Three Generations of Pluralism: Continuity and Change

The Process of Government. By Arthur F. Bentley. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1908). Referred to in the text as PG.

The Governmental Process. By David Truman. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971, 2nd edition; originally published 1951). Referred to in the text as GP.

The End of Liberalism. By Theodore Lowi. (New York: W.W. Norton 8c Co., 1979, 2nd edition; originally published 1969). Referred to in the text as EL.

The Politics of Disorder. By Theodore Lowi. (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1971). Referred to in the text as PD.

Pluralism, once the dominant paradigm of American political science, has increasingly come under attack. The pluralists of the 1950s have been accused of naively assuming that interest group politics would produce just outcomes because all interests would be represented by organized groups. That assumption was challenged theoretically by the discovery that collective action dilemmas might prevent large groups from spontaneously organizing to secure their common interests, and empirically by the discovery that the interest group system had a class bias. Pluralists of the 1950s were also accused of having assumed that groups were voluntary, and therefore, expressed the genuine interests of their members for fear of membership attrition. That assumption was challenged as the coercive dimensions of group life were highlighted and the divergent interests of organizational elites and group members were exposed.

Despite these criticisms, pluralism in more than one way has proved remarkably durable. Normatively the pluralism of the 1950s has been discredited. Few would still assert that interest group politics per se provides genuine representation for all, relevant interests. Theoretically pluralism in general has been increasingly faulted because it has no theory of the state. But the pluralist inter-

pretation of American politics, an interpretation which focused on the easy access interest groups have to public officials and the responsiveness of those officials to interest group pressure, has fared far better. Particularly when the United States is examined in a comparative framework and contrasted with European countries with highly centralized public bureaucracies, the pluralist emphasis on groups in American politics appears well justified. If the pluralist interpretation of American politics is distinguished from the pluralist theoretical framework and from the normative stance of pluralists in the 1950s, a more fruitful analysis of their relationship in the history of American political science is possible.

The longevity of the pluralist interpretation of American politics was demonstrated by the enthusiastic reception of Theodore Lowi's *The End of Liberalism* during the late 1960s and early 1970s. While Lowi's theoretical and normative emphasis on the state distinguish him from earlier "generations" of pluralists, his description of a policy process dominated by interest groups bears a striking resemblance to the policy process described by his predecessors. The affinity between Lowi's analysis in *The End of Liberalism,* and its further elaboration in *The Politics of Disorder,* and that of earlier pluralists is clearest when he considers class as an alternative characterization of the social structure.

> Industrial societies are almost inevitably group societies. The division of labor, the specialization of functions, and a host of other social complexities provide an infinity of bases for organization. The rigid class structures of pre-industrial and early industrial societies do not give way to classless societies. The numerous class does not devour the less numerous. Rather, both disappear, or are overshadowed by the multiplication of strata. (PD, 4)

This emphasis on groups is pervasive in his interpretation of American politics, and in more subtle ways it influences his theory of the state.[1]

As the earlier use of the metaphor "generation" suggests, Lowi's work has in many ways developed in response to the shortcomings and strengths of his pluralist predecessors, and cannot properly be understood except in relationship to the preceding "generations" of

1. For an alternative analysis of Lowi as a group theorist see David Greenstone, "Group Theories," in *Handbook of Political Science,* eds. Fred Greenstein and Nelson Polsby, Vol. 4 (Reading: Addison Wesley, 1975).

pluralism. A comparison of Lowi's *The End of Liberalism* with David Truman's *The Governmental Process is* particularly useful for illuminating the distinctive character of Lowi's pluralist interpretation of American politics and understanding its limits. But just as Truman is in the background of Lowi's work, Bentley is in the background of Truman's. Truman believed *The Governmental Process* was an elaboration of the analytic framework proposed in Bentley's pathbreaking *The Process of Government* and a systematic application of it to American politics; and he tacitly acknowledged his debt to Bentley by mimicking his title.

This article will therefore analyze the development of the pluralist interpretation of American politics and question its validity by examining the three generations of pluralism. Arthur Bentley's *The Process of Government,* the first generation, will be briefly examined to highlight the fundamental premises of the pluralist framework and to set the stage for those who have followed in his footsteps. David Truman's *The Governmental Process,* from the second generation, will be examined at greater length to show the ways in which Truman subtly but decisively altered Bentley's analysis as he struggled to explain the possibility of political stability in a system composed of conflicting interest groups. His distortions of Bentley were so fundamental that his interpretation of American politics can at best be considered quasi-pluralist, despite his affirmation of the pluralist theoretical framework. Theodore Lowi's *The End of Liberalism,* a third generation work, will be examined to demonstrate that Lowi's interpretation of American politics reveals him to be the true heir of Bentleyan pluralism, and that his theory of the state subsumes, rather than rejects, pluralist theory. Finally, a comparison of Truman and Lowi provides a basis for questioning the validity of Lowi's pluralist thesis.

The First Generation

Arthur Bentley's *The Process of Government* was a pathbreaking attempt to fashion a new science of politics based on the group as the fundamental unit of political analysis. For Bentley, "When groups are adequately stated, everything is stated." (208) The core of Bentley's new understanding is his famous equation of groups, interest, and action. (211) Groups are defined in the process of group interaction, they arise and exist only in opposition to other groups. Action and reaction is the law of interests. The identification of

groups with interests defines the group as an efficient cause, a quantum of matter and energy capable of initiating change in political life.

Bentley's new science was explicitly contrasted with the pre-scientific study of politics which had focused on the lifeless formal structures of government.

> Set opposite to all these various forms of so-called psychical interpretation, we have a dead political science. It is a formal study of the most external characteristics of governing institutions. It loves to classify governments by incidental attributes, and when all is said and done it cannot classify them much better now than by lifting up bodily Aristotle's monarchies, aristocracies, and democracies which he found significant for Greek institutions, and using them for measurements of all sorts and conditions of modern government . . . . They lose all sight of the content of the process in some trick point about the form. (162)

The formalistic approach to political institutions reifies them, detaching institutions from their social context and failing to note their grounding in group interests.

The reification of institutions in the pre-scientific study of politics has been complemented by the reification of individuals, attributing an independent reality to them divorced from the group context in which they are always found.

> It is a "relation" between men, but not in the sense that the individual men are given to us first, and the relation erected between them. The "relation," i.e., the action, is the given phenomenon, the raw material; the action of men with or upon each other. We know men only as participants in such activity. (176)

Individuals cannot be abstracted from their activity, and their activity is a manifestation of group activity. The false assumption that individuals were the fundamental unit of analysis in the study of politics in turn brought with it pseudo-explanations of individual behavior as the product of ideas, feelings, faculties, or the social will, all of which must also be understood as manifestations of group activity if they are not to systematically obscure our understanding of the political process.

Bentley's critique of reification extends not only to explanations which attribute causal efficacy to formal institutions or individuals and their internal mental states; it even raises objections to explanations of political behavior in terms of our everyday concept of

groups. For Bentley the group is no longer an organization of individuals with shared interests. There is no group apart from acting collectively, and thus nothing which unifies the agent of different acts.

> The term "group" will be used throughout this work in a technical sense. It means a certain portion of the men of society, taken, however, not as physical mass cut off from other masses of men, but as a mass activity, which does not preclude the men who participate in it from participating likewise in many other group activities. (211)

The groups of everyday language are abstractions from the seamless web of relations, imaginary actors which persist long after their real world correlates have been reconstituted.

If groups are the fundamental particles of political life, and if they become manifest only in action, then groups are necessarily homogenous. The perception that groups are heterogeneous, that they are composed of parts, is a consequence of reifying groups, of treating them as "things" that unify actions. Everyday groups may indeed attempt to achieve one goal at one point in time and another contradictory goal at another point in time, revealing discord among the parts which compose that group. Bentley saw that that conception of groups, however, would threaten any attempt to describe political behavior strictly in terms of groups. If groups are composed of subgroups, then these subgroups would be susceptible to further division. One might be driven back to positing an interest of the individual prior to that of any subgroup. That possibility can only be foreclosed if groups are equated with interest and action.

The rigorous application of Bentley's process framework to the study of politics would have led to an abstract science of politics so remote from our everyday perspective that its utility is dubious. [2] Inevitably Bentley's disciples would describe politics in terms of relatively stable organized groups rather than as a seamless web of action, a lapse which even Bentley was prone to when he tried to apply his theory. (225) Although this was a distortion of Bentley, it was so pervasive that for our purposes the pluralist theoretical framework will simply refer to Bentley's methodological imperative to find the group basis of all political behavior. Pluralism was an at-

2. Bentley himself compromised his model when he turned to political analysis in his *Makers, Users, and Masters.* See Dennis Hale, "Arthur Bentley: Politics and the Mystery of Society," *Political Science Reviewer,* 13 (1983), 24-35.

tempt to get behind the surface of politics, a surface defined by formal institutions and political rhetoric justifying actions as intended to secure the common good. Pluralists tried to uncover the real basis of politics, conflict and bargaining among self-interested groups. Above all, it was Bentley's criticisms of the common good which seemed to open the door for a realistic political science.

Bentley's aversion to the use of the common good or public interest in political analysis followed logically from his prior definition of group interest. If interest is identified with action, then societies have no common interests because they never act collectively. The actions of government, ostensibly acting on behalf of collective interests, are always opposed by some members of society. Even when the government secures the lives of its citizens by prohibiting murder, perhaps its most nonpartisan function, the government is opposing the interests of murderers. (221) No interest is uniformly asserted by every member of a society, hence it has no genuinely collective interests. In order to understand a heterogeneous entity like the nation-state, we must explain it in terms of more fundamental, homogenous entities like groups. [3]

While Bentley denied that the common good, with its normative connotations, was a useful concept in political analysis, he did recognize that conflict occurred only within certain boundaries in a political system; it was not pervasive. Unwilling to explain this fact as the product of a social consensus, shared *ideas* cutting across different groups, Bentley formulated the concept of a "habit background" to account for the limits of conflict.

> If we take a little different angle of vision we shall be tempted to state each group activity, not directly in terms of such and such other group activities, but as resting in a great sea of social life, of which it is but a slight modulation. We shall get the conception of a "habit background" in which the group activity operates. (218)

The habit background explained social order without resorting to a concept like the common good.

Bentley warns his readers that the concept habit background may be misused.

3. For a more complete analysis of the problems this posed for Bentley's analysis see Leo Weinstein, "The Group Approach: Arthur F. Bentley" in *Essays in the Scientific Study of Politics,* ed. Herbert Storing (New York: Holt Rinehart, 1962), 151-224.

> The habit background may usefully be taken into the reckoning as summing up a lot of conditions under which the groups operate, but reliance on it is apt to check investigation where investigation is needed, or even become the occasion for the introduction of much unnecessary mysticism. (218)

The task of science is to study the relationship between competing groups, not to focus on the relationship between groups and the shared conditions of their existence. The habit background should remain in the background.

One use of the concept particularly exemplifies its dangers. The habit background may be transformed into a social whole.

> It is easy to generalize the background so much that one thinks he finds it in a "social whole" which he can treat as an active factor in his interpretative work. (220)

Indeed, the habit background concept is ill-suited to be the basis of such a "social whole." The first example of an application of the concept is to the limits on destructive practices between warring nations. If a shared habit background constituted a social whole, then the warring nations together form a social whole. Such an Olympian perspective, where unity does not even presuppose peace among its members, is clearly distinct from the perspective of social theorists who believe it is meaningful to speak of the "social whole."

Dismissing the state as a reified ideal, Bentley's muckraking science unmasked the particularistic group interests concealed behind the universalistic pretensions of ideas, institutions and law. By the 1950s Bentleyan realism had become the dominant intellectual motif of political science. Many aspects of the political process which a more formalistic analysis of institutions had ignored were now vividly highlighted. The role of lobbyists in the legislative and administrative process was exposed. The extent to which political parties aggregated interest group demands rather than presenting coherent alternatives to individual voters became apparent. But would this realism provide the basis for a new, comprehensive interpretation of American politics? That goal was to prove more elusive than those who followed in Bentley's footsteps suspected, as an analysis of David Truman's *The Governmental Process,* the most ambitious attempt to apply Bentley's science to the study of national politics, will show.

The Second Generation

David Truman, acknowledging his debt to Bentley, refined the group framework and attempted to apply it systematically to American politics. Despite his intentions, however, Truman's *The Governmental Process* subtly but fundamentally altered Bentley's science. For Bentley the description of social phenomena in terms of groups was the scientific alternative to ordinary language descriptions of events in terms of either individuals or formal political institutions. Truman, on the other hand, emphasized that the group is more important than the polity in *shaping* the individual.

> In all societies of any degree of complexity, the *individual is less affected* directly by the society as a whole than differentially through various of its subdivisions, or groups [emphasis mine]. (15)

The concessions that individuals are in need of socialization and that the "society as a whole" can also socialize individuals are crucial qualifications of Bentley.

Truman is not consistent regarding the status of the individual. At times he follows Bentley, describing "the individual" and the group as "two ways of approaching the same phenomena, not different things." (48) Consistent with this premise he accounts for individual differences by the phenomena of overlapping group memberships. Each individual is a member of multiple groups, and if no two individuals are members of exactly the same groups then each individual can be unique without denying the primacy of groups for determining individual behavior. (48-49) But Truman also refers to "the infinite variations in biological inheritance" and suggests that these are at least in part responsible for "divergent perceptions and differential responses." (49, 165) Groups can socialize individuals because they have a powerful urge to "belong," and such an individual will "exhibit the kinds of behavior that will identify him as belonging *or else accept a position as an outsider"* [emphasis mine]. (18) "Most" individuals find the price of nonconformity too high to bear, but the possibility that some individuals can resist social pressure may be important not only in explaining asocial deviants, but in accounting for the exceptional individuals who rise to the Presidency, an office which is "peculiarly reflective of the personality of the incumbents." (398) As we shall see, Truman's description of the Presidency allows individuals a role in the political process

which Bentley's more consistent pluralism would never have conceded.

Truman's departure from Bentley becomes even more apparent when we turn from his treatment of individuals to his treatment of political institutions. While sharing Bentley's hostility to a strictly formal political science and asserting that the "first step" in developing a more realistic political science "will have to be away from formal government and politics as such," Truman was not prepared to go as far as Bentley. (12) Commenting upon criticism of political science from other disciplines, Truman's response would apply equally to Bentley:

> To many of these critics, the concern of political science with analysing and describing formal institutions of government was totally misplaced. Most political scientists, dissatisfied though they were with the state of their discipline, were not prepared to accept any such extreme position. They knew that formal arrangements, unless totally ignored in practice, do affect outcomes, and that different types of formal structure distribute opportunities and handicaps unevenly, as indicated by the intense conflicts that could be generated by proposals to alter them. They were, however, persuaded that the formalities alone neither accounted for enough of what happened on the governmental scene nor showed in systematic terms how the system actually operated. (xix)

Critics of pluralism, by equating Bentley with Truman, have often failed to perceive the significance of political structure in pluralism after Bentley.

Truman is troubled, in a way that Bentley was not, with the problem of political order when society is fragmented into conflicting interest groups. Recognizing the need for a social consensus which can contain potential conflicts, Truman introduces the concept "the rules of the game" to account for political stability.

> Were such [interest groups] the exclusive ingredients of the political process in the United States, the entire system would have torn itself apart long since.
>
> If these various organized interest groups more or less consistently reconcile their differences, adjust and accept compromises, we must acknowledge that we are dealing with a system that is not accounted for by the "sum" of the organized interest groups in the society. (51)

The rules of the game must be actively defended against the in-

herently selfish tendencies of groups. Yet their defenders are not a group in Bentley's sense of the term. The hue and cry of Bentley's pluralism is back to the groups, a hermeneutical guide which ferrets out group interests behind all protestations of the common good. Yet Truman's analysis demands a broadly based group supporting "the functional prerequisites of the system." (xlvi) Actually the defenders of the rules of the game are an architectonic group, operative in every narrower group. Whereas Bentley's groups were abstractions defined by a single interest, for Truman every group is defined by two interests. Truman's concern for the viability of a regime necessitates a distinction between moderate and immoderate demands by groups. He can only account for the moderation of group demands in a healthy polity by describing groups in terms of their narrower interest and their broader interest in the "rules of the game." When the narrower interest threatens the interest in the "rules of the game" by pushing its demands too far, internal group cohesion is weakened and the group cannot pursue its interest as vigorously. (156-188) The "rules of the game" are a common good, a universal interest which cannot be reduced to particularistic group interests, despite Truman's frequent attempts to deny it. (50)

A crucial step in the introduction of the common good, or a national interest, into the pluralist framework is Truman's definition of interest as shared attitudes.

> As used here "interest group" refers to any group that, on the basis of one or more ***shared attitudes,*** makes certain claims upon other groups in the society for the establishment, maintenance, or enhancement of forms of behavior that are implied by the shared attitudes [emphasis mine]. (33)

The definition of interest in terms of shared attitudes, in contrast to Bentley's equation of group, activity, and interest, allows the potential group, which was a residual category in Bentley, to rise to a new level of importance. If shared attitudes constitute interests, then any calculation of interests must include unorganized as well as organized interests.

> Definition of the interest group in this fashion has a number of distinct advantages in the task of political analysis. In the first place, it permits the identification of various potential as well as existing interest groups. That is, it invites examination of an interest whether or not it is found at the moment as one of the characteristics of a particular organized group. (34)

Not all of the unorganized interests are of equal significance.

> More important for the present purposes than the potential groups representing separate minority elements are those interests or expectations that are so widely held in the society and are so reflected in the behavior of almost all citizens that they are, so to speak, taken for granted. Such "majority" interests are significant not only because they may become the basis for organized interest groups but also because the "membership" of such potential groups overlaps extensively the memberships of the various organized interest groups. (512)

Pluralism began as an attempt to look behind the formal institutions of government; therefore these institutions cannot directly represent the national interest. One must discover the groups behind government. A national interest can emerge only if mediated through the group structure. Since most organized groups represent special interests, the national interest appears from the group perspective to be unorganized or potential.

This potential group which supports the rules of the game is vital to the survival of the regime. Those interpretations of pluralism which view it as a theory of natural equilibrium among groups often point to overlapping membership as the crucial mechanism for moderating group demands. But Truman explicitly denies that overlapping memberships among *organized* groups are sufficient.

> But multiple membership in organized groups is not sufficiently extensiveto obviate the possibility of irreconcilable conflict. There is little overlapping in the memberships of the National Association of Manufacturers and the United Steelworkers of America, or of the American Farm Bureau Federation and the United Automobile Workers. Overlapping membership among relatively cohesive organized interest groups provides an insufficient basis upon which to account for the relative stability of an operating political system. (510)

Only a broad social consensus could provide the foundations for political order.

> It is thus multiple memberships in potential groups based on widely held and accepted interests that serve as a balance wheel in a going political system like that of the United States. (514)

Yet this potential group is most suspect from Bentley's perspective.

In Bentley the potential group was restricted to a "becoming"

stage for groups, with groups still understood in the narrow sense of one of the many competing parts of society. Bentley's discussion of potential groups occurs in Chapter 4 of *The Process of Government,* whereas his discussion of the habit background, which can mistakenly appear to be the functional equivalent of Truman's rules of the game, occurs in Chapter 7, without any reference to potential groups. It is Truman's marriage of the concepts of potential interest and habit background by redefining interest as attitude that allows him to interject a notion of national interest. When Truman discusses potential interests he quotes a passage from Bentley, which is here expanded to show that in the context Bentley was concerned with the habit background.

> Thus it is only as the effects of overlapping memberships and the functions of unorganized interests and potential groups are included in the equation that it is accurate to speak of governmental activity as the product or resultant of interest group activity. As Bentley has put it:
>
> [While I am making this discussion in terms of group struggles, there is implied all the time the habit background in which the struggle proceeds. That is] [t]here are limits to the techniques of the struggle, this involving also limits to the group demands, all of which is solely a matter of empirical observation [for the given time and country]. Or, in other words, when the struggle proceeds too harshly at any point there will become insistent in the society a group more powerful than either of those involved which tends to suppress the extreme and annoying methods of the groups in the primary struggle. It is within the embrace of these great lines of activity that the smaller struggles proceed, and the very word struggle has meaning only with reference to its limitation. [Bracketed quotes are parts of Bentley not quoted by Truman.] (515)

But Bentley restricted the habit background to exclude any reference to potential interests.

> Usually we shall find, on testing the "social whole," that it is merely the group tendency or demand represented by the man who talks of it, erected into the pretense of a universal demand of the society; and thereby, indeed, giving the lie to its own claims; ***for if it were such a comprehensive all-embracing interest of the society as a whole it would bean established condition,*** and not at all a subject of discussion by the man who calls it an interest of society as a whole [Emphasis mine]. (PG, 220)

By equating the habit background with potential groups Truman

shifts it from the background to the foreground in political analysis. Rather than a common condition presupposed in all expressions of interest, it becomes an interest itself, capable of opposing other group interests. Truman's attempt to equate the operation of his "rules of the game" with Bentley's habit background seems plausible because both limit the operation of narrower interests. But, by Bentley's definition, the habit background is presupposed in all action, so there cannot be violations. Truman's "rules of the game" can be violated, though such violations *may* bring into active existence the potential group defending the rules to counter any attack upon them. This activation of the potential group defending the rules is not invariant because individuals may be lost in their own concerns and not react in time to prevent a disturbance or collapse of the regime. Contrary to what some critics have charged, (EL, 35) all pluralists do not assume that an invisible hand guides the interaction of groups, assuring either an equilibrium, justice, or both.

The assertion , that Truman modified Bentley's framework to allow the introduction of a national interest seems to be contradicted by Truman's explicit rejection of a "social whole" or "common good."

> Many of those who place particular emphasis upon this difficulty assume explicitly or implicitly that there is an interest of the nation as a whole, universally and invariably held and standing apart from and superior to those of the various groups included within it. This assumption is close to the popular dogmas of democratic governments based on the familiar notion that if only people are free and have access to "the facts," they will all want the same thing in any political situation. It is no derogation of democratic preference to state that such an assertion flies in the face of all that we know of the behavior of men in a complex society. (50)

Echoing Bentley again, Truman cites the example of spies and subversives in times of war when the national interest would be preeminent as an empirical refutation of any national interest shared by all. (50)

Truman's assertion that a common interest must be universally held is the only one consistent with his behavioral definition of interest. He then denies any interest has such a totally inclusive character. But Truman also concedes in the preface to the second edition that his rejection of a national interest was not meant to suggest that there was only "a process of contention, bargaining and

pressure by organized groups." (xlvi) In order to account for the stability of our "going political system" one must go beyond groups.

> In an exchange in 1958 with a committee of philosophers who were concerned with theories of "the public interest," I stated that one could accept a definition of the phrase in terms of the functional prerequisites of the system-that is, the requirements necessary to its evolution and survival. The rules of the game clearly are among such prerequisites. They are not and need not be unanimously accepted or uniformly understood provided that they can be effectively articulated and authoritatively defined by appropriate actors in the system, whether governmental or non-governmental. (xlvi)

These circumlocutions are necessary because Truman is committed to the development of a behavioral science of politics which is skeptical of any causal role for ideas in accounting for a phenomenon like political stability.

> We must go farther to explain the operation of such ideals or traditions as constitutionalism, civil liberties, representative responsibility, and the like. These are not, however, a sort of disembodied metaphysical influence, like Mr. Justice Holmes' "brooding omnipresence." We know of the existence of such factors only from the behavior and the habitual interactions of men. If they exist in this fashion they are interests. (51)

Truman's logic here resembles that of some economists who, when confronted with examples of individual altruism, save the premise of self-interested man by reinterpreting altruism as some form of self-interest. If such an expansive definition of interests is accepted, one which could encompass the particularism of narrow group economic interests and the universalism of the rules of the game, then an analysis of politics in terms of interest may not explain anything.

Truman's attempt to sustain the interest group model while acknowledging the significance of the rules of the game poses severe theoretical problems. This becomes clear if one examines the content of rules of the game. Truman, who is remarkably vague about these rules given their importance in his framework, never offers more than a partial list of what would be included.

> In the American system the "rules" would include the values generally attached to the dignity of the individual human being, loosely expressed in terms of "fair dealing" or more explicitly verbalized in for-

> mulations such as the Bill of Rights. They would embrace what in Chapter 5 we called "the democratic mold," that is, the approval of forms for broad mass participation in the designation of leaders and in the selection of policies in all social groups and institutions. They would also comprehend certain semi-egalitarian notions of material welfare. This is an illustrative, not an exhaustive, list of such interests. (512-13)

This vagueness may be attributed to his desire to keep the focus of attention on more narrowly based interest groups while using the rules of the game as an indispensable limiting concept.

If the rules of the game are to be conceptualized as another interest within the interest group model, how can one account for their unique role? At first, Truman's description of the rules of the game as the interest of an architectonic potential group which can unify the polity, appears to distinguish this interest from any other solely because it is widely held. (xxxvii) But having identified the Bill of Rights as a component of the rules of the game, Truman is then forced to concede that broad majorities do not always support its provisions.

> Sizable minorities and in some instances majorities of the general population do not accept or agree with statements that by any reasonable definition would be included in the rules of the game. (xxxvii)

Recognizing the importance of this fact, Truman gradually modifies his initial emphasis on the "democratic mold" by relying increasingly on a smaller group of political activists to sustain the rules of the game. (xxxviii) Since pluralists were pitted against elitists in the 1950s, it is interesting to observe that Truman closes *The Governmental Process* with an explicit acknowledgment of the importance of elites: "Guardianship will emerge out of the affiliations of the guardians." (535)

Truman was unwilling to interpret the rules of the game as the narrow self-interest of political elites, and his most sophisticated attempt to distinguish support for these rules from other forms of interest group behavior draws upon the distinction between substance and procedure.

> The fundamental basis for the long-term survival of a pluralist system, it is argued, is the continued vitality and effectiveness of those typically "unorganized interests" described as the rules of the game, to which I

> have referred. Since the essential character of the rules is procedural rather than substantive, they are, at least in principle, consistent with substantial alterations in power relationships and with equally significant shifts in public policy. (x1i)

As the choice of the term rules of the game would itself suggest, agreement on procedures which are neutral *vis-a-vis* a wide variety of potential ends are the foundation of political stability.

Consensually held beliefs alone, however, cannot guarantee the neutrality and integrity of the rules of the game, as Truman himself acknowledges.

> We have further observed that these unifying widespread interests are not always mutually consistent and unambiguous. Variations in group experiences and, consequently, in frames of reference invite differences in the importance attached to these partially inconsistent interests, and their ambiguity permits divergent rationalizations in terms of these diversified frames of reference ... .
>
> It follows that the stabilizing effects of overlapping memberships may be limited or eliminated if they operate primarily or exclusively either in sharply defined social strata or classes that are characterized in part by the specialized priorities, and meanings they give the widespread and ambiguous interests. (520)

Previously he had conceded that such diverse strata do exist in the United States, for the mechanisms of overlapping membership among organized groups (but not among organized and potential groups) was inadequate to moderate the class relations between employers and employees or the sectoral relations between farmers and workers. (510) If overlapping membership among organized groups is "an insufficient basis upon which to account for the relative stability of an operating political system," then how does the introduction of a potential interest in the rules of the game alter the situation? Won't the rules simply be interpreted differently by the different strata? What prevents all politics from collapsing into Truman's description of morbific politics, where disputes about the rules replace disputes over issues.

It is at this point that the absence of a state in Truman's pluralist polity becomes an egregious problem, for only a state could establish and enforce rules of the game delimiting interest group conflict. Rules of the game can only be effective if there is an authoritative judge who can definitively resolve disputes over interpretations and applications of the rules of the game. Indeed, if rules of the game are

to exist, there must be a legislative power to specify the rules, an executive power to execute them, and a judiciary to apply them, although the extent to which these powers are vested in distinct institutions may vary depending on the constitutional arrangement. Reliance on a potential (hence unorganized) group which would mobilize to defend the rules of the game will not suffice.

Truman's pluralist theoretical framework cannot accommodate those institutions, but does his interpretation of American politics ignore them? If one examines his analysis of the Presidency, for example, he certainly downplays the formal institutional authority of the office and focuses on the limits of informal power and the need to accommodate interest group demands. But Truman also believes the Presidency is an "important molder of its incumbents," that a President's persuasive power "supplements his formal authority," and that the "expectations" attached to the office are "effective in determining access. (400) Nor does Truman concur with Bentley's suggestion that the "history of the Presidency . . . has been the history of interests which chose it as their best medium of expression when they found other pathways blocked." (402) For Truman, the President's symbolic role as the President of all the people, as someone who rises above partisan and interest group politics, is not simply a myth. The President is a leader who has a special responsibility to defend the rules of the game against divisive interests. Contrary to the pluralist dictum, Truman attributes an independent role to both the office and the individual who fills the office, at least if the incumbent is "skillful." (400-03)

Truman never resolved the tension between his theoretical framework and his description of the American political process. While institutions can and must rise above the play of interest group politics in his interpretation, he refuses to grant them too much autonomy.

> Many of these forms and functions have received such widespread acceptance from the start or in the course of time that they appear to be independent of the overt activities of organized interest groups. The judiciary is such a form .... However, if the judiciary or a segment of it operates in a fashion sharply contrary to the expectations of an appreciable portion of the community or if its role is strongly attacked, the group basis of its structure and powers is likely to become apparent. (506)

Some realism regarding the role of interest group bargaining in

building consent and legitimacy for the state is no doubt to be commended, but in Truman this realism constantly threatens to overwhelm the fragile rules of the game and vitiate his interpretation.

Thus when Truman conceded in the introduction to the second edition of *The Governmental Process* that "[a]ny system, of course, tends to discriminate in favor of established groups and interests, and it may deny to new groups access to points of decision," (xli) and then went on on to suggest that the veto power of established groups in our decentralized political process made us particularly vulnerable to this charge, he sacrificed the central insight which animated his original thesis. That thesis had compromised Bentley's strict methodological imperative to state everything in terms of groups by grafting onto a society of groups an autonomous, neutral political class that would manage conflict and secure justice. What proved troublesome in this formulation was the relationship between the competing groups of civil society and the neutral political class. He could never resolve the problem of finding a social base for this class so it could be efficacious with the need for independence from any social base so it could be neutral.

Torn between his theoretical framework and his rich understanding of American politics, the former repeatedly gives way to the latter in Truman's descriptions. It was this "empiricism," which must be distinguished from the narrower scientific behavioralism linked to the group framework, which enriched *The Governmental Process.* Given Truman's methodological biases, it is not surprising that its analysis of formal institutions is often superficial and inadequate. But *if* the United States is indeed governed by rules of the game, then Truman's interpretation of American politics, while not comprehensive, does tell part of the story. It should be supplemented, not discarded. Furthermore, no critique of the group framework of *The Governmental Process* can fully discredit his analysis, since that analysis transcended the group framework. Only a criticism which went to the root, which attacked his rules of the game concept, would suffice. The most comprehensive reply to Truman's work in the 1960s, Theodore Lowi's *The End of Liberalism,* did not shirk that challenge.

The Third Generation

The normative stance of Theodore Lowi's *The End of Liberalism* is diametrically opposed to that of David Truman's. Lowi is as

relentless in his criticism of interest group bargaining as Truman had been in his defense of it. But in many ways the description of the political process which one finds in *The End of Liberalism* resembles the descriptions found in Truman's *The Governmental Process.* Lobbying is pervasive, public officials respond to interest group pressure, and bargaining and coalition building among interest groups determines political outcomes and shapes political parties. The process is the same, but the outcomes are different. Where Truman found consensus, legitimacy and justice, Lowi discovers coercion, illegitimacy and injustice. These differences are derived from their respective understandings of the role of the contemporary American public philosophy, which Lowi refers to as "interest group liberalism."

Lowi's new approach to those consensually held ideas which constitute the rules of the game for American politics is revealed in his reference to them as an *"ersatz* public philosophy." (EL, 43) For Lowi, the American regime is facing a crisis of legitimacy. This crisis, however, has not been generated by the gap between American ideals and American political practice. The problem is the congruence of ideals and practice, and the radical deficiency of both. Ultimately the very use of the term crisis *is* misleading, for this congruence of ideals and practice has created a durable regime. Thus, while the first edition of *The End of Liberalism*, written in the turbulent 1960s, points to active opposition to government policies as a tangible sign of growing illegitimacy and suggests that the functional incapacity of government may lead to imminent political reform, the second edition, released at the end of the 1970s, mutes the language of crisis; it suggests that interest group liberalism has been solidified and that change cannot be expected until interest group liberalism has had "its era as the philosophic and jurisprudential basis of its own regime." (EL, 271, 310)

The durability of interest group liberalism, whether it be based on apathy, false consciousness or the tacit consent of the people, does not render it any more legitimate in Lowi's eyes. (EL, 63, 297-98) For Lowi cannot accept the behavioral reduction of legitimacy to a "trust in government" variable to be measured by public opinion polls, the most important form of legitimacy recognized by the behavioral pluralists of the 1950s. Although Lowi does not dismiss this dimension of legitimacy, legitimacy in his work is ultimately a normative concept. A legitimate regime is *a* just regime, and the *"sine qua non* of justice" is that an "actor derive his actions from a

general rule or moral principle governing such a class of acts." (EL, 296) A legitimate regime is a regime governed in accord with the rule of law, for it is law which elevates the state above interest group politics. Without a public philosophy that affirms the rule of law, governance will occur through bargaining rather than law. Without law there is no state.

Support for the rule of law is the criterion which distinguishes a genuine public philosophy from an "ersatz" public philosophy. Applying that stringent criterion, Lowi concludes that the American public philosophy fails to live up to its pretensions. It is "ersatz" because it prefers bargaining to law, and has therefore undermined the development of an American state. Such a public philosophy can not provide neutral rules of the game which grant equal opportunity to all; it justifies procedures biased toward the well-organized. But how could an ersatz public philosophy, which allows the strong to exploit the weak, be accepted or maintained? Radicalizing the realist thrust of pluralist analysis in a manner consistent with Bentley's original intentions, Lowi discovers the ideological function of a public philosophy, its capacity to mask exploitation through the creation of a false consciousness. (EL, 3, 295-98)

In Lowi's analysis the ideological character of interest group liberalism can only be understood in relation to the ideological character of traditional liberalism, the public philosophy which preceded interest group liberalism. Yet, despite his references to traditional liberalism in both the title of his book and the title to the first part of his book, Lowi downplays the political doctrines of liberalism and focuses almost exclusively on its economic doctrine, the defense of capitalism.[4] For Lowi the classic expression of the first American public philosophy is to be found in Adam Smith, not in John Locke or in *The Federalist Papers;* and the golden age of the "old public philosophy" is the late nineteenth century *laissez-faire* era, not the American Founding.

Lowi's description of the development of the first American public philosophy actually suggests a possible distinction between the liberalism of the American Founding and the Social Darwinist *laissez-faire* views of the late nineteenth century. But in his discussion of liberalism he not only blurs that distinction; he accepts the *laissez-faire* conception as the definitive liberal position and emphasizes its ideological foundations.

4. Lowi at times recognizes that liberalism includes a theory of the state, but the general rhetorical thrust of *The End of Liberalism* ignores this. (EL, 36)

> But when these objective capitalistic practices are successfully employed privately for many years, as in the United States, institutions develop around them, classes of wealth emerge, power centers organize. Then words are spoken on behalf of these patterns. When repeated often and spread widely these justifying words become the ideology of the thing. When these words end up coloring the Constitution, influencing policies of government, and shaping the very criteria of worth as well as wealth, they constitute a public philosophy. (EL, 3-4)

Lowi's reduction of liberalism to an ideological defense of capitalism explains one of the most striking anomalies in his work: that he entitles his book *The End of Liberalism* when his proposals for juridicial democracy are fundamentally an appeal to return to a liberal rule of law.[5]

The most important aspect of this capitalist/liberal ideology for Lowi is its assertion that the market is governed by an "Invisible Hand." It is not necessary for a state to impose order on social life because society is "automatic" and "self-regulating." Liberalism does not go as far as to deny any need for government and organized force, since at the very least government must enforce contracts, but a government is distinguished from a state.[6] Liberal government is the instrument of private interests; it lacks autonomy, because it avoids authoritative rule through law. "Liberal jurisprudence is a contradiction in terms. Liberalism is hostile to Law." (EL, 92) One

5. For a more extended analysis of Lowi's "disguised" liberalism see Harvey Mansfield, Jr., *The Spirit of Liberalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 28-51. If Lowi had recognized the rule of law was a liberal doctrine, he would have been forced to confront the liberal argument that a capitalist economy is the most secure economic foundation for the rule of law. The most persuasive modern proponent of that view is Friedrich von Hayek. It is interesting that Lowi praises von Hayek's "superb" discussion of the rule of law in the fifth chapter of *The Road to Serfdom* (EL, 330n.), but fails to address the general theme of von Hayek's book: that socialism and national economic planning lead us away from law and into totalitarian serfdom. Lowi accepts von Hayek's discussion of law, but simultaneously appeals for a planned economy because he believes capitalism is a radically defective mode of organizing economic production in a modern industrial economy.

6. I am modifying Lowi's terminology here in a manner consistent with Lowi's general thesis. Lowi does not systematically distinguish government and the state; he distinguishes politics and government, where the latter is linked to the rule of law (EL, 36). But since he goes on to talk about liberal government even in the absence of law, I believe his discussion could be clarified by the use of a distinction between government and the state.

cannot help but wonder how Lowi would deal with William Blackstone or John Marshall.

The ideological function of laissez-faire liberalism is revealed by the ways in which it served the interests of a particular group, the capitalists. Freeing capitalists from the threat of government control, liberalism allowed them to use their corporate power to exploit other groups such as workers or consumers and to maintain their control over the political system. "The very idea of capitalist public philosophy can be accurately termed a euphemism for capitalist political power during most of the nineteenth century." Acknowledging that "the Marxist critique of capitalism is overwhelming" for the nineteenth century, Lowi appropriates the Marxist analysis of the ideological function of ideas. (EL, 31)

Despite this resemblance between Lowi's analysis of late nineteenth and early twentieth century American politics and that of the Marxists, Lowi parts company with them in his analysis of American politics since the New Deal. Class polarization proved to be "a passing phase of early industrialization" which has increasingly been broken down by "the addition and multiplication of classes." (EL, 32) The evolution of the industrial system into a pluralistic system of groups destroyed the monopoly on political power held by capitalists and replaced it by a system in which power is shared among highly organized groups in society, a category which includes the AFL-CIO and the American Farm Bureau Federation as well as the National Association of Manufacturers. (EL, 34, 68-77, 80-82, 297) Furthermore, the organizational imperatives of a modern industrial economy have generated demands for greater government coordination and administration of disparate economic activities than could be justified under the old *laissez-faire* philosophy. Since the old public philosophy was no longer in accord with modern economic realities, it was discredited, even among capitalists, and the ground was paved for the rise of a new public philosophy.. (EL, 22-31; PD, 21-31)

Lowi describes the new public philosophy, interest group liberalism, as an amalgam of three elements: the old capitalist ideology, pluralism, and statism; but it is the pluralist strand which is "the intellectual core of the new liberalism." (EL, 22) Fundamentally derived from the pluralist social theory which dominated political science academia in the 1950s, this new pluralist public philosophy has legitimated a politics of mutual adjustment among groups through bargaining. It "seeks to justify power by avoiding

law and by parcelling out to private parties the power to make public policy." (EL, 44) As groups are increasingly given representation within the policy making process, "more hierarchy is introduced into our society." (EL, 60) Thus the transition from the old public philosophy to the new public philosophy is not a transition from an "ersatz" public philosophy to a genuine public philosophy. Interest group liberalism is just as ideological as its predecessor. It contributes to "the maintenance of old and the creation of new structures of privilege." (EL, 59)

Lowi's historical reconstruction of the rise of interest group liberalism is troublesome. Although the institutional practices characteristic of interest group liberalism arise during the New Deal, the ideological justification for these practices was first articulated in the public addresses of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson-a substantial historical gap. (EL, 55-56) Furthermore, the only conduit which Lowi can identify for the popularization of pluralism, which had been known only to a relatively select audience as a social theory, is through the more widely read works and political influence of Arthur Schlesinger and John Kenneth Galbraith. (EL, 53-54) There is a striking disproportion between the magnitude of the cause and the magnitude of the effect, for Schlesinger and Galbraith are unlikely candidates as "founders" of the new regime.

Lowi buttresses his arguments for the rise of a new public philosophy by suggesting that the old liberal public philosophy had enough in common with the new interest group liberal public philosophy that an easy transition was possible. The central premise of the new interest group liberalism is that the public good will emerge from competition among organized groups, and Lowi asserts that this "is little more than the appropriation of the Adam Smith `hidden hand' model for politics." (EL, 51) The new public philosophy did not have to repudiate the old one; it could absorb it. (EL, 35)

In fact Truman's pluralist interpretation of American politics had relied less on an invisible hand structuring group competition to produce the public good than on the structural constraints of institutions and the public philosophy. But even if we assume that there are analogies between a vulgarized version of pluralism and *laissez-faire* economics, the transition from the latter to the former still required the the displacement of the individual by the group as the fundamental political actor and the affirmation of positive, in-

terventionist government. Lowi remains ambiguous about the scope of these changes, on the one hand characterizing the old and the new as distinct regimes but also implying continuity by referring to the new as interest group *liberalism*. (EL, 271)

If Lowi's account of the pluralist enlightenment, the diffusion of pluralist ideas, is problematic, his assertion of the ideological potential of pluralism is more plausible. Pluralism could have formed the basis for a new public philosophy because pluralism was not simply objective social science; despite Truman's behavioral aspirations his pluralism has an implicit normative orientation. An important element in this normative framework is contained in the assertion that the division of civil society into a multiplicity of groups is not simply a fact about modern industrial societies; it is a virtue. (EL, 36) In Truman's world "men must exist in society in order to manifest those capacities and accomplishments that distinguish them from the other animals." (GP, 14) But society itself is composed of primary and secondary groups, which are the true nexus of man's cultural and moral life.

Lowi astutely recognizes that Truman's affirmation of the group distinguishes his pluralism from the Madisonian pluralism of Federalist No. 10, which encouraged the proliferation of groups but emphasized their factious character. (EL, 55) Despite Truman's more positive evaluation of groups, however, he was not oblivious to the problem of faction. The narrow pursuit of group interest can be just as destructive of political unity in Truman as it was in Madison. (GP, 516-24) In the final analysis, Truman's affirmation of our pluralist polity rested less on the value he attributed to groups than on his assumption that American political institutions and the liberal public philosophy which stood behind them were neutral rules of the game which protected the interests of the weak as well as the strong. In this decisive respect Truman is genuinely closer to Madison than Lowi is.

Whether or not Lowi does justice to the subtlety of Truman's argument, his critique of a pluralist public philosophy which romanticizes groups and denigrates the state is vigorous and compelling. That critique, however, should not be confused with his response to pluralism as social theory. Pluralism as a social theory asserts that power is highly dispersed in modern industrial societies and that political power under these conditions cannot be deterministically linked to economic power. As a social theory Lowi believes pluralism is "overwhelmingly superior" to Marxist theory

because it recognizes the group basis of modern political life and because it does not reduce politics to an "epiphenomenon of socio-economic life." (EL, 31, 34) It is equally superior to the "capitalist theory" that "power and control are properties of the state and, therefore, should be feared and resisted" because it recognizes that "there are many sources of power and control other than the state." (EL, 31) Dividing his discussion of pluralism in Chapter 2 of *The End of Liberalism* into discrete sections on pluralism as theory and pluralism as ideology, he raises objections to pluralism exclusively in the latter context.

Even so, Lowi also suggests that it may not be possible to neatly distinguish social theory from ideology. Reacting to what he considers to be the apologetic character of pluralism in the 1950s, he takes issue with the "scientific pluralist's scientific dread" of terms like "public interest" and the "state." (EL, 36) But Lowi objects to scientific pluralism because he must carve out a place for his normative theory of the state, not because he finds it difficult to conceptualize his empirical findings in a pluralist framework. In fact, Lowi's discovery of the ideological function of the American public philosophy, which reduces it to an expression of group interests, is more resolutely pluralist than David Truman's *The Governmental Process,* which implicitly elevated the public philosophy above the group process by referring to it as the rules of the game.

In the midst of his discussion of the fallacies of pluralist ideology, however, Lowi does raise a criticism of pluralist social theory which could indicate a fundamental break with the pluralist analysis. Just as David Truman had recognized that interest group competition must be regulated by rules of the game if it is not to degenerate into destructive social conflict, so Lowi points to the importance of such rules. Lowi even faults Truman for his "imprecision" about the rules of the game and his "tendency to disregard those aspects of the political system not susceptible to group interpretation ...." (EL, 37) Far from criticizing Truman's use of the rules of the game, he extends the argument by recognizing that effective rules would require "the existence of a framework of controls and institutions separate from the competition itself." (EL, 37) Here, it would appear, is a decisive break with pluralism as social theory.

Lowi's argument here is misleading. Far from disagreeing with Truman's pluralism because it failed to take account of the institutional context of interest group politics, Lowi is asserting that there is no such genuinely autonomous institutional context. It is true that

even in Lowi the pluralist interpretation is qualified, for he acknowledged that "statism" is one element in the interest group liberal ideology. (EL, 22) Nevertheless, the subordinate status which Lowi assigns to statism in interest group liberalism is clear. Government is so pervasively captured by private interests in Lowi's interpretation of interest group liberalism that the reforms necessary to create a genuine American state, or in Lowi's terms a juridical democracy, can only be characterized as a revolutionary appeal for the establishment of a third American republic. (EL, 295)

Theoretically Lowi goes beyond the pluralist framework in his assertion that authority transcends interest group politics through the rule of law, a conclusion which follows from his important distinction between ad hoc bargaining and bargaining over rules. (EL, 108) Thus for Lowi the rule of law could constitute a genuine set of rules of the game, impartially protecting the weak and the strong. (EL, 298) That possibility is reaffirmed when Lowi argues that bureaucrats applying laws could approximate the "ideal of the Neutral Civil Servant" (EL, 304); a remote ideal today since loose delegations of power have thrust political responsibilities on bureaucrats which undermine their potential neutrality. But the rediscovery of the state, the agency of law, only led Lowi back to a pluralist interpretation of American politics. The state can transcend pluralist politics, but America has no state.

These considerations help to illuminate the relationship between Lowi's interpretation of American politics and that of David Truman's. Lowi's insistence that genuine rules of the game must be distinguished from pseudo-rules, and that the rule of law is the distinguishing characteristic of genuine rules, are important theoretical advances beyond Truman. But in the introduction to the second edition of *The Governmental Process* Truman, acknowledging that the rules of the game were "not catalogued," does specify that they "include acceptance of the rule of law .... " (GP, xxxvii) Lowi's dispute with Truman is not over the possibility of neutral rules over the game; it is over the empirical question of the extent to which such rules may be said to exist in the United States, and the extent to which the American public philosophy nurtures those rules. Lowi is the true heir of Bentley in this debate, relentlessly exposing the ways. in which groups masquerade their power behind public interest pretensions.

The cogency of Lowi's interpretation must be examined at two levels. The first level of analysis is theoretical, and concerns Lowi's

concept of the state. While I believe that Lowi's identification of the state with law is fundamentally correct, there are other elements in this theory of the state which are more suspect. If Lowi's discussion of the state is inadequate, then his conclusion that we have no state, and therefore that our politics are pluralist, will be open to criticism. The second level of analysis concerns empirical rather than theoretical questions. Is the public philosophy of the United States interest group liberalism? Has interest group bargaining supplanted the rule of law? While these issues cannot be resolved in this article, a number of questions can be raised.

One of the most distinctive aspects of Lowi's treatment of the state is his assertion that law, the *sine qua non* of the existence of the state, would enhance the possibility for change, rather than reinforce the status quo as conservatives and liberals have often mistakenly believed.

> Those who wish to defend the status quo will always have the advantage. Leadership and authority favor them. Interest group politics favors them. Decentralization favors them . . . . A careful evaluation of all possible instruments that might institute a change-rather than pretend to bring it about-will eliminate everything but the juridical principle. (PD, 184)

This leads Lowi to the paradoxical conclusions that law and disorder are linked and that conflict rather than consensus is conducive to the rule of law. (PD, 58-61)

If the function of the state is to secure the possibility of social change, what is the source of social order? Lowi assumes that social order is inherent in society itself, emerging from the organizational imperatives of a modern industrial economy and from mutual accommodations among organized groups. (EL, 25-30) The internal logic of capitalism systematically rationalizes social and economic life. (EL, 3) Capitalism fosters the development of corporations, trade unions, and professional associations, organizations which become increasingly bureaucratized and dominated by administrative elites. Referring to these trends as the "iron law of oligarchy," or the "rule of rigidification," Lowi suggests that civil society is a stable "system" which can defend the status quo against challenges from newly emerging groups. (PD, 51-53)

The argument that civil society is stable, and that the state is a vehicle for social change, reflects residual pluralist elements in Lowi's analysis of the state. For it was Bentley's intention to show

that social order was the product of group interaction within civil society, that it was not imposed from above by an autonomous state. In this regard we see once again that it was Truman, not Lowi, who departed from Bentley's pluralism. For Truman civil society was indeed composed of groups, but this world was not self-sufficient. Civil society was a world of change and flux, a world in which conflict between groups constantly threatened to overwhelm a fragile social order. Only the rules of the game prevented interest group competition from collapsing into anarchic social conflict. Truman may be faulted for failing to see the need for autonomous institutions to enforce those rules, but his analysis points to the indispensable role of the state in creating social order.

Focusing exclusively on the state as a vehicle for social change, Lowi's attempts to ground the state in "real social processes" leads him to assert a symbiotic relationship between social movements and the rule of law. Lowi suggests "the good democrat [i.e. a juridical democrat] should try to foster new groups [i.e. social movements] and should distrust old groups." (PD, 54) He conjectures that the clash between the establishment and ideological mass movements will foster "democratic formalisms" more effectively than bargaining among organized interests.

> The old epigram, "What's a constitution among friends?" applies to the group process. But when leaders refuse to bargain, other rules apply. These rules are: confrontation, debate, formulation, voting, policy-making, and ultimately a decision that may require forceful imposition of a new policy on the society. But examine those words and those rules. They define the formal democratic process. (PD, 55-56)

Such a "grounding" requires a true faith in social dialectic, for it claims that the cultivation of disorder and conflict in civil society leads to order when mediated by the state.

Social movements are characterized by charismatic leadership, and thus implicitly by arbitrary rule and a lack of formality. Yet these are the qualities in government which are anathema to Lowi. (PD, 42, 169-85) Would one intensify these qualities in civil society to remove them from government, as if a zero-sum arithmetic applied to informality and leadership? Lowi's juxtaposition of law and social movements seems to rest on the principle that opposites attract. It is as if the Invisible Hand of equilibrium theory were replaced by the Cunning of Reason working through historical change.

While it is undoubtedly the case that the need for the rule of law emerges when conflicts emerge over goals, is it not also the case that the rule of law will emerge when a spirit of moderation and compromise prevails among conflicting groups? Immoderation breeds contempt for law; it encourages groups to try to achieve their goals through force rather than through law. If moderation is the precondition for law, then interest group bargaining over narrow economic goals will be far more conducive to the rule of law than ideological conflict between polarized social movements. Lowi justifiably distinguishes interest group bargaining from the rule of law, but his assertion that the two are antithetical is far less persuasive.

Lowi's unusual juxtaposition of law and social movements is implicitly justified by his reference to the "formal democratic process." Social movements are "democratic" phenomena, they disrupt the status quo of power by intensifying political participation and bringing new actors into the political arena. If formalism, which Lowi equates with the rule of law, is intrinsic to democracy, democratic social movements should foster the rule of law. Indeed, for Lowi, democracy and the rule of law are inextricably bound together. "A democratic government is *inconceivable* without full coercive imposition of laws democratically arrived at [emphasis mine]." (PD, 56) Tocqueville's unsurpassed analysis of the impatience of democratic movements with the time-consuming formalities of law would suggest otherwise.

The second set of issues one must raise concerning Lowi's analysis are empirical. Is interest group liberalism the public philosophy of the United States? Lowi accepts the well-established thesis that the American regime was founded on liberal principles, even though he restricts his attention to the economic doctrines of liberalism. What is distinctive in Lowi's analysis is the assertion that the cumulative changes between the New Deal and the 1960s revolutionized American politics sufficiently to call forth a new public philosophy and constitute a second American regime, a regime in which bargaining rather than law was the characteristic mode of governance. If one acknowledges, as Lowi does not, that the rule of law was a fundamental principle of America's Lockean liberalism, then the change would be even more stark than Lowi suggests. The term interest group liberalism would be a misnomer, for there can be no liberalism without the rule of law. Nor could the deficiencies of the post New Deal era be ascribed to that which went before, a misleading implication of the title of Lowi's book.

Lowi's interpretation of the New Deal revolution would have to be carefully weighed against the plausible alternative that liberalism, and with it the rule of law, remain the dominant American public philosophy. The choice between these alternatives will in part determine whether Lowi or Truman has provided a more persuasive account of American politics. Truman refers to the New Deal period as "something very close to a revolution." (PG, xlvii) Not only did the New Deal permit new groups such as labor to become full participants in the political process, it changed the rules of the game to include a governmental responsibility to help those who experienced misfortunes over which they had no control in our modern industrial system. (PG, xlvii) Nevertheless, it is clear that Truman believed that the basic principles of our regime were still those of the American Founding, those of the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, and the Bill of Rights, even after the New Deal. (PG, 399, 512-13, 530) If our public philosophy is still Lockean liberalism, then Lowi's analysis of ideology will face insurmountable problems.

A second set of empirical issues must also be addressed in evaluating Lowi's thesis. Lowi asserts that public officials act as brokers mediating conflicts among interest groups by ad hoc bargaining rather than authoritatively governing through law. He heavily emphasizes the role loose delegations of authority have played in encouraging interest group bargaining and he provides a brief history of statutory delegations of power to independent regulatory agencies to support his assertions that delegation has run riot and that Congress has abdicated its responsibilities to control these agencies. Implicit in Lowi's discussion of this issue is the thesis that the vesting of discretionary authority in an administrative agency is incompatible with the rule of law.'

Interestingly, Lowi does not provide a comprehensive discussion of the functioning of independent regulatory agencies, despite the fact that the central themes of Lowi's work have been dealt with more extensively in the literature on these agencies than in any other subfield of political science. Part of Lowi's contribution to the discipline was his generalization of the issues raised in this literature, his demonstration that they are pervasive in a variety of policy

7. Lowi's discussion of the increasing reliance on vague delegation of authority, which he links to the "decline of law," points to a fundamental theoretical problem in his work. If the rule of law is declining, then when was it at its peak? And where did it come from if liberalism, the only preceding public philosophy, eschewed law?

areas. But his failure to address the issue in its original context is regrettable. Government regulation of the economy poses a crucial dilemma for those who advocate the rule of law. Is the generality and rigidity of law compatible with the flexibility needed to regulate a modern industrial economy?

Lawmakers committed to regulation have repeatedly come to the conclusion that administrative discretion is indispensable to efficient regulation, a judgment shared by many academic specialists. Regulators have also been reluctant to confine their discretion by the promulgation of rules, behavior which can be plausibly attributed to a desire to maximize their personal power but which could no less plausibly be due to their judgment that inflexible rules would hinder the achievement of agency goals. Administrative discretion has had many costs, and Lowi provides invaluable insight into the nature of those costs. But those costs can only be understood in relation to the potential costs of inflexible regulation. An analysis of economic regulation would substantiate Lowi's concerns about the fate of the rule of law in the post New Deal era, but it would also put those concerns in perspective.

Of even greater importance for Lowi's thesis, the problem of administrative discretion has not been ignored in the American legal system. The Administrative Procedures Act and administrative case law are attempts to deal with this problem. Regulators have rarely been compelled to govern through general rules, but they have been forced to adopt quasi-judicial procedures in case-by-case administration. Lowi properly notes that these procedural restraints do not apply to cases handled informally, but cases are frequently handled informally because legal procedures are so burdensome when cases are dealt with formally. Is the problem too little rule of law, or too much? In the final analysis it may well be the case that quasi-judicial procedures alone cannot sustain the rule of law, but the existence of such procedures surely attests to a sustained commitment to the rule of law.

Lowi does not completely ignore these issues, but, overemphasizing the problem of delegation, he does not do them justice. Their potential significance for Lowi's thesis is fundamental. If administrative law signifies the vitality of the rule of law in the United States, then by Lowi's own definitions the American state is autonomous from interest group politics and the pluralist interpretation of American politics is seriously deficient. While that conclusion is probably too optimistic, Lowi's bleak alternative is probably too

pessimistic. Pathbreaking work is prone to exaggeration, and Lowi's is no exception.

Lowi has not provided a definitive answer to the question "Is the United States governed by the rule of law?", but his crucial contribution was to pose the question. In doing so he has raised the level of discourse in political science to a plane where the limits of the pluralist interpretation of American politics can fruitfully be explored. Identifying law and the state, and finding neither present in American politics, he developed a systematic pluralist interpretation of American politics which, in the highest tradition of American muckraking, discovered the particularistic interests concealed behind ideas and institutions.

Conclusion

David Truman's *The Governmental Process is* frequently thought of as the classic pluralist interpretation of American politics. Often explicitly acknowledging Bentley's influence, Truman systematically emphasized the study of informal group interactions rather than formal institutions. Despite his Bentleyan and behavioral orientations, however, he subtly reintroduced some of the very spooks which Bentley strove so hard to expel when he attempted to account for social cohesion amidst interest group competition. The political ideas which constituted the rules of the game for Truman served not as rationalizations of group interests but as "universals" acting to restrain and moderate the selfish pursuit of narrow group interests. Truman's failure to see that the rules of the game would require an autonomous state to enforce them mistakenly led him to believe that interest groups were restrained by an informal potential group which could be accommodated within pluralist theory. If that error is corrected and Truman's theory is reformulated to acknowledge the central role of the state in upholding the rules of the game, a paradoxical conclusion emerges. Since Truman believed that the rules of the game on the whole effectively constrained groups, his interpretation of American politics can be understood as quasi-pluralist. What would be decisive in a revised Truman would be the way in which the state structures the interaction among interest groups, not the ways in which interest groups structure the state.

A confrontation between this revised Truman and Lowi reveals the central issue dividing them. Truman asserts the existence of neutral rules of the game in American politics, whereas Lowi denies

that. While Lowi's theoretical framework is superior to Truman's in a number of ways, it may well be that Truman was closer to the truth than Lowi on this decisive issue. The weak link in Lowi's argument is his assertion that pluralism is the reigning public philosophy in the United States. Even if he is correct that a pluralist public philosophy which denigrated the state in favor of groups would serve powerful organizational elites in a modern industrial society, the dominant public philosophy of the United States has been a version of Lockean liberalism, not pluralism. That public philosophy not only affirms the sovereignty of the state and the virtues of the rule of law, it identifies faction as the most serious threat to republican government. The extent to which liberalism is the source of much of Lowi's critique of a pluralist polity, as seen in his concern for individual rights and in his commitment to government by law, is perhaps the best evidence that liberalism does not legitimate the interest group politics he describes.

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