. Yet it seems clear that unless the study of politics generates and is guided by broad, bold, even if highly vulnerable general theories, it is headed for the ultimate disaster of triviality.

Finally, I should like to suggest that empirical political science had better find a place for speculation. It is a grave though easy error for students of politics impressed by the achievements of the natural sciences to imitate all their methods save the most critical one: the use of the imagination. Problems of method and a proper concern for what would be regarded as an acceptable test of an empirical hypothesis have quite properly moved out of the wings to a more central position on the great stage of political science. Yet surely it is imagination that has generally marked the intelligence of the great scientist, and speculation—often-times foolish speculation, it turned out later—has generally preceded great advances in scientific theory. It is only fair to add, however, that the speculation of a Galileo, a Kepler, a Newton, or an Einstein, was informed and controlled by a deep understanding of the hard empirical facts as they were known at the time: Kepler's speculations always had to confront the tables of Tycho Brahe.

There is every reason to think that unities can be forged anew. After all, as the names of Socrates, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Tocqueville remind us, from time to time in the past the study of politics has been altered, permanently, by a fresh infusion of the spirit of empirical inquiry—by, that is to say, the scientific outlook.

²² The historians and the elections were: Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., on the election of 1824, Samuel E. Morison and Henry S. Commager on the election of 1860, Allan Nevins on the election of 1884, and William Diamond on the election of 1896. See his "Research Problems in American Political Historiography," in Komarovsky, ed., *Common Frontiers of the Social Sciences* (1957).

²³ "The Emergence of the One-Party South—the Election of 1860," in *Political Man* (1960).

²⁴ Lee Benson, *Turner and Beard, American Historical Writing Re-Considered* (1960).