SCIENCE AND WALTER LIPPMANN

By

John A. Palen

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ABSTRACT

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The role of science in Walter Lippmann's social thought has been noted but not extensively analyzed. Using historical methods of research, this study traces the relationship of science to social thought in Lippmann's 11 books of domestic political theory. The study finds that Lippmann's lifelong effort to construct a social philosophy with science at the center failed because of his inability to resolve two related problems. One was the gulf between science and the lay public. The other was whether a scientific basis could be found for morality. In his final book, The Public Philosophy, he skirted both problems by asserting that all reasonable people could reach objective and moral truth that was self-evident in the nature of things. He had finally relinquished the belief that only science could solve the dilemmas of modern times.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter I

Introduction

Walter Lippmann was not only an influential figure in American journalism for almost six decades, he rose to influence at a crucial period in the formation of modern journalists' definition of their craft and its role in society.

Born in 1889, Lippmann began his journalistic career in 1910 and his career as a political theorist in 1913, with publication of A Preface to Politics. By 1923, ten years later, he had become editor of the New York World, one of the nation's most prestigious newspapers, and had published six books and served as an editor of the New Republic. A little more than a decade after that, he was well launched into his column in the New York Herald-Tribune, "Today and Tomorrow," and the list of books had lengthened to a dozen.[1]

Thus the first third, roughly, of his career spanned World War I, which Michael Schudson identifies as a turning point in the way American journalists defined their craft, and extended into the 1930s, when, according to Schudson, the "new objectivity" came into conscious focus among journalists.[2]

It is one of Schudson's principal theses that journalists reacted to skepticism and doubt about the reality of

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[1]Ronald Steel, Walter Lippmann and the American Century (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1980), pp. 601, 633.

[2]Michael S. Schudson, "Origins of the Ideal of Objectivity in the Professions: Studies in the History of American Journalism and American Law 1830-1940" (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1976), p. 267.

"facts" by erecting an ideal of objectivity. The ideal was "not so much an extension of naive empiricism and the belief in facts as the assertion of 'method' designed for a world in which even facts could not be trusted."[3]

Schudson finds evidence that before the war journalists saw the world through robust and naively empirical eyes: Facts were facts and spoke for themselves; reporters of the 1890s like Lincoln Steffens and Ray Stannard Baker saw themselves as scientists uncovering the economic and political facts of industrial life.[4]

With the war, however, uneasiness set in. Propaganda was interposed between reporters and the war, and they "began to see everything as illusion."[5] The contemporaneous rise of public relations also undermined reporters' confidence. Public relations was a threat to reporting because news could now be conceived of as merely the reprinting of those facts which the wealthy could hire an agent to pass out.[6]

Disillusioned reporters and editors sought certainty in the news process with such safeguards as detachment, non-involvement, separation of news from opinion, and balanced reporting. "Journalists responded to anxiety about reality

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[3]Ibid., p. 232.

[4]Schudson, Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers (New York: Basic Books, 1978), p. 71.

[5]Ibid., p. 142.

[6]Ibid., p. 138.

with allegiance to rules and procedures," Schudson found.[7] He suggests that journalists thus created for themselves a framework within which they could take their work seriously. And he identifies Walter Lippmann as "the most wise and forceful spokesman for the ideal of objectivity."[8]

Schudson observes -- and this study of Lippmann's books on domestic political theory confirms -- that his thinking about journalistic objectivity was bound up with his thinking about science.

Schudson notes that science was Lippmann's answer to the problems raised by manufactured consent and propaganda in a democratic society. He quotes Lippmann's assertion in Liberty and the News that the unity of the scientific method -- "the unity of the disciplined experiment" -- is the only kind of unity possible in a diverse world.[9]

It was in the same essay, published in 1920, that Lippmann held up science and scientists as ideals for journalism and its practitioners. "... The true patterns of the journalist apprentice are not the slick persons who scoop the news, but the patient and fearless men of science who have labored to see what the world really is."[10]

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[7]Ibid., p. 7.

[8]Ibid., p. 151.

[9]Ibid., p. 152.

[10]Walter Lippmann, Liberty and the News (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920), p. 82.

Forty years later, Lippmann was still defining the task of journalism in terms transferred from the realm of science. "Because we are newspapermen in the American liberal tradition," he told the National Press Club on his 70th birthday, "the way we interpret the news is not by fitting the facts to a dogma. It is by proposing theories or hypotheses, which are then tested by trial and error."[11]

But what precisely did Lippmann mean when he urged journalists to pattern themselves after scientists and adopt the scientific method in their work? Are journalists, for example, to submit each story for peer review before publication? Are they to reject anecdotal evidence and use only statistically significant data in their stories? Are they to include both sides of a story if only one of the sides is based on data considered scientifically admissible in the current state of the science involved?[12] Even a cursory attempt to relate journalism and the scientific method indicates that Lippmann's prescription requires analysis and explanation.

The beginning of that endeavor must be to determine what Lippmann meant by science and what interaction it had with his political and social thought. This study will examine Lippmann's books of domestic political theory to

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[11]Lippmann, "The Job of the Washington Correspondent," Atlantic, January 1960, pp. 48-49.

[12]For a discussion of changing standards of admissibility of data, see Thomas Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

determine the answer to these questions:

1) What did Lippmann mean by science?

2) What role did science play in Lippmann's analyses of American society and politics?

There are two reasons for undertaking such a study. One is that it will contribute to the effort to understand more about the origins of the ideal of objectivity in journalism, scholarly interest in which is evidenced by the work of Schudson and Schiller.[13] The second is that it will contribute to the understanding of Lippmann himself. Although the Lippmann literature is immense, only one scholar has looked specifically and at length at the role of science in Lippmann's political theory, and that study was restricted to the early book Drift and Mastery.[14]

Review of the Literature

Science has had a major impact on American society, both on the way people live and the way people think. Several works that deal with that impact have been helpful in providing a background against which to investigate Walter Lippmann's work as a particular instance of the interaction of science with American social thought.

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[13]Daniel T. Schiller, Objectivity and the News: The Public and the Rise of Commercial Journalism (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981).

[14]David A. Hollinger, "Science and Anarchy: Walter Lippmann's Drift and Mastery," American Quarterly 29, No. 5 (1977), pp. 463-475.

The multitudinous ways in which science-based technology has changed daily life for Americans since the Civil War have been detailed by Daniel J. Boorstin in The Americans: The Democratic Experience. Commenting on the meaning of the completion of the first transcontinental railroad, Boorstin writes: "The century after the Civil War was to be an Age of Revolution -- of countless, little-noticed revolutions ... so little-noticed because they came so swiftly, because they touched Americans everywhere and every day. Not merely the continent but human experience itself, the very meaning of community, of time and space, of present and future, was being revised again and again...."[15]

In The Search for Order, 1877-1920, Robert H. Wiebe finds a pattern in these changes: As the "island communities" of the 19th century became linked by new networks of communication -- of which the railroads were but one example -- Americans came to find less sense of identity in place and more in such other characteristics as skill or occupation; specialization and professionalization increased; local autonomy gave way to more centralized government; and the old personal, informal power structures were replaced by hierarchy, regulation and bureaucracy. The bureaucratic ideal of a rational society gained sway.[16]

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[15]Daniel J. Boorstin, The Americans: The Democratic Experience (New York: Random House, 1973), p. ix.

[16]Robert H. Wiebe, The Search for Order, 1877-1920 (New York: Hill & Wang, 1967), pp. 111-163.

Science, both as technology and as way of thought, was one of the driving forces behind these changes, but was also affected by them. "'Science,' the basic word that every school of thought claimed and worshipped, also altered in meaning to accommodate the revolution. In all varieties of classical theory, science referred to a grand design whose fundamental principles men could comprehend and apply.... Bureaucratic thought, on the contrary, made 'science' practically synonymous with 'scientific method.' Science had become a procedure, or an orientation, rather than a body of results."[17]

Morton White, in Social Thought in America: The Revolt Against Formalism, finds a different but not necessarily conflicting pattern at work in the same period.[18] By the 1890s, he wrote, American intellectuals had become convinced that the old formal tools of logic, abstraction, deduction, mathematics and mechanics were too awkward and limited to work with "the rich, moving current of social life."[19]

Dewey, Holmes and Veblen -- three of the five thinkers on whom White concentrated -- were the "leaders of a campaign to mop up the remnants of formal logic, classical economics

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[17] Ibid., p. 147.

[18] Hollinger, "Science and Anarchy," p. 475, shows how the two patterns are brought together and reconciled in Lippmann's Drift and Mastery.

[19] Morton White, Social Thought in America: The Revolt Against Formalism (New York: Viking Press, 1949; new ed., Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), p. 11.

and jurisprudence in America, and to emphasize that the life of science, economics and law was not logic but experience in some streaming social sense."[20]

A central question for the turn-of-the-century bearers of this "anti-metaphysical strain in American thought," according to White, had to do with science, and specifically with two philosophical questions: 1) What is the nature of social science; and 2) What is the relation of social science and moral value and obligation?[21]

Finally, Charles Rosenberg, in No Other Gods: On Science and American Social Thought, has suggested yet a third way of looking at science and American society, one that emphasizes the implicit rather than the explicit content of the relationship.

There are at least four ways in which science and American social thought interact, Rosenberg wrote. "Perhaps the most important has been the increasing emotional relevance of science, its expanding role as an absolute able to justify and even motivate the behavior of particular individuals."[22]

Science also has been a source of vocabulary and images for social thought, and the similes of science have

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[20]Ibid., pp. 11-12.

[21]Ibid., p. 204.

[22]Charles Rosenberg, No Other Gods: On Science and American Social Thought (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 1.

"variously suggested, explained, justified, and even helped dictate social categories and values," Rosenberg said.

A third relationship is the role in society of the professional values and preconceptions of scientists, a role that exists "in the popular mind, as an intellectual construct having only a problematic relationship with the scientist's actual behavior...."

The fourth relationship is "the obverse of the third -- that is, not the effect of the scientific community's values in bringing an element of change and diversity to society, but that of society's attitudes and demands upon the scientist's work and thought."[23]

This study will show that Lippmann's books of domestic political theory manifest interactions of science and social thought consistent with these patterns; for example, his emotion-laden advocacy of science as "the discipline of democracy" in Drift and Mastery; in his borrowing of the concept of taboo from Freudian psychoanalysis to help explain and justify his critical analysis of American politics in A Preface to Politics; and in his advocacy of scientists as role models for young journalists in Liberty and the News.[24]

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[23]Ibid., pp. 1-2

[24]Lippmann, Drift and Mastery (New York: Mitchell Kennerly, 1914; new ed. with an introduction by William E. Leuchtenberg, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1961), p. 151; A Preface to Politics (New York: Mitchell Kennerly, 1913; new ed., Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962), pp. 42-44. On Lippmann's misapplication of Freud, see Allen I. Safianow, "Walter Lippmann: The Quest for Disinterestedness" (Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University, 1973), p. 118.

This study also will show Lippmann's persistent concerns for the quest for order and discipline, the reaction against lifeless formalism and the attempt to define the moral life in a world in which scientific fact and moral value are separate. Hollinger's characterization of Drift and Mastery -- that it occupies the "terrain on which the 'revolt against formalism' and the 'search for order' compete for the attention of historians" -- applies to other of Lippmann's books as well.[25]

To move from background works to the literature on Lippmann itself is to realize the extent to which his career was multi-faceted. He was magazine editor, newspaper editorialist and editor, author of books on domestic and foreign affairs, philosopher, adviser to the powerful, and participant in significant events. The extensive literature on Lippmann reaches into each of these fields. Secondary sources examined for this study have been limited to books, articles and dissertations that provide biographical background or that deal primarily with Lippmann's domestic political theory.

Several book-length studies devoted exclusively to Lippmann have been published. David A Weingast's Walter Lippmann: A Study in Personal Journalism is an interesting study, made midway in Lippmann's career, of his failure to support in practice many measures of which he approved in

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[25]Hollinger, "Science and Anarchy," p. 475.

theory. Edward L. and Frederick H. Schapsmeier's Walter Lippmann: Philosopher-Journalist is biographical and uncritical. Twentieth Century Pilgrimage: Walter Lippmann and the Public Philosophy, by Charles Wellborn, is an admiring attempt to show that Lippmann moved increasingly toward a theistic position as time went on.[26]

Lippmann, Liberty, and the Press by John Luskin, chronological in organization, presents Lippmann's views on liberty and press issues with minimal interpretation. Benjamin F. Wright's Five Public Philosophies of Walter Lippmann points out shifts and inconsistencies in Lippmann's political thought. Steel's biography, the only account written with full access to the Lippmann papers at Yale, provides a wealth of detail and balanced judgment.[27]

Two other full-length studies have been helpful: Safianow's unpublished dissertation, noted above, and Charles Forcey's The Crossroads of Liberalism: Croly, Weyl,

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[26]David A. Weingast, Walter Lippmann: A Study in Personal Journalism (Rutgers, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1949; new ed. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1970); Edward L. and Frederick H. Schapsmeier, Walter Lippmann: Philosopher-Journalist (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1969); Charles Wellborn, Twentieth Century Pilgrimage: Walter Lippmann and the Public Philosophy (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969).

[27]John Luskin, Lippmann, Liberty, and the Press (University, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 1972); Benjamin F. Wright, Five Public Philosophies of Walter Lippmann (Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press, 1973); Ronald Steel, Walter Lippmann and the American Century (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1980).

Lippmann, and the Progressive Era, 1900-1925.[28] Safianow's dissertation seeks the intellectual and biographical impulses behind Lippmann's ideal of disinterestedness. Forcey's book shows its protagonists leading liberalism, at a crucial time, toward a position favoring nationalism and a strong state.

Although each of these full-length studies mentions science as a factor in Lippmann's thought -- some at more length than others -- none makes it a central concern. Moreover, their interpretations of the development of Lippmann's thinking in regard to science are not unanimous.

For example, on the question of the difference between A Preface to Politics and Drift and Mastery, Wright comments on an "insistent emphasis on being scientific and realistic" in both books, while Wellborn finds "remarkable differences" between them, including a markedly greater enthusiasm in the second book for the ability of science to offer answers to society's problems. Drawing the sharpest contrast between the two books is Forcey, who finds the differences "astonishing" and says that in Drift and Mastery Lippmann had abandoned the "anti-scientific Bergsonian world" of A Preface to Politics.[29]

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[28]Charles Forcey, The Crossroads of Liberalism: Croly, Weyl, Lippmann, and the Progressive Era, 1900-1925 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961).

[29]Wright, Five Public Philosophies, p. 26; Wellborn, Twentieth Century Pilgrimage, p. 25; Forcey, Crossroads, pp. 167, 118.

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Nor can consistent pictures of the overall development of Lippmann's thinking on science be gained from these studies. While there is agreement about the central place of science in Drift and Mastery, Wellborn finds science elevated to a "miracle-working force" in A Preface to Morals, but does not give it a substantial place in his discussion of the last two of Lippmann's books, The Good Society and Essays in the Public Philosophy. Wright, on the other hand, does not mention science in his analysis of A Preface to Morals, but suggests that by the time of The Good Society Lippmann had come to fear science and that by the time of The Public Philosophy he had despaired of it.[30] Why, however, would someone who had despaired of science in 1955 hold up the scientific method as a model for journalists in 1960, as Lippmann did in his speech, noted above, to the National Press Club?

The only study to focus specifically on science as an element in Lippmann's thought is Hollinger's article, also noted above. He proposes that Drift and Mastery offered science as a key to two major intellectual impulses of the time -- the search for order and the revolt against formalism.

"Few authors had so smoothly integrated apparently conflicting aspirations of the age," Hollinger wrote. "Lippmann encouraged people to believe that they could be organized, efficient, functional, and under firm control without

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[30]Wellborn, p. 58; Wright, p. 142.

sacrificing impulse, choice, fantasy, and liberty; and this happy combination, he led them to hope, could be effected by welcoming rather than resisting the 'impact of science' that was felt by many to be inevitable."[31]

Hollinger notes that "the contrast between Drift and Mastery's dependence upon a positive view of science and the ambivalence toward science in Lippmann's later works...has been widely acknowledged, but not extensively analyzed."[32] This study is an attempt to fill that gap.

Method

Historical methods of research were employed. The approach was drawn from Paul D. Leedy's Practical Research: Planning and Design and from "The Logic of Historical Research" by David Paul Nord and Harold L. Nelson.[33]

Primary sources for the study were Walter Lippmann's books of domestic political theory: A Preface to Politics, Drift and Mastery, Liberty and the News, Public Opinion, The Phantom Public, American Inquisitors, A Preface to Morals, The Method of Freedom, The New Imperative, The Good Society, and The Public Philosophy.

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[31]Hollinger, "Science and Anarchy," p. 469.

[32]Ibid., p. 473.

[33]Paul D. Leedy, Practical Research: Planning and Design (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 2d. ed. 1980); David Paul Nord and Harold L. Nelson, "The Logic of Historical Research," in Guido H. Stempel III and Bruce H. Westley, eds., Research Methods in Mass Communication (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1981), pp. 278-304.

In each work, references to science, the scientific method or scientific experts were isolated in the context in which they appeared. They were interpreted in the light of Rosenberg's suggested patterns for the interaction of science and social thought. They also were arranged chronologically and compared and contrasted with each other to yield a description of the development over time of the function and influence of science in and on Lippmann's political thought.

Chapter II

The Discipline of Democracy

For a work that, in Forcey's view, celebrates an "anti-scientific, Bergsonian world,"[1] A Preface to Politics has quite positive things to say about science and scientists. Scientists are classed with artists and philosophers, for example, as "the keenest minds,"[2] and their work is contrasted with the triviality of Progressive reformist enthusiasms:

> Science was valid, art was valid, the poorest grubber in a laboratory was engaged in a real labor.... But politics was a personal drama without meaning or a vague abstraction without substance.[3]

Two of the concerns of reform were business and politics, and Lippmann thought science had much to offer each, in attitude and temper as much as in specific knowledge.

> No man can gauge the civilizing possibilities of a new set of motives in business.... Given a nation of men trained to think scientifically about their work and feel about it as craftsmen, and you have a people released from a stupid fixation upon the silly little ideals of accumulating dollars and filling their neighbors' eye.[4]

Scientific attitudes among businessmen would eliminate the profit motive, he believed.

In politics, the scientific procedures of hypothesis and experiment would help resolve a seeming paradox in

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[1] Forcey, Crossroads, p. 118.

[2] Lippmann, Preface to Politics, p. 2.

[3] Ibid., p. 3.

[4] Ibid., p. 49.

Lippmann's political thought -- his desire to put human nature at the center of his political thinking, "even though we are densely ignorant both of man and of politics." Plato and Bentham had based their politics on a view of human nature, but "they made their political man a dogma -- we must leave him a hypothesis. That is to say that our task is to temper speculation with scientific humility." A human-centered politics, in other words, will err from ignorance; but the scientific attitude will turn error to good account. "Experience itself will reveal our mistakes; research and criticism may convert them into wisdom."[5]

Science, then, gave Lippmann hope that a human-centered politics could be developed. It also, on a more prosaic level, enabled him to make a neat distinction between Woodrow Wilson -- whom he admired -- and William Jennings Bryan -- whom he did not. Wilson, he wrote in the summer before the 1912 election, "has a talent which is Bryan's chief defect -- the scientific habit of holding facts in solution."[6] The observation makes an interesting contrast with Lippmann's views on Wilson and science in Drift and Mastery, written only a year later but after Lippmann had become personally close to Wilson's rival Theodore Roosevelt.

Another scientifically oriented aspect of A Preface to Politics, noted by Luskin, Safianow and others, is Lippmann's application of Freudian concepts to social problems. Looking

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[5]Ibid., p. 84.

[6]Ibid., p. 80.

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[6]Ibid., p. 80.

at the reformist concerns of his time -- vice, gambling, drinking, corrupt big-city political machines, the trusts -- Lippmann concluded that society tends too often to react negatively. It creates a "taboo" by passing a law outlawing the evil. Lippmann instead argued for frank acceptance of the impulses at the root of the problems, and their civilization through a society that provides constructive outlets. It is the task of society, he wrote, to create the "moral equivalent" for evil. "Instead of tabooing our impulses we must redirect them.... The assumption is that every lust is capable of some civilized expression."[7] The logical outcome of that analysis is a government more concerned with providing wholesome services than with passing restrictive laws. The statesman's business, said Lippmann, is "to surround childhood, youth and age with homes and schools, cities and countryside that shall be stocked with interest and the chance for generous activity." The task of government "is essentially to carry out programs of service, to add and build and increase the facilities of life. Repression is an insignificant part of its work...."[8] Freudian psychology is put forward in support of the political program.

> The Freudian school of psychologists calls this 'sublimation.' They have brought forward a wealth of material which gives us every reason to believe that the theory of 'moral equivalents' is soundly based, that much the same energies produce crime

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[7]Ibid., p. 42.

[8]Ibid., p. 225.

> and civilization.... Only by supplying our passions with civilized interest can we escape their destructive force.[9]

Lippmann, of course, had no evidence that Freudian analysis, which was rooted in medical treatment of specific conditions in individual patients, could be applied to diagnose and alleviate the ills of society at large. Repression and taboo were concepts he picked up from a friend who happened to be translating An Interpretation of Dreams as Lippmann wrote A Preface to Politics. They were ideas that fit in with his ideas, and he used them.[10] He may have been using scientific concepts to analyze society, but he was not doing so in any scientific way. Instead he was borrowing concepts from a science, psychoanalysis, to rationalize a political program for dealing with the items on the reform agenda. The pattern of Rosenberg's model fits well -- science providing to social thought "a vocabulary and a supply of images" to rationalize and communicate a conventional understanding of fundamental social realities.[11] Lippmann's program -- government as provider of services to replace government as policeman -- had the emotional authority of science placed squarely behind it. It may also be significant that the science involved was a relatively new one. "The more tenuous an area of scientific knowledge (and) the smaller its verifiable content," Rosenberg theorized, "the more easily its

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[9]Ibid., p. 44.

[10]Steel, Walter Lippmann, p. 46.

[11]Rosenberg, No Other Gods, p. 1-2

data may be bent to social purposes."[12]

Lippmann, then, found both social example and social analysis, political hope and political weaponry in the attitudes and concepts of science. But his view was not uncritically positive. In a two-pronged critique, he charged science with too often ignoring the human element, and, as consequence, with being a poor engine to power the machinery of politics.

In his opening chapter, which traces the failure of the politics of the time to attain relevance, Lippmann wrote: "We have elaborate governmental mechanisms -- like the tariff, for example, which we go on making more 'scientific' year in, year out -- having long lost sight of their human purpose."[13] Economic reformers often forget the poor and the vagrant, and some of society's best-intentioned schemes, "like reform colonies and scientific jails, turn out to be inhuman tyrannies just because our imagination does not penetrate the sociological label."[14]

Ignoring the human element can also mean ignoring the mental life of men and women -- their wishes and desires, fantasies and errors, myths and beliefs. Lippmann notes a reaction "against a very stupid prejudice of nineteenth century science to the effect that the mental habits of human beings were not 'facts'."[15] In his view, what nineteenth

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[12]Ibid., p. 10

[13]Lippmann, Preface to Politics, p. 30.

[14]Ibid., p. 87.

[15]Ibid., p. 175.

century science would have classified as error becomes instead a fact to be investigated. After Freud, Lippmann wrote, "no one can any longer dismiss the fantasy because it is logically inconsistent, superficially absurd, or objectively untrue."[16]

Conversely, the whole life of the mind -- irrational and subconscious as well as rational and conscious -- is important to the success of science. Creation of scientific truth, Lippmann write, "is no automatic product of logical thought or scientific method . . . the greatest discoveries in science are brilliant guesses on insufficient evidence." In all great ages, "art and science have enriched each other."[17]

But because rational, logical science is only a part of the whole -- and a part that, at least before Freud, had not been in close touch with the emotional, subconscious motivators of human action, Lippmann believed science makes an ineffective political tool. Slogans are what is needed to incite the will to political action: "So long as you rely on the efficacy of 'scientific' demonstration and logical proof you can hold your conventions in anybody's back parlor and have room to spare."[18]

Drift and Mastery

A Preface to Politics was Lippmann's declaration of

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[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid., p. 88.

[18] Ibid., pp. 164-165.

freedom from the idols and taboos of the time. A year later, in Drift and Mastery, he pondered what comes after. "The battle for us. . . does not lie against crusted prejudice," he wrote, "but against the chaos of a new freedom."[19] The old authority had been made impossible by "scientific invention and blind social currents,"[20] and something new must be found to give humans assurance about their place in the scheme of things and to hold society together. He proposed not a unity of aim or of authority but a unity of method, and the method was to be science. "The discipline of science," Lippmann wrote, "is the only one which gives any assurance that from the same set of facts men will come approximately to the same conclusions."[21]

There are differences in the treatment of science in the two books.

For one thing, there is less emphasis in the later work on a Freudian analysis of society. The idea is still present: "It is sophomoric to suppose that the emotional life can be treated as a decadent survival. Men's desires. . . are what make their lives, they are what move and govern."[22] But there is less talk in general in Drift and Mastery about the inner life of the emotions, and more talk about the political issues of 1913 -- business, property, the trusts, labor, the women's

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[19]Lippmann, Drift and Mastery, p. 17.

[20]Ibid., p. 16.

[21]Ibid., p. 155.

[22]Ibid., p. 169.

movement -- with which the newly appointed co-editor of the New Republic was having to deal.

A more striking difference is the shift in Lippmann's attitude toward Wilson -- and his appeal to science as an emotional counter in the political game. In A Preface to Politics, Lippmann had written that Wilson had "the scientific habit of holding facts in solution." His purpose there was to draw a distinction between Wilson and Bryan, whose mind supposedly was not so scientifically habituated. In the year after A Preface to Politics, however, Lippmann had met and fallen further under the spell of his hero, Theodore Roosevelt, and the New Republic had begun life as a pro-Rooseveltian critic of the Wilson administration.[23] Acknowledging in Drift and Mastery that Wilson had a more "critical mind" than Bryan, Lippmann nevertheless leaves no doubt that Wilson and science are no longer on the same side. The temper of the Democratic Party, he wrote, "has always been hostile to specialization and expert knowledge, because it admires a very primitive man-to-man democracy. Wilson's thought is inspired by that outlook. . . ."[24] Wilson, he wrote, shows

> never a word of understanding for the new type of administrator, the specialist, the professionally trained business man. . . no hint that it may be necessary to organize the fundamental industries of the country on some more definite plan so that our

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[23]Steel, Walter Lippmann, p. 75.

[24]Lippmann, Drift and Mastery, p. 86.

> resources may be developed by scientific method instead of by "men on the make". . . .[25]

Science, which had looked approvingly on Wilson's mental habits in the summer of 1912, in a year's time had become a firm Roosevelt Progressive.

Another difference in the treatment of science in the two books is the place of science on the metaphorical stage of Lippmann's presentation. In A Preface to Politics, references to science occur throughout as a general backdrop to the iconoclastic attack on the old authorities. In Drift and Mastery, the final chapters put science front and center as the method that will enable society to solve its problems, but there are fewer appeals to science earlier in the book, and there is no discussion of why Lippmann's focus has changed and science now has a more central role in the society envisioned in Drift and Mastery. So when the final chapters arrive, paeans to science as "mastery" and "modern communion," they seem sudden and unsupported by what has gone before. Perhaps that is one reason the difference between the two books struck Forcey as "astonishing."

But in their basic orientation toward science, the two books also exhibit strong similarities.

There is the same positive general attitude toward science and scientists. If in A Preface to Politics scientists are among "the keenest minds,"[26] we read in Drift and

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[25]Ibid., p. 84.

[26]Lippmann, Preface to Politics, p. 2.

Mastery that the businessman feels a sense of inferiority to the scientist. "For at the bottom there is a difference of quality in their lives, -- in the scientist's a dignity which the scramble for profit can never assume."[27]

There is the same attitude toward what science is. Only vaguely defined in A Preface to Politics, science is referred to as a mental "habit. . . of holding facts in solution,"[28] and as a process wherein "hypothesis is confirmed and modified by action, and action is guided by hypothesis." Research has the ability to convert error itself into wisdom, we are told.[29] In Drift and Mastery science sometimes is virtually indistinguishable from the Socratic injunction that "the unexamined life is not worth living." "When we cultivate reflection by watching ourselves and the world outside, the thing we call science begins," Lippmann wrote.[30] Under the discipline of science, human beings "use language accurately, know fact from fancy, search out their own prejudice, are willing to learn from failure, and do not shrink from the long process of close observation."[31] In both books, science is a frame of mind. For all his emphasis on the need for experts and specialists,

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[27]Lippmann, Drift and Mastery, p. 35.

[28]Lippmann, Preface to Politics, p. 80.

[29]Ibid., p. 84.

[30]Lippmann, Drift and Mastery, p. 148.

[31]Ibid., pp. 150-151.

the mental attributes of science remain open to any who will adopt them.

In addition, although they are stated at greater length in the earlier book, both works carry the same reservations about the tendency of science to miss the point by leaving out the human being.

> If we try to ignore the desire that moves our thought, if we try in short to be "absolutely objective," we succeed only in accumulating useless facts, or we become the unconscious victims of our wishes.[32]

Lippmann, however, would not have interpreted a critique of science as being necessarily anti-scientific, as Forcey and others seem to have done. For Lippmann, the saving grace of science was its self-correcting self-consciousness. The relatively new science of psychology, for example, opens up new possibilities "for the conscious control of scientific progress," Lippmann wrote. "It has begun to penetrate emotional prejudice, to show why some men are so deeply attached to authority, why philosophers have such unphilosophical likes and dislikes."[33] The self-consciousness of science is its "inner sanctuary of civilized power." When science becomes its own critic, "it assures its own future. It is able, then, to attack the source of error itself; to forestall its own timidities, and control its own bias."[34]

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[32] Ibid., p. 170.

[33] Ibid., p. 150.

[34] Ibid.

That the future of science and the future of the country were closely bound up, Lippmann made plain in the last three chapters of Drift and Mastery. Taken together they made large claims for science -- not, significantly, so much for the physical, technological changes it may bring, but for its capacity to free people from needless anxieties and bind them in a common orientation toward reality. The old authorities are dead, Lippmann believed, and "there is a terrible loneliness that comes to men when they realize their feebleness before a brutally uninterested universe."[35] At the very least, science offers a common discipline, even though that discipline may seem dry and laborious. But beneath science itself are "luminous passions" of the kind Lippmann believed necessary for an idea to take hold in the world. As yet, these impulses are "vaguely humanitarian," Lippmann wrote, but they can be enriched by removing them from the realm of fantasy and focusing them on a conception of the possibilities of human life.[36]

> In the drift of our emotional life, the genuine hope is to substitute for terror and weakness a frank and open worldliness, a love of mortal things in the discipline of science.[37]

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[35] Ibid., p. 152.

[36] Ibid., pp. 154-156.

[37] Ibid., p. 174.

Liberty and the News

Drift and Mastery was Lippmann's last book of domestic political theory before the war. Forced by the war to focus his attention for the first time on events overseas, he wrote two books on foreign affairs. When he returned to domestic matters in 1920, it was with a slim volume comprising an introduction and two essays originally published in Atlantic Monthly. The topic was his own profession of journalism.

Liberty and the News asserts that "the present crisis of western democracy is a crisis in journalism."[38] It is so because in a society in which public opinion governs, public opinion must be made "increasingly responsible to the facts."[39] Yet newspapers were not carrying out that responsibility adequately, partly because their owners and editors too often put their own visions of morality and patriotism ahead of reporting the news; and partly because the complexity of society had outstripped the ability of news organizations to report it in any meaningful way.[40]

The news process transmits information gained from eyewitnesses of variable reliability and involvement, and the news is written by reporters who probably have no special training or expert knowledge. It is then processed through a complex mechanism by editors of limited knowledge who tend to share

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[38]Lippmann, Liberty and the News (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Howe, 1920), p. 5.

[39]Ibid., pp. 63-64.

[40]Ibid., pp. 7, 41-49.

common professional and social mores. Intentional propaganda may further distort the message.[41] The result is that public opinion on matters of the utmost importance is formed on the basis of reports that no court would accept as valid "in a suit to determine the possession of a donkey."[42]

Lippmann's offered solution is a combination of formal and informal controls on publishing, plus an effort to increase the professionalization of news reporters and editors. Characteristically, the profession that supplied the role model was science.

The role of science in Liberty and the News is a continuation of themes from the first two books. As in Drift and Mastery, science is both a source of unity for a complex, diverse society and an intellectual discipline that will help democracy function by keeping public opinion in touch with objective reality.[43]

> There is but one kind of unity possible in a world as diverse as ours. It is a unity of method, rather than of aim; the unity of the disciplined experiment. There is but one bond of peace that is both permanent and enriching: the increasing knowledge of the world in which experiment occurs.[44]

Picking up a thread from A Preface to Politics, the difficulty of achieving a human-centered politics when we are

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[41] Ibid., pp. 41-50.

[42] Ibid., p. 51.

[43] Ibid., pp. 91-94.

[44] Ibid., p. 67.

"densely ignorant" of human nature and of politics, Lippmann also stressed a theme that will become increasingly important in later books: The study of human nature and politics is a young science with many more achievements ahead of it than behind it. Generations in the future, Lippmann wrote, historians will find it ludicrous that democracies attempted to function with so little guarantee of the integrity of their news. Above all, they will be incredulous "that their political scientists went on year after year writing and lecturing about government without producing one, not one single, significant study of the process of public opinion."[45]

The areas in which research is needed are numerous. Lippmann suggests that a body of principles for scientific investigation of journalism "must wait upon the development of a psychology and political science," and that a psychological study needs to be made of why newspaper editors are possessed by a particular set of ideas" in such a way that their decisions about news selection and emphasis are "curiously unanimous."[46] Nevertheless, science is progressive. If Lippmann's prescriptions for journalism sound "like a counsel of perfection," he wrote, "it is only because the science of public opinion is still at the point where astronomy was when theological concerns proclaimed the conclusions that all research must vindicate."[47] Presumably, social

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[45]Ibid., p. 15.

[46]Ibid., pp. 16-17, 48-49.

[47]Ibid., pp. 88-89.

science will follow the path to greater certainty of astronomy and the other physical sciences.

Lippmann's prescriptions for journalism are in line with his assertions in Drift and Mastery that science is the key to solving the problems of democracy. If the crisis of democracy is a crisis in journalism, the solution for journalists is to pattern themselves after "the patient and fearless men of science who have labored to see what the world really is."[48] If fact, journalism may be particularly amenable to the scientific approach.

> It does not matter that the news is not susceptible of mathematical statement. In fact, just because news is complex and slippery, good reporting requires the exercise of the highest of the scientific virtues. They are the habits of ascribing no more credibility to a statement than it warrants, a nice sense of the probabilities, and a keen understanding of the quantitative importance of particular facts.[49]

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[48] Ibid., p. 82

[49] Ibid., pp. 82-83.

Chapter III

Years of Doubt

Like the two earlier books, Liberty and the News was written in the hopeful conviction that human beings could bring a measure of scientific certainty to the conduct of their affairs by adopting mental attitudes available to all, including journalists. At the same time, however, it raised troubling questions about structural impediments in the news process to full, accurate reporting. Public Opinion, published in 1922, was a detailed examination of this problem. It was written not with the buoyant optimism of the first two books but with a grim tenacity. How can a democracy function in a complex world, Lippmann asked, when the sovereign public operates at several removes from reality?

In a sense, the problem was anticipated in Drift and Mastery. Just as science and social currents had destroyed the old faith in authority and brought in an era of chaotic freedom, so had they shrunk the world and eliminated the isolation in which politics had been conducted. American democracy, born in a time when the field of public affairs and the field of intimately known local conditions were more or less coterminous, now had to deal with the larger world, the Great Society, in which events half a world away must be taken into account.[1]

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[1]Lippmann, Public Opinion (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1954), p. 29.

The trustworthiness of information about the reality of that larger world is inherently limited. At the source it is restricted by such factors as censorship and the expectation of privacy. As a message on its way from source to recipient, it is further transformed by limitations of the media -- news hole, for example, or language itself. Analyzing a news report of a Korean commission's charges of Japanese atrocities, Lippmann commented:

> . . . eyewitnesses, their accuracy unknown, report to the makers of "authentic reports"; they in turn transmit these to a commission five thousand miles away. It prepares a statement, probably much too long for publication, from which a correspondent culls an item of print three and a half inches long. . . .
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> It is doubtful whether a supreme master of style could pack all the elements of truth that complete justice would demand into a hundred word account of what had happened in Korea during the course of several months. For language is by no means a perfect vehicle of meanings.[2]

At the receiving end of the message a further transformation takes place. The receiver sees not so much what is in the message but what he or she is conditioned to see or expects to see. That is true not only of messages but of all perceptions. The layman looks at a piece of metal and defines it through such qualities as smoothness, hardness and heavy weight for its size. The chemist, on the other hand,

> . . . would likely as not ignore these esthetic and utilitarian qualities and define a metal as "any chemical element that enters into combination with oxygen so as to form a base."

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[2]Ibid., pp. 65-66.

> For the most part we do not first see and then define, we define first and then see. In the great blooming, buzzing confusion of the outer world we pick out what our culture has already defined for us, and we tend to perceive that which we have picked out in the form stereotyped for us by our culture.[3]

In short, at every stage from source to receiver the communications process tends to create and reinforce stereotypes, those emotion-laden and simplified pictures in our minds that stand for but do not replicate reality. The stereotypes inhabit a "pseudo-environment" that stands between human beings and the real environment. It is a pseudo-environment to which humans respond with actions that inexorably have impact not on the pseudo- but on the real world.

> . . . when the stimulus of the pseudo-fact results in action on things or other people, contradiction soon develops. Then comes the sensation of butting one's head against a stone wall, of learning by experience, and witnessing Herbert Spencer's tragedy of the murder of a Beautiful Theory by a Gang of Brutal Facts, the discomfort in short of a maladjustment.[4]

The perfect stereotype, according to Lippmann, was Aristotle's definition of a slave as one intended by nature to be servile. The hallmark of the stereotype "is that it precedes the use of reason; is a form of perception, imposes a certain character on the data of our sense before the data reach the intelligence."[5] And because the stereotype is

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[3]Ibid., p. 81.

[4]Ibid., p. 15.

[5]Ibid., p. 98.

emotion-laden, whatever is perceived in its terms is perceived with the emotion it calls forth. Stereotypes judge as well as describe the world. They are at the center of moral codes, and they explain why the same man may be a loving father and a mean boss, a municipal reformer at home and a jingo abroad: The compartments of his mind hold different sets of stereotypes and, therefore, different codes of behavior. Public opinion, rather than a moral judgment on the facts, is a "moralized and codified version of the facts . . . . The pattern of stereotypes at the center of our codes largely determines what group of facts we shall see and in what light we shall see them."[6]

Stereotypes have value as a kind of shorthand that allows the work of the world to go on.[7] But because they are a partial representation of reality, they tend to break down, to become increasingly misrepresentative of changing reality, to censor out distinctions that need to be made. And "when the day of reckoning comes, and the stereotype is shattered, likely as not that which it did wisely take into account is shipwrecked with it."[8] Stereotypes, then, are inevitable; what matters is their character and the gullibility with which they are held. Recognizing the pervasiveness of stereotypes

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[6]Ibid., p. 125.

[7]Ibid., p. 90.

[8]Ibid., p. 112.

is in itself an antiseptic against them, making us more willing to modify them when necessary.[9]

The implication of stereotypes for politics led Lippmann to his critique of what he considered to be orthodox democratic theory -- the idea that political wisdom wells up spontaneously from a public of omnicompetent citizens. That concept, he believed, ignores the question of what the people know about the world. By the time the American reached voting age, the theory was, he "had his political faculties. What counted was a good heart, a reasoning mind, a balanced judgment."[10] Against this simple vision of the omnicompetent citizen, Lippmann placed his own portrait of the citizen: a person of severely limited vision and knowledge, whose political decisions are based on stereotypes, codes and symbols -- symbols which can be manipulated to enlist his interest and support in political programs the real nature and impact of which he can hardly judge. The role of the political leader in such a system is not to carry out the will of the people, which is too amorphous and uninformed to matter, but to use the techniques of politics to create consent.[11] And because the public could only judge after the fact whether its consent was gained wisely or cynically, political leaders as a class were in fact irresponsible to the public.[12]

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[9]Ibid., pp. 90-91.

[10]Ibid., p. 258.

[11]Ibid., p. 248.

[12]Ibid., p. 310.

For democracies to function, Lippmann believed, there must be created neutral, expert agencies whose job it is to organize intelligence into a form in which it will be useful for running public affairs intelligently and responsibly.[13] The experts, whose neutrality would be protected by insulation from politics, would assemble the pertinent facts. The decisions would be made by the political leaders, the "insiders" whose function it is to make judgments. The press -- "the beam of a searchlight that moves restlessly about, bringing one episode and then another out of darkness into vision" -- would bring to the public's attention matters on which a public decision is needed. And public decisions can be of only one kind -- thumbs up or thumbs down, yes or no. But because the facts of public life will have been organized for the press by the experts -- not by the press for the public -- the spotlight will fall on information in useful, intelligible form, not on the chaos of "episodes, incidents and eruptions."[14]

Against the picture of the omnicompetent citizen Lippmann had placed another picture, that of a confused, ill-informed citizen whose political interest was open to cynical manipulation. But he also juxtaposed another image -- this one normative, and not of the citizen but of the leader who would use the experts' knowledge in the citizens' behalf -- "the perfectly sound ideal of an executive who sits before a flat-top desk, one sheet of typewritten paper before him, and

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[13] Ibid., p. 31.

[14] Ibid., p. 364.

decides on matters of policy presented in a form ready for his rejection or approval."[15] This image, and all it implies about the roles of public, public servant and expert, was Lippmann's solution to the perplexing questions raised in Public Opinion. And as in the earlier books, both the solution and the problems were intimately bound up with science.

Many of the attitudes toward and uses of science in Public Opinion are by now familiar. As in A Preface to Politics and Drift and Mastery, science is generally viewed in a positive light. In fact, the critique of science offered in the earlier books -- that it had a tendency to ignore the full richness of the human experience -- is no longer mentioned. Instead, science, as opposed to authority and to observation by the innocent or the lay eye, is put forward as the surest epistemological link to reality.[16] The same distinctions are drawn as in earlier books between the older, "hard" physical sciences with their certainty of method, and the younger, less established social sciences. Lippmann compares the reception by business of the physical and social sciences:

> The chemist, the physicist, the geologist, had a much earlier and more friendly reception. Laboratories were set up for them, inducements offered, for there was quick appreciation of the victories over nature. But the scientist who has human nature as his problem is in a different case. There are many reasons for this: the chief one, that he has so few victories to exhibit.[17]

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[15] Ibid., p. 370.

[16] Ibid., pp. 5-6, 13-14, 69, 71.

[17] Ibid., pp. 371-372.

But Lippmann is confident that social science will progress, because the need for it to do so is real. "The social scientist will acquire his dignity and his strength when he has worked out his method," and he will do that by capitalizing on the need of those who run the Great Society for trustworthy scientific instruments with which to analyze society. Already, in the exchange of methods and results among the expert staffs of state and municipal governments, Lippmann could see the "beginning of experimental method in social science."[18]

There are other continuities as well. There is the same hope, for example, as in Drift and Mastery that the public some day will actually come to like thinking scientifically -- that the pursuit of truth will become as exciting as bread and circuses. Teach the principles of science as the discipline of objectivity, Lippmann said, and they will be dull. But teach them as victories over superstition, "and the exhiliration of the chase and the conquest may carry the pupil over that hard transition from his own self-bound experience to the phase where his curiosity has matured, and his reason has acquired passion."[19]

There is also the same analysis of self-consciousness as the strength of science. Science is the surest epistemology precisely because it is humble. It operates through

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[18]Ibid., pp. 373, 377.

[19]Ibid., p. 410.

hypotheses which are either supported or contradicted and are, even when supported, tentative and incomplete. The person who "submits to the scientific discipline knows that though he does not know everything, he is in the way of knowing something . . . ."[20] Lippmann, however, does have an ambiguous attitude toward humility in science. One of his criticisms of social science as opposed to the physical sciences is that it is "apologetic." Social scientists assemble their data from scraps of material gathered by others for other purposes; and their hypotheses cannot be tested in the laboratory, but only in the "real world." Thus the social scientist "has little inner certainty about his own work. He only half believes in it, and being sure of nothing he can find no compelling reason for insisting on his own freedom of thought." Social scientists will not be able to "go to Armageddon" until they have developed a scientific method that will produce conclusions of which they can be certain.[21] Humility about one's conclusions is fine, apparently, as long as one is certain of them.

Finally, and most important, there is the same key role for science in resolving the difficulties raised in the book. In Drift and Mastery, the old authorities had been weakened and the problem confronting humans was what to do with their chaotic new freedom. Science offered a way, on the personal

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[20]Ibid., p. 122.

[21]Ibid., p. 282.

level, for humans to free themselves from needless anxieties; on the social level, it offered a common orientation toward reality. In Public Opinion, the problem examined is almost wholly a societal one -- how is a democracy to be governed when the obstacles in the way of an informed public are so many and so intractable?

Science has the answer on several fronts. First, the intelligence bureaus are to turn the nation's public institutions into a kind of huge research library, full of the quantitative data that will allow analysis and comparison to be made.

> When each school district and budget, and health department, and factory, and tariff schedule, is the material of knowledge for every other, the number of comparable experiences begins to approach the dimensions of genuine experiment. In forty-eight states, and 2400 cities, and 227,000 school houses, 270,000 manufacturing establishments, 27,000 mines and quarries, there is a wealth of experience, if only it were recorded and available. And there is, too, opportunity for trial and error at such slight risk that any reasonable hypothesis might be given a fair test without shaking the foundations of society.[22]

Given such a "wealth of experience" and the urgent need of politicians, businessmen and others for expertly organized information, the apologetic social scientist will at last come into his own. Instead of working with unrelated data spasmodically recorded as accidents of administration, the social scientist will find and formulate the facts for the "man of action." Later, the disinterested expert will make "what wisdom he can out of comparison between the

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[22]Ibid., p. 377.

decision, which he understands, and the facts, which he organized."[23]

Thus science has a critical role to play at the source of information, finding and organizing the facts on which decisions are to be based. It also, however, can alleviate to some extent a major problem at the other end of the flow of information. It can help soften the intransigence of moral codes based on stereotyped views of the world. Every code contains stereotyped conceptions about human nature, the material world and tradition.

> But in the codes that are under the influence of science, the conception is known to be an hypothesis, whereas in the codes that come unexamined from the past or bubble up from the caverns of the mind, the conception is not taken as a hypothesis demanding proof or contradiction, but as a fiction accepted without question.[24]

Lippmann's ambiguity about science -- when does humility become apology? -- was noted previously. Something of the same sort of ambiguity can be seen in a solecism Lippmann commits in regard to the relationship between social scientists and moralists. He comments that "whether the moralists study economics and politics and psychology, or whether the social scientists educate the moralists is no great matter."[25] Indeed it is no great matter, because it is the same. Although the sentence structure seems to offer alternatives, in fact

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[23]Ibid., p. 377.

[24]Ibid., pp. 122-123.

[25]Ibid., p. 180.

it does not: In each case, science is the teacher, and the moralist is the student. The authority of science had a strong hold on Lippmann's mind.

But if the similarities in the role and uses of science are marked, Public Opinion introduces differences as well. For one, there is less marshalling of scientific evidence to support one side or the other in a current political debate. In only one instance does Lippmann use science overtly to support a partisan political view. Analytic psychology and anthropology unite, Lippmann wrote without reference to particular research, in supporting the conclusion that human desires and behavior are learned, not innate. Thus both psychology and anthropology undercut the "false determinism" of socialism.[26]

But, unlike his two earliest books, Public Opinion does not analyze contemporary figures in Washington in terms of their sympathy with science or lack of it. Warren Harding, president when the book was written and published, is mentioned only once in passing. This may be as much the result of the subject matter of Public Opinion as of any change in Lippmann's thinking about the appropriateness of weighing science in on the political scales. In later books, Lippmann will use science both to support and to attack the New Deal and to support the classical liberalism of Adam Smith and attack the naive capitalism of 19th century businessmen.

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[26]Ibid., pp. 187-190.

Another difference from earlier books is that the Freudian vocabulary of taboo and repression is no longer used to analyze society. "Stereotype," the key concept in Public Opinion, is a word drawn not from science but from print journalism. Nevertheless, there is a marked increase in citations to scientific research, much of it psychological. For example, Lippmann cites Jung for laboratory studies on the ability to "discriminate among crude perceptions and vague analogies";[27] Locard and others on the variability of witnesses' accounts of an incident;[28] and Titchener on the perception of present time. "The longest duration which we immediately feel is what is called the 'specious present.' It endures, according to Titchener, for about six seconds."[29] Other citations are to the psychological works of William James, Joseph Jastrow, Cannon, Adler, Kempf and MacDougall. Clearly, Lippmann tried to support his argument with reference to actual data and specific research. Yet what endures in Public Opinion, its analysis of the function of stereotypes in human communication, does not rest on such references, and to the present-day reader they seem an affectation.

Public Opinion is the first of Lippmann's books to achieve a genuine distance from the events of its time. Unlike A Preface to Politics, Drift and Mastery, The Method of Freedom or The New Imperative, it has dated remarkably little

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[27]Ibid., p. 71.

[28]Ibid., pp. 79, 82.

[29]Ibid., pp. 138-139.

and is frequently cited today, not as a piece of the history of its time but as a work of enduring insight into its topic.

Yet for all the distance it obtained, Public Opinion remains a book with a political message. The politics it urges would place political power in the hands of an elite of scientific experts and administrators. Thus as in his earlier books, Lippmann continues to use science to rationalize progressive, middle-class, bureaucratic values. But his doing so is less obvious because he no longer equates those values with the programs of named political leaders like Theodore Roosevelt or Woodrow Wilson. Lippmann's use of science in Public Opinion is not less political, only less partisan.

The most striking new theme in Public Opinion is the conviction that there is a wide gulf between the public and the experts. Although experts were acknowledged and praised in A Preface to Politics and Drift and Mastery, the scientific way of thinking was considered to be an attitude of mind that could be adopted by anyone. Scientific training for businessmen, for example, would release them from a fixation on accumulating dollars, Lippmann wrote in his first book.[30] "The scientific spirit," he wrote in his second, "is the discipline of democracy, the escape from drift, the outlook of a free man."[31] In Public Opinion, there remain vestiges of hope that scientific attitudes might bring some flexibility to the

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[30]Lippmann, Preface to Politics, p. 49.

[31]Lippmann, Drift and Mastery, p. 151.

stereotypes at the core of moral codes, and that science, if taught as the victory of truth over superstition, might gain emotional relevance with the public. But built into Public Opinion's analysis of society is a troubling perception: The public will always and inevitably receive only restricted and transformed information about the larger world. There are limitations at the source, such as censorship and privacy; there are limitations on the time and attention span the public has for news of the world; there are limitations on the ability of language itself to represent reality; and the information is received and perceived in terms of stereotypes which are inherent and perhaps even inevitable.

Some stereotypes are closer to reality than others; some are useful in their time; and some people hold their stereotypes more flexibly and more humbly than others. But stereotypes are a structural part of the way the public perceives the world. To attempt to look innocently -- that is, without stereotype -- would in fact "impoverish human life" because stereotypes bring economy to perception.[32] They prevent humans from having continually to revisualize the wheel.

Do scientists working through the scientific method see the world as it really is, unmediated by stereotypes? Probably not, although Lippmann doesn't directly address this issue. In a passage cited above, he seemed to imply that a chemist's technical perception of a metal is an example of

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[32]Lippmann, Public Opinion, p. 88.

stereotyping, of defining first and then seeing.[33] At another point he says that science makes use of "fictions" which he defines as man-made representations of the environment.

> The range of fiction extends all the way from complete hallucination to the scientist's perfectly self-conscious use of a schematic model, or his decision that for his particular problem accuracy beyond a certain number of decimal places is not important. A work of fiction may have almost any degree of fidelity, and so long as the degree of fidelity can be taken into account, fiction is not misleading.[34]

But a fiction, which the scientist in Lippmann's example uses consciously and as a convenience or an aid to communicating results, is not the same thing as a stereotype, which "precedes the use of reason" and "imposes a certain character on the data of our sense before the data reach the intelligence.[35] In other passages, he describes the political science of the Founding Fathers as functioning something like a stereotype.

> The physical isolation of the township, the loneliness of the pioneer, the theory of democracy, the Protestant tradition, and the limitations of political science all converged to make men believe that out of their own consciences they must extricate political wisdom.[36]

But political wisdom, of course, is a social science which

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[33]Ibid., p. 81.

[34]Ibid., p. 15.

[35]Ibid., p. 98. For an argument that science is just such an activity, carried out under stereotype-like "paradigms" that alter the way data are perceived, see Kuhn, Structure of Scientific Revolutions.

[36]Ibid., p. 274.

had yet to find the method and certainty of the physical sciences.

Lippmann appeared to consider the sciences to be capable of development to a point at which their method and their "humility" could act together to discount their stereotypes. Science was a way to overcome the limitations of human perception and draw close to reality, if not directly perceive it. Therefore, the more scientific a branch of science, it would seem, the closer its experts are to knowing the real world.

But expertness was not simply a matter of applying "the scientific spirit to everyday life," as Lippmann had urged in Drift and Mastery. The role of experts in a modern, democratic society had become as technical as it was crucial.

> The Great Society had grown furiously and to colossal dimensions by the application of technical knowledge. It was made by engineers who had learned to use exact measurements and quantitative analysis. It could not be governed, men began to discover, by men who thought deductively about rights and wrongs. It could be brought under human control only by the technic which had created it.[37]

Moreover, representative government cannot be made to work successfully unless there is "an independent expert organization for making the unseen facts intelligible to those who have to make the decisions.[38] And by decision makers, Lippmann does not mean the voting public, but instead the "men of action," the leaders and administrators. In fact, beyond

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[37]Ibid., p. 370.

[38]Ibid., p. 31.

their and the experts' use of the data organized by intelligence bureaus, there would be only "some study" of it by those organs of mass communication, the newspapers.

> . . . the outsider, and every one of us is an outsider to all but a few aspects of modern life, has neither time, nor attention, nor interest, nor the equipment for specific judgment. It is on the men inside, working under conditions that are sound, that the daily administration of society must rest.[39]

Politicians who appeal to the public on matters of detail usually are trying to avoid criticism from knowledgeable people by appealing to an ignorant majority. The winner in that game is determined not by the facts but by who speaks the loudest or has the best publicity agent.[40]

In sum, what had changed between Drift and Mastery and Public Opinion seems to have been Lippmann's sense of the realism of expecting scientific thought to effect substantial changes in the fidelity with which the mass of people perceived the larger world. There may have been, as well, a growing sense of his own ambiguous position. He was a non-scientist leading the parade for science, a generalist maintaining that the experts had the most direct line to reality. In all but a few aspects of life, he wrote, "every one of us is an outsider." In another passage, he wrote of the difficulty of drawing a valid sample from a population: The task belongs, he said, to the science of statistics, "and it is a most difficult affair for anyone whose mathematics is primitive, and

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[39]Ibid., p. 400.

[40]Ibid., p. 401.

mine remain azoic in spite of the half dozen manuals which I once devoutly imagined that I understood."[41] It is revealing that in his admission of mathematical inadequacy, Lippmann felt called upon, perhaps defensively, to use a technical geological term, azoic. The larger world that science had opened up -- and indeed science itself -- had proved to be bigger than even Walter Lippmann could manage. And if that were so, what hope for the public?

The Phantom Public

In Public Opinion, Lippmann undercut what he considered to be the orthodox democratic theory -- the notion that political wisdom wells up spontaneously from a public of omnicompetent citizens. In place of that view, he suggested a theory of democracy in which political leaders create public consent for actions based on information supplied and organized by independent bureaus of experts. The public's role would be to vote yes or no when its consent was asked. The scheme left the public open to manipulation by skillful but cynical politicians, and it failed to supply the public with criteria on which to base its yes or no vote. Can members of the public act intelligently even in the reduced role Lippmann felt appropriate for them? That was the question posed in his next book, The Phantom Public, published in 1925.

The private citizen, as sketched in the book's opening chapter, is "like a deaf spectator in the back row" of a play.

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[41] Ibid., p. 148.

He knows his sovereignty in the democratic system is a fiction, because he knows he lives in a world he can neither fully perceive, understand nor direct.[42] He knows that the theory of democracy expects the impossible of voters -- that they "know what is going on and . . . have an opinion worth expressing on every question which confronts a self-governing community."[43]

Nor is there hope that ideal democratic citizens can be produced by eugenics, education or moral instruction. The ideal of a citizen competent to direct public affairs is a false ideal, unattainable in the sense that ballet dancing is an unattainable goal for a fat man.[44]

The actual work of the world, however, is done not by voting publics but by individual people taking concrete, specific actions in situations with which they are closely involved. When the voters become involved, they do so not as actors but rather in the attempt to influence the actions of others from the outside.[45] The involvement most often is in the form of an election, which is an expression of the force of numbers in a society, a kind of sublimated war, the substitution of ballots for bullets.[46]

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[42]Lippmann, The Phantom Public (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1925), p. 13-14.

[43]Ibid., p. 20.

[44]Ibid., pp. 22-39.

[45]Ibid., pp. 49-53.

[46]Ibid., pp. 58-59.

Thus the public does not govern public affairs. Rather, it intervenes, and its interventions can be counted on to be neither well informed, continuous, non-partisan, creative or effective. Public opinion deals with crisis, and its object is to see that the crisis is ended. The aim of educating the public is to give it the power to discern which side in a conflict can best end the crisis through workable laws rather than an appeal to brute force.[47] "It is the function of public opinion to check the use of force in a crisis, so that men, driven to make terms, may live and let live."[48]

When an issue arises that requires public intervention, the public needs the answers to two questions: 1) Is the rule that applies to the dispute defective? and 2) if it is, who is best able to mend it? In other words, the public is to be concerned solely with judging whether a particular rule of society needs to be reformed and, if so, who shall be the reformer.[49]

In this scheme of things, the value of public debate is not to inform the public about the merits of the issue: The public, since it is on the outside, is incapable of dealing with the merits. The value of public debate is to identify the advocates and partisans and so deprive them of the advantage of sailing falsely under the colors of the general

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[47]Ibid., pp. 63-70.

[48]Ibid., p. 74.

[49]Ibid., pp. 107-109.

public interest.[50]

Rules are challenged by being broken -- in effect, by the substitution of new rules. The question for the public is whether the new rule was substituted justifiably, and the criterion is whether there was assent to the new rule by most of the insiders directly concerned.[51] If so, there is no public question. But if there is significant dissent, the public may profitably inquire which side is most willing to submit its claim to inquiry and to abide by the result. If all sides are willing to do so, the public can instead ask which proposed new rule includes the means of its own clarification and amendment with consent and proper notice.[52] If these or some other reasonable tests cannot be made to apply to the situation, the public is better off doing nothing. In cases in which only an opinion on the actual merits of a case would be of any use, "any positive action the bystanders are likely to take is almost certain to be more of a nuisance than a benefit."[53]

The merits of an issue, then, are not for the public to decide. The only useful role for the public is as a kind of referee, judging whether the game is played according to the rules and whether the rules themselves are amended in an

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[50]Ibid., pp. 110-114.

[51]Ibid., pp. 115-117.

[52]Ibid., pp. 125-138.

[53]Ibid., pp. 141-142.

orderly way.

In Public Opinion, Lippmann had stressed for the first time the width of the gulf between scientific experts and the lay public. He elaborates on that theme in The Phantom Public. One of the reasons the public cannot be expected to judge a public issue on its merits is that the public is contemptuous of and bored with experts and with statistical measurement. If it weren't that the insiders in government and business find record and measurement necessary, "the organization of intelligence to administer modern affairs would probably be entirely neglected."[54]

But it is a mistake to believe that everyone can be an expert about everything. That is the myth of the omnicompetent citizen. Science does not equip one to be an omnicompetent citizen, because science equips one to deal specifically and concretely with an issue with which one is closely involved.[55] Science, in other words, helps insiders function as insiders, but cannot help the public do its job as an outside influence. And one is an insider for only a narrow spectrum of issues.

> Only the insider can make decisions, not because he is inherently a better man but because he is so placed that he can understand and can act. The outsider is necessarily ignorant, usually irrelevant and often meddlesome, because he is trying to navigate the ship from dry land. That is why excellent automobile manufacturers, literary critics and scientists often

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[54]Ibid., p. 42.

[55]Ibid., p. 150

> talk such nonsense about politics. Their congenital excellence, if it exists, reveals itself only in their own activity.[56]

Nor will science, he noted wryly, be likely to develop the omnicompetent citizen through genetic manipulation. He had tried to imagine how the perfect citizen could be produced from the conjunction of the right germ plasm, and he noted the prescriptions by popular eugenists "as to just who ought to marry whom. . . ." Not being a biologist himself, he noted, he kept an open mind, but observed that those who display the most certainty about the possibility of breeding ability into the human race also have the slightest scientific reputations.[57] (Later, in The Good Society, Lippmann was to return glancingly to the topic of eugenics, but in that book he was to suggest that the genetic improvement of the citizenry ought indeed to be a concern of the state.)

Science is brought to bear as authority or metaphor to support two major contentions in the book. One is that moral education in itself does not equip a person to judge an issue on its merits. Lippmann cites Pavlov's experiments on conditioned reflexes in animals as support for an assertion that a human being

> responds quite readily to a glass egg, a decoy duck, a stuffed shirt or a political platform. No moral code, as such, will enable him to know whether he is exercizing his moral faculties on a real and an important event.[58]

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[56] Ibid., p. 150.

[57] Ibid., p. 22.

[58] Ibid., p. 30.

What that person needs to know, Lippmann wrote, is the facts.

The second contention is that all values are relative. This is important for Lippmann to maintain in order to support his proposition that the purpose of politics is not to determine right and wrong in an absolute sense, but rather to allow conflicting interests to achieve a live-and-let-live accommodation. Drawing his vocabulary from Darwin, Lippmann wrote that social problems are not conflicts between right and wrong but instead the result of uneven evolution. People and things multiply, grow, learn, age, wear out and die at different rates; a person and his friends, tools, institutions, beliefs and needs evolve unevenly.

> Instead of that one grand system of evolution and progress, which the nineteenth century found so reassuring, there would appear to be innumerable systems of evolution, variously affecting each other, some linked, some in collision, but each in some fundamental aspect moving at its own pace and on its own terms.
>
> The disharmonies of this uneven evolution are the problems of mankind.[59]

The use of scientific vocabulary and authority to support propositions about society, and the consciousness of a wide gap between science and the lay public are aspects of Lippmann's thought that appeared in previous works. A new element in his use of science emerges in The Phantom Public. That is his attempt, which will grow more pronounced in later books, to offer his insights as seminal ideas for future scientific research.

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[59] Ibid., pp. 83-84.

Of the criteria by which the public may judge which side to back in a public dispute, for example, he wrote:

> It goes without saying that what I shall present here is no final statement of these principles. At most and at best it may be a clue, with some illustrations, that can be developed by research.[60]

Noting that the public must make a judgment about public issues based on "sampling an external aspect of the behavior of insiders," and that criteria need to be established for the public to distinguish reasonable from arbitrary behavior, Lippmann concludes: "It is the task of the political scientist to devise the methods of sampling and to define the criteria of judgment."[61]

A question that must have occurred to Lippmann as he formulated his distinction between insiders and outsiders was, where did he himself stand in regard to the issues about which he wrote every day? As a journalist, was he inside or out, an expert or a lay citizen? He knew he was not an expert on all the public matters on which he commented daily. He admitted that "although public business is my main interest and I give most of my time to watching it, I cannot find time to do what is expected of me in the theory of democracy . . . to have an opinion worth expressing on every question which confronts a self-governing community."[62] At the same time,

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[60] Ibid., p. 79.

[61] Ibid., pp. 144-145.

[62] Ibid., p. 20.

however, he was hardly willing to restrict himself to the role he set out for the lay public, that of a bystander and a referee isolated from the merits of the issues.

In offering his insights as fertile ground for scientific research, Lippmann the non-scientist could stake out a claim for himself within the territory of science, and thus find an accommodation between being an insider and being an outsider. He could exhibit due humility about the tentative nature of his conclusions, while at the same time drawing some of the aura of science around them.

Chapter IV

High Religion Incarnate

Drift and Mastery examined the impact of modernity on both public and personal life. Public Opinion and The Phantom Public looked more specifically at the public aspect of the problem. In 1929, Lippmann returned to the personal aspect in A Preface to Morals. The book deals with religion and with "the problem of unbelief."[1] In an age in which the acids of modernity have destroyed faith but not the need for faith, "the problem is how mankind, deprived of the great fictions, is to come to terms with the needs which created those fictions."[2] As in Drift and Mastery and Public Opinion, science is both a cause of the problem and a key to the solution.

Religion is no longer believable because the modern scientific viewpoint has destroyed the credibility of the physical and historical truth of religion among the mass of people. In the sense that unbelief has affected the masses, the modern situation is different from that of earlier periods in which science and orthodox religion were in conflict. In the days of Plato and Socrates and again when the educated classes of Rome accepted Christianity, a relatively small elite translated popular theology into a "higher" religion that their sophistication could accept; meanwhile, the popular

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[1]Lippmann, A Preface to Morals (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1929), p. 3.

[2]Ibid., p. 144.

beliefs remained intact among the masses. "This is the first age . . . in the history of mankind," Lippmann wrote, "when the circumstances of life have conspired with the intellectual habits of the time to render any fixed and authoritative belief incredible to large masses of men."[3] People have lost the sense that their lives are part of a rational order, and their search for new religions, their adoption of cults and their appeals for a reconciliation between religion and science are symptoms of their unease.[4]

Life used to have a unity, expressed alike in church, state, family and school.

> . . . The rights and duties of the individual in society, the rules of morality, the themes of art and the teachings of science were all of them ways of revealing, of celebrating, of applying the laws laid down in the divine constitution of the universe.[5]

But the unity is broken in the modern world. Science no longer is expected to support religion, and religion no longer dominates art.[6] All the scientists agree: There is no evidence of an anthropomorphic God anywhere in the universe. And members of the lay public, trying to read the Bible literally as history, science and law, find it contradicted by "the practical working convictions of their daily lives."[7]

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[3]Ibid., pp. 11-12.

[4]Ibid., pp. 18-19.

[5]Ibid., p. 112.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Ibid., pp. 27-28, 40.

Modern theologians have tried to separate religion's ideal values from the historic account set forth in the Bible -- but to do so means that in the view of the "common man," these ideal values no longer are based in the meat and potatoes of reality. They no longer are "inherent in the very nature of things."[8] The common people, in fact, need miracles to convince them of the truth of religion. But to them, science and not the church seems to be the source of modern miracle.

> The miracles which are recounted from the pulpit were, after all, few and far between . . . . But the miracles of science seem to be inexhaustible. It is not surprising then, that men of science should have acquired much of the intellectual authority which churchmen once exercised. Scientists do not, of course, speak of their discoveries as miracles. But to the common man they have much the same character as miracles. They are wonderful, they are inexplicable, they are manifestations of a great power over the forces of nature.[9]

The miracles of science, however, don't completely satisfy the human needs that religion used to fill. Science's "miraculous" aspect has the defects of its virtues: Science seems to be miraculous because it is difficult to understand, and because it is difficult to understand it is somewhat remote from the emotional life of human beings. It is as mysterious to most people as religion ever was. Even the "moderately educated minority," the "disillusioned rebels" don't understand modern science because they "never learned enough mathematics

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[8]Ibid., p. 32.

[9]Ibid., pp. 120-121.

and physics."[10] (Lippmann, himself a "disillusioned rebel, had no courses in math or any of the physical sciences at Harvard.)[11]

Science not only is difficult to understand, it also answers radically different questions than those answered by religion. Through religion, human beings have sought to define a place for themselves in the order of things that would relate their individual destiny to the destiny of the universe. Science says that even the attempt to do so is outside the pale.

> The radical novelty of modern science lies precisely in the rejection of the belief, which is at the heart of all popular religion, that the forces which move the stars and atoms are contingent upon the preferences of the human heart....
>
> Therefore, science, though it has displaced revelation, is not a substitute for it. It yields a radically different kind of knowledge. It explains the facts. But it does not pretend to justify the ways of God to man. It enables us to realize some of our hopes. But it offers no guarantee that they can be fulfilled.[12]

If science cannot satisfy the naive yearning for a personal sense of connection with universal destiny, however, it does point the way toward a new morality that will be based once again -- as in the days of literal Biblical belief -- on reality. Thus a characteristic pattern of Lippmann's thought is continued: Science is at the root of modern problems, but it also offers solutions to those problems; it destroys the

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[10]Ibid., pp. 121, 18.

[11]Steel, Walter Lippmann, p. 14.

[12]Lippmann, Preface to Morals, p. 133.

old, but it also is the means through which the new can be built. The scientific basis for the new morality will not be biology and history -- the Creation, the Flood and the Exodus -- but the science of psychology.[13]

Lippmann traces the modern sense of alienation, of dissatisfaction with things as they are, of yearning for a destiny, to an intuitively perceived memory of life as human beings think it should be. Psychology, as it studies the development of human behavior, begins to understand the source of that memory. It is the period of very early infancy, when the baby is closely cared for in a situation as much like the womb as possible. For a short time the infant lives under the illusion that "'his wishes are realized simply by imagining the satisfaction of them,'" Lippmann wrote, quoting Ferenczi.[14] In Ferenczi's scheme of psychological development, humans pass through several stages in which they progressively learn to accommodate themselves to the real world. The final stage, maturity, is not dealt with in detail by the psychologists because their concern is with pathology. The moralist, however, is concerned not with pathology but with health, and for the moralist the end result of natural human development offers a norm for which human life ought to strive.[15] Thus the science of psychology, while it may not be developed enough yet to

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[13]Ibid., p. 143.

[14]Ibid., pp. 150, 178.

[15]Ibid., p. 179.

totally supplant imaginative insight, does establish on a scientific basis the goal of moral effort: That goal is a calm, disinterested maturity.

> . . . With the help of psychology we are in position now to construct reliable and useful pictures, which confirm and correct our own intuitive understanding . . . . We can, as it were, fix these two poles and regard the history of each soul as the history of its progress from infantilism to maturity. . . . We know what we mean by the goal of moral effort.[16]

Moreover, as psychology develops strength as a science, the reality base for the morality of maturity will become firmer. If scientific knowledge of human nature were adequate to the task now, humanists could actually achieve what all religions tried to achieve in the past -- a morality based on tested truths.

> They would be truths about the development of human nature, and not, as in the popular religions, truth of physics and of history. But our knowledge of human nature is inadequate, and therefore, like the teachers of popular religion, we have in place of exact knowledge to invent imaginative fictions in the hope that the progress of science will confirm and correct, but will not utterly contradict, our hypothesis.[17]

The "progress of science," however, is regarded as a matter of course. Granted, psychologists don't have an agreed-upon terminology and still use a "literary language in which the connotations of words tend to overwhelm their precise signification"; moreover, the science of psychology is split into sects, each characterized by dogmatism, elaborate system-making and headstrong generalization. "But all this is characteristic

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[16]Ibid., p. 174.

[17]Ibid., p. 176.

of a young science," Lippmann wrote, "and if that is borne in mind, there is nothing disconcerting about it." Physics in the 18th century and biology in the 19th went through the same difficulties. The implication is that, given time, psychology will catch up to its more firmly established sisters.[18]

The morality to whose establishment Lippmann looked forward was a mature, disinterested understanding that the universe did not exist to fulfill men's desires. By accepting reality, humans could discipline their wills to bring desire into harmony with it.

> To be able. . . to follow what the heart desires without coming into collision with the stubborn facts of life is the privilege of the utterly innocent and of the utterly wise. It is the privilege of the infant and of the sage who stand at the two poles of experience; of the infant because the world ministers to his heart's desire and of the sage because he has learned what to desire. Perhaps this is what Jesus meant when he told his followers that they must become like little children.[19]

It is a morality that was intuitively perceived in the past only by the spiritual elite. In addition to Jesus and Confucius, Lippmann includes among them such men as Eckhart, Origen, Dean Inge, St. Augustine, Luther, Erasmus and Montaigne. They are the minority to whom religion is not a guarantee of eternal salvation or earthly success, but a "reconditioning of their own souls."[20]

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[18]Ibid., pp. 173-174.

[19]Ibid., p. 193.

[20]Ibid., p. 196.

Lippmann concedes even to popular religion the ability to intuitively perceive truths about human nature that are later confirmed by science. Religion has always understood, for example, the close connection between religion and sex and the importance of early childhood for the transmittal of traditional values.[21] Likewise, the elite who practiced the more difficult "religion of the spirit" understood the value of a disinterested maturity long before the advent of modern psychology began to lay the scientific basis for it. Pythagoras, for example, understood the relationship of disinterestedness in science to moral maturity. He tried to establish a movement in which scientific study would be combined with ascetic discipline, but lacked the "technical knowledge" to make the experiment work. ". . . The pursuit of science was too much for the mass of the faithful."[22]

Insights like Pythagoras' were comparable to the "prophetic conceptions" in the natural sciences which, after being considered curiosities for years, were at last seen to be clues to significant scientific advance. The idea of evolution, for instance, was conceived often before Darwin, but nothing came of it until "the rapid evolution of human affairs after the industrial revolution had somehow brought this neglected insight into focus with men's interests."[23] It is likewise with

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[21] Ibid., pp. 89, 91.

[22] Ibid., pp. 204-205.

[23] Ibid., pp. 209-210.

the new morality of disinterested maturity. What was intuitively grasped by an elite of wise men or mystics now is ripe to be established on a firm scientific foundation.

> The vision itself we can discern only faintly, for we have as yet only the occasional and fragmentary testimony of sages and saints and heroes, dim anticipations here and there, a most imperfect science of human behavior, and our own obscure endeavor to make explicit and rational the stresses of the modern world within our own souls. But we can begin to see, I think, that the evidence converges upon the theory that what the sages have prophesied as high religion, what psychologists delineate as matured personality, and the disinterestedness which the Great Society requires for its practical fulfillment, are all of a piece, and are the basic elements of a modern morality.[24]

Indeed, Lippmann announces his own reconciliation between science and religion. "It is no exaggeration," he wrote, "to say that pure science is high religion incarnate."[25]

The time is ripe for the new idea precisely because the Great Society, with its dependence on science, now requires that the scientific spirit spread throughout the mass of people. Science may be difficult for the common person to understand. It may even be difficult for the educated minority like Lippmann. But the underlying realities of the modern age will bring change. The machine technology "requires a population which in some measure partakes of the spirit which created it."[26]

How the change is to come about is not clear. Lippmann

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[24]Ibid., p. 323.

[25]Ibid., p. 239.

[26]Ibid., p. 240.

begins with the belief that, whatever the motives surrounding the practice of science and technology, the motives at the heart of the enterprise are disinterested and mature. The hope of financial gain may have led to the establishment of a laboratory, but in the laboratory itself," the habit of disinterested realism in dealing with the data is the indispensable habit of mind." How is this habit of mind to spread beyond the laboratory to the populace at large? Beyond stating his belief that the machine technology requires it, Lippmann is not sure -- and indeed expresses some skepticism. He notes that the scientific spirit becomes "diluted" the further one goes from those who actually work in science. It is a long way, he observes, from Faraday, Maxwell and Hertz to the "broker who sells radio stock or the householder with his six-tube set." Still, he affirms, "it is a fact of enormous consequences, cumulative in its effect upon the education of succeeding generations," that the technology of modern civilization is possible only with "the increasing use of a scientific discipline."[27]

Lippmann believed, or at least wanted to believe, that the disinterestedness at the heart of science would spread throughout a mass population living in a technological society. But he was not able to say clearly how that diffusion would occur. Once more he called on science to solve the problem -- suggesting that the concept of disinterestedness be accepted

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[27]Ibid., pp. 240-241.

by psychologists and educators as a kind of "theory of evolution" or "Mendel's law" from which they could "thread their way by dialectic and by experiment to practical knowledge which is actually usable as a method of education and as a personal discipline."[28]

Meanwhile, the ideal of disinterestedness was already implicit in three areas of human concern: sex, government and business. In sexual relations, the impact of technology came through the increasing use of birth control methods and through the relaxation of old moral standards. Modern advocates of sexual freedom, following the logic of birth control to its end, were advocating a complete separation of sex from the institution of the family.[29] But the logic of birth control need not and should not be followed to its end, Lippmann believed. "One might as well argue that because automobiles can be driven at a hundred miles an hour the laws should sanction driving at the rate of a hundred miles an hour."[30] Instead, the convention of marriage correctly interprets human experience:

> In the home made by a couple who propose to see it through, there are provided the essential conditions under which the passions of men and women are most likely to become mature, and therefore harmonious and disinterested.[31]

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[28] Ibid., p. 231.

[29] Ibid., pp. 293-294.

[30] Ibid., p. 299.

[31] Ibid., p. 311.

Marriage, however, will not survive as a rule of law backed by coercion or as a moral commandment handed down from the old to the young, nor will all persons in the Great Society live together in marriage. But marriage will survive as the dominant arrangement if it in fact corresponds to reality. What was in the past a matter of authority and law now becomes a part of the scientific temper. Marriage, "when it is clarified by insight into reality, is likely to be the hypothesis upon which men and women will ordinarily proceed."[32]

In government, Lippmann saw the ideal of disinterestedness moving politics away from centralization and toward "multitudinous mass leadership," or responsible decision-making spread throughout the mass of people.

> The essential point is that as the machine technology makes social relations complex, it dissolves the habits of obedience and dependence; it disintegrates the centralization of power and of leadership; it diffuses the experience of responsible decision throughout the population . . . .[33]

In business, the naive capitalists of the 19th century are being replaced by salaried executives, technicians and experts. The naive capitalists did not understand science because they did not understand disinterestedness. Indeed, Adam Smith told them they should be the opposite of disinterested; that by each pursuing his own interest, the general welfare would be served. The result was social disaster in

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[32]Ibid., p. 312.

[33]Ibid., p. 274.

the cycles of inflation and deflation, the waste of natural resources and the abuse of labor.[34]

On the other hand, business is too complex to be administered from the top by legislation or a government bureaucracy. The only alternative is the self-control of the disinterested business leader, "the man who has transformed his passions by an understanding of necessity."[35]

Thus in sexuality, government and business, Lippmann saw common forces at work. Science and technology were pressing in all three areas for men and women to adopt a mature disinterestedness as the central orientation of their lives. The new orientation, moreover, was not only carried on the tide of the times. It was certified by the science of psychology as the goal toward which human development naturally moved.

In his study of Drift and Mastery, Hollinger saw a contrast between Lippmann's early positive view of science and a later ambivalent attitude, especially in A Preface to Morals. Hollinger's article dealt primarily with the early period and not with the place of science in Lippmann's overall work; but in a footnote Hollinger briefly characterized what he saw as the main relationships between the earlier and the later books.

Both, he said, pose a common problem, the search for stability and fulfillment without resort to tradition or

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[34]Ibid., pp. 242-243.

[35]Ibid., p. 258.

authority. And both present science as a "Promoethean and experimental enterprise grounded in the insight that we live in a radically contingent world." But Preface to Morals, he said, "specifically doubts the viability of science as a social and spiritual ideal." Humanism and maturity take the place of the discipline of science and of mastery, and there is a greater willingness in the 1929 work to "attribute to human experience a stable moral structure which 'the progress of science cannot upset.'" In the later book, Lippmann stressed the difficulty and not the ease with which the bridge between science and lay public could be eased, Hollinger wrote. And finally, Lippmann "associated his own efforts as a critic not with the methods of science, but with the spirit of classical philosophy."[36]

There is no question that both Drift and Mastery and A Preface to Morals see science as both a destroyer of old restraints and a key to unlocking new ways of ordering experience. But in other respects, this study finds evidence to support an interpretation of A Preface to Morals that differs from Hollinger's in emphasis if not in substance. Far from questioning science's viability as a social and spiritual ideal, for example, A Preface to Morals elevates it to a lofty position as "high religion incarnate."

> Modern science . . . is the actual realization in a practicable mode of conduct which can be learned and practiced, of the insight of high religion. The scientific discipline is one way in which the

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[36]Hollinger, "Science and Anarchy," p. 473.

> insight, hitherto lyrical and personal and apart, is brought down to earth and into direct and decisive contact with the concerns of mankind.[37]

To be sure, humanism and maturity have a function similar to that of scientific discipline and mastery in the earlier book. But they are not put forward in place of science and mastery. They are offered as outgrowths of science and as ways to achieve mastery by incorporating the ideals of science in personal life. Humanism is based on human psychology, Lippmann wrote, and maturity is put forward as the moral goal of human life in part because it is the end-point of healthy human development as determined in the psychological work of Freud and Ferenczi.[38] The quality of the mature mind, Lippmann wrote, is that it knows that in action it is "only testing an hypothesis."[39]

Hollinger noted that Lippmann wrote of a stable moral structure that cannot be upset by the progress of science as belief in the literal truth of the Bible was upset by Darwinism. But the moral structure of which Lippmann wrote is stable precisely because it has incorporated the spirit of science into itself. Its indifference to what the facts may be is "the very spirit of scientific inquiry."[40]

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[37]Lippmann, Preface to Morals, p. 239.

[38]Ibid., pp. 143, 176.

[39]Ibid., p. 329.

[40]Ibid., p. 237.

Rather than stressing the difficulty of bridging the gap between science and the layman, A Preface to Morals seems to argue that the bridge will be built as a natural result of the extension of the machine technology. The existence of the gap is acknowledged: Modern men and women don't understand science; but they do understand its tangible results, and those results bring the discipline of science into direct contact with the everyday concerns of human beings.[41] The machine technology, he asserted, "requires" a population that understands the scientific spirit.[42] The continuing human need for a religious orientation, meanwhile, will also press the population to adopt the disinterestedness that for Lippmann is the common insight both of science and of high religion.

> The real effect of modernity upon religion is to make the religion which was once the possession of an aristocracy of the spirit the only possible kind of religion for all modern men.[43]

Finally, it is true, as Hollinger observed, that Lippmann tended to associate his efforts in the later book more with philosophy than with science. In A Preface to Morals, citations of research are few. Only in offering scientific support for his belief that maturity is the end-point of normal human development does Lippmann cite specific scientific work -- that of psychologist Ferenczi. In Public Opinion, he had cited scientific research numerous times.

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[41] Ibid., pp. 121, 239.

[42] Ibid., p. 240.

[43] Ibid., p. 197.

On the other hand, Lippmann does attempt to associate A Preface to Morals closely with science when he puts forth the concept of disinterestedness as a concept capable of articulation through research. He suggested that it might have the same relation to psychological and educational practice that scientific theory has to practical applications in other disciplines. The realization of the ideal of disinterestedness is a matter of education, he wrote: Yet merely telling mothers and teachers to lead children away from childishness will do no good. Mothers and teachers will want concrete advice about what they should do differently. But the advice they should be given is "no more to be had from the original concept than are rules for breeding fine cattle to be had from the theory of evolution or Mendel's law." If the concept of disinterestedness is "correct," however, psychologists and educators will be able to "thread their way by dialectic and by experiment to practical knowledge."[44]

In putting his concept of disinterestedness on the same footing with evolution and Mendel's law, however, Lippmann did violence to a basic distinction: Both Mendel's law and Darwin's theory of natural selection were proposed after considerable empirical observation, while there is very little of an inductive element in disinterestedness. Basically a moral concept, it seems to have fallen victim to the same "pathetic fallacy" against which Lippmann warned earlier in the book --

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[44]Ibid., pp. 230-231.

the belief that good and evil are objective qualities of the natural world.[45] To say that disinterestedness is the right attitude for a mature person to have is one thing. To assert that it is to psychology and education what Mendel's law is to cattle breeding is to make an unsupportable claim for its standing as science.

In several other respects, Lippmann's uses of science in A Preface to Morals continue patterns from previous books. Science remains the most reliable epistemological link to reality.[46] The social sciences continue to lag behind the physical sciences in certainty and reliability, but will progress.[47] Science's strength continues to be its self-correcting and contingent nature.[48] Moreover, science is brought to bear against political and economic theories with which Lippmann disagreed. The naive capitalists of the 19th century were anti-scientific in spirit, he wrote, because the self-interest that is at the heart of laissez faire capitalism is at odds with scientific disinterestedness.[49]

A Preface to Morals had asked the same basic question posed by Drift and Mastery: In a world in which the old certainties had been swept away, how were people to orient

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[45] Ibid., p. 168.

[46] Ibid., pp. 103, 133.

[47] Ibid., pp. 157, 173-174.

[48] Ibid., p. 239.

[49] Ibid., pp. 241-244.

themselves to the world, to others and to themselves? In both books, the central answer is science, the "discipline of democracy," the "high religion incarnate." Yet, like one who draws a line on a Mobius strip, Lippmann had arrived at an opposite view without lifting his pencil, without appearing to jump to the other side. In Drift and Mastery he had warned against trying "to ignore the desire that moves our thought . . . ."[50] He had urged a science centered on human needs and directed by human needs. In A Preface to Morals, he again confronts the conflict between science and the "desire that moves our thought." Science doesn't fill the human needs to which popular religion responded. But now it is the human need that must give way. Human beings must learn not to desire what they cannot have, and instead must discipline their wills in a disinterested maturity.

American Inquisitors

At about the time Lippmann was working on A Preface to Morals, he was asked to give the Barbour-Page lectures at the University of Virginia. These lectures, reprinted as American Inquisitors, focus on the Scopes trial in Tennessee and on efforts in Chicago to legislate the content of school texts in American history. In the main, American Inquisitors sets forth the same themes in regard to science as does A Preface to Morals. Specifically, it interprets modern times as a period of transition between fundamentalist religious belief

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[50]Ibid., p. 170.

based on revelation and authority and, on the other hand, "the scientific method of thought."[51] It leaves no doubt that, in Lippmann's view at least, the transition was taking place in the direction of a desirable ideal. "Have you ever stopped to think," he has Socrates ask in a dialogue on Olympus,

> what it means when a man acquires the scientific spirit? It means that he is ready to let things be what they may be, whether or not he wants them to be that way. It means that he has conquered his desire to have the world justify his prejudices. It means that he has learned how to live without the support of any creed, that he can be happy, or at least humane, no matter what conclusion men may come to as to the origin of the world, or its plan, or its destiny. There are not many men of this sort in any age.[52]

Although its general treatment of science is the same as A Preface to Morals, which was published the next year, American Inquisitors is of interest because of the self-criticism it shows Lippmann willing to direct at his own ideas. The book is Lippmann's effort to play the devil's advocate, to make "the strongest case which I know for the fundamentalist in religion and in politics who is at war with the new scientific spirit in education."[53]

Lippmann puts the devil's case into the mouth of a Fundamentalist who is neither illiterate nor unsophisticated. In his argument with the Modernist over the Scopes trial, the Fundamentalist quickly focuses not on the Biblical creation

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[51] Lippmann, American Inquisitors (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1928), p. 90.

[52] Ibid., p. 46.

[53] Ibid., p. 80.

account but on the question whether there is an absolute point of reference for morality. If the creation story can be disbelieved, the moral teachings of the Bible can be doubted as divinely imparted truth. This uncertainty, the Fundamentalist points out, is the price not of established truth but only of the uncertain and contingent knowledge of science. Modernism, says the Fundamentalist,

> undermines the respect of my children for the truth. They learn a lot of half-baked theories about evolution in school, and then they come home disbelieving the whole religion and morality of their fathers, and recognizing no standard of conduct except their own wilfulness.[54]

The Modernist argues that, given an enlarged experience and trained judgment, children can learn to make their own moral decisions, guided by the "accumulated wisdom of the race." This strikes the Fundamentalist as naive, because it leaves too much up to an innate goodness that is at variance with experience. Neatly turning the Modernist's scientific tables on him, the Fundamentalist observes:

> Your natural man is a natural barbarian, grasping, selfish, lustful, murderous. Your psychoanalysts will tell you that. The religious teachers knew it long before the psychoanalysts rediscovered it.[55]

Morality is not the result of acceptance of a moral code but of the transformation of the will, and the will can only be transformed through the knowledge that one is part of a

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[54] Ibid., p. 52.

[55] Ibid., p. 55.

"universe governed by a divine plan to which, if I wish to be everlastingly happy, I must make my will conform," says the Fundamentalist.[56] This transformation of the will is similar to the disinterestedness of which Lippmann wrote as both the fruit of the scientific habit of mind and of the high religion. The Modernist and the Fundamentalist do not dispute that both the religious and the scientific elite can attain to some similar kind of transformation. Where they differ is in the extent to which the mass of the people can participate in that experience without the guarantee of some supernatural sanction for their belief. All that scientific education amounts to, says the Fundamentalist, is that a slowly growing minority learns to live the disinterested life. The rest merely pick up "odds and ends of more or less obsolete information" which erodes religion while offering nothing of moral value in its place.[57] Meanwhile, the demands of modernism for tolerance and open-mindedness further undermine the authority of the "ancient and established order of mankind," because religious authority is by its nature not subject to the test of reason. It is all very well for a modernist to call for a discussion of the issues without heat and without rancor. But for the Fundamentalist,

> an eternal plan of salvation is at stake. For you there is nothing at stake but a few tentative opinions none of which means anything to your happiness. Your request that I should be tolerant and amiable

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[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid., p. 62.

> is, therefore, a suggestion that I submit the foundation of my life to the destructive effects of your skepticism, your indifference, and your good nature. You ask me to smile and to commit suicide . . . .[58]

As persuasively as he was able to state them, Lippmann rejected the Fundamentalist's views in American Inquisitors. It is Socrates, with his eloquence about "what it means when a man acquires the scientific spirit," who speaks for the author. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that Lippmann was able to confront some of the difficulties of his position so squarely. Years later, in his last two books, Lippmann would re-examine the questions of tradition and of moral relativism and, while not forsaking science, would find himself more in sympathy with the Fundamentalist's point of view.

Before that change began to take place, however, Lippmann published two short books on domestic economics, The Method of Freedom and The New Imperative. The first is an argument for Keynesian regulation of the economy, the second an argument that the maintenance of a decent standard of living for the public had become as fundamental a task of government as the national defense. Neither book deals with the impact of science on society, and science is mentioned only briefly in each.

In The Method of Freedom, Lippmann claims that the "compensated economy" -- his version of Keynesianism -- is

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[58] Ibid., pp. 65-66.

"a conception which is not spun out of abstract theory. It is rather an induction from many experiments actually undertaken."[59] And in The New Imperative, he rests his argument that maintaining the living standard is a basic governmental function on the contention that both Herbert Hoover and Franklin Roosevelt by their actions demonstrated that they accepted it as such. The two administrations, thought to be so different in their approaches to the Depression, actually brought to it the same assumption, that it was the government's job to restore prosperity. The comparison between the two administrations "has been something like a controlled scientific demonstration."[60] The two books illustrate once again Lippmann's characteristic impulse to appeal to the authority of science to bolster his social views.

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[59]Lippmann, The Method of Freedom (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1934), p. 51.

[60]Lippmann, The New Imperative (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1935), p. 10.

Chapter V

Toward Natural Law

The Good Society, first published in 1937, takes Lippmann in a new direction. It is the first of his major books of political theory that does not hold out science as the key to the perplexities of the age. To be sure, science still is highly valued, both for what it can do and for what it can offer as an intellectual and social ideal. The impulse that drove Galileo to examine the heavens, Lippmann wrote, is the "movement which drives human life forward."[1] Still, when Lippmann summarizes the solutions to the problems discussed in the book, he writes not of science as the "discipline of democracy" or as "high religion incarnate," but instead of the inviolability of the individual as perceived in natural, self-evident law.

The Good Society begins by asking what sort of political relationships are appropriate in an age of machine technology. Spokesmen for the collectivist point of view say the new technology required centralized, authoritarian control, either to protect the workers from the dislocations of a technology-driven economy or to fully realize the promise of such an economy.[2] Lippmann's characterization of the collectivist vision is strikingly similar to one he himself could have

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[1] Lippmann, The Good Society (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1937), p. 354.

[2] Ibid., pp. 7-8.

urged in all seriousness 15 years earlier, when he was proposing government by the "experts" and the "insiders." The collectivists' "ardent wish," he wrote in The Good Society,

> makes plausible one of the most enchanting myths which ever captured the human imagination. From the marriage of knowledge with force a new god is to be born. Out of the union of science with government there is to issue a providential state, possessed of all knowledge and of the power to enforce it . . . . The prime ministers and their parliaments, the dictators and their commissars, are to follow the engineers, biologists, and economists who will arrange the scheme of things. The men who know are to direct human affairs and the directors are to listen to those who know.[3]

But far from embracing such a vision, as he once did, Lippmann had come to believe that the concentration of centralized power was the wrong arrangement for the modern world. It was inappropriate to the machine technology, because it was impractical and because it was at odds with the scientific spirit.

He illustrated its impracticability on several counts. The overall direction of an economy must be general and relatively stable. But in a society of constant, rapid technical change, the bureaucracy will not be able to keep up. The official will not be able to issue orders as fast as the inventors can invent.[4] It does not matter to Lippmann whether the bureaucracy is public or private. Corporate capitalism, far from being a natural outgrowth of the machine technology, actually may retard technological progress by

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[3]Ibid., p. 22.

[4]Ibid., pp. 11-12.

creating cumbersome business organizations in which "the objective criteria of the competitive market" are destroyed and in which technical change is "ruinously expensive."[5]

In addition, collectivism is impractical because there are limits on humans' abilities to govern. True, the modern technology of communications makes it possible to cover more ground, but there is just that much more ground to cover. Those who govern remain human beings with limited faculties of insight and foresight. Moreover, they still must deal in partial and simplified views of existence, stereotypes that Lippmann described as having "to reality some such relation as a silhouette to a man."[6]

Finally, collectivism is impractical because the social sciences -- whose progress Lippmann had been enthusiastically predicting since 1914 -- still had not progressed far enough. The tools of social analysis necessary to plan a society might be imagined by a mathematical logician. But in their present state they are inadequate.

> The time may come when the higher logic will have been significantly developed to enable thinkers to analyze the whole relevant social order, and from this analysis to predict successfully the real and not merely the apparent and immediate, effect of a political intervention.
>
> Not until then will it be possible to contemplate a planned society consciously directed.[7]

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[5]Ibid., p. 15.

[6]Ibid., pp. 27, 31-32.

[7]Ibid., p. 33.

The theme that the social sciences lagged the physical sciences was a continuing one in Lippmann's thought. But in previous books, progress in the social sciences was considered a matter of course. In The Good Society, for the first time, the relatively primitive state of the social sciences is advanced as a reason not to attempt the conscious control and direction of society.

This less hopeful view of social science did not mean, however, that Lippmann had stopped considering science to be a strong social force or a worthy intellectual ideal. Indeed, collectivism is wrong not just because it is impractical, but because it is antithetical to the spirit of science.

Taking issue with what he said was the collectivist view that concentration of control is a natural outgrowth of the machine technology, Lippmann argued instead that the growth of corporate capitalism stems from those laws which allow limited liability corporations to be formed. Without the corporate form of economic organization, the modern industrial system could not exist. Thus big business has no organic link with science and technology, and its attendant evils instead result "from the mistakes of the lawmakers."[8]

The socialist and communist versions of centralized control are no more scientifically based than their capitalist alter ego. The hypothesis of doctrinaire communism was that a new technology caused capitalism to evolve out of feudalism,

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[8]Ibid., pp. 13, 15.

and a new technology would bring about the evolution of socialism as well. But technological change will not halt with the coming of socialism, despite the Marxian assumption that "after socialism the new technologies will not call into being a new class whose interests conflict with the interests of those who still live by the more antiquated technology."[9]

There is a more basic sense as well in which collectivism is anti-scientific. Because it depends on authoritarian control, it chokes off scientific inquiry. The intensification of government Lippmann saw around him in the 1930s "is arresting the very advance in science which is the reason given for the magnified officialdom." Thus those collectivists who argue for an increase in authority to realize the promise of science "find themselves facing the awkward fact that science is being crushed in order to increase the authority of the state."[10] The 20th century's threats to science are of the same kind faced in the 16th century by Galileo.

> When the Inquisitors summoned Galileo before them, they told him he must not find that the earth revolves around the sun. Galileo had been observing the heavens through a telescope: He had become convinced that the evidence warranted his conclusion. But the Inquisitors did not look through the telescope. They knew all about astronomy from reading the Bible. So against Galileo's telescope the Inquisitors employed another instrument: the rack . . . .
>
> But the rack is not an instrument for exploring the heavens. A concentration camp is not a political seminar.[11]

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[9] Ibid., p. 69.

[10] Ibid., p. 19.

[11] Ibid., p. 353.

The political ideal that Lippmann opposed to collectivism is one he calls liberalism. He identified it with Adam Smith. The basic economic fact of modern times is the division of labor in widening markets, and the differences between liberalism and collectivism lie in the answers they provide to the human and technical questions raised by that fact. Abstractly, the question is how to determine the allocation of capital and labor, but in human terms, it is where savings shall be invested, at what jobs people shall work and what goods they shall consume. The collectivists say those questions must be answered by central planners backed by the coercive power of the state. The first principle of liberalism, however, is that the market is the essence of an economy based on the division of labor; therefore the market "must be preserved."[12] Adam Smith's discovery of that principle, Lippmann asserted, was a "genuine and a momentous scientific generalization which cannot be obsolete until some radically new mode of production comes into being." The fundamental difference between Marx and Smith, between collectivism and liberalism, "is not in their social sympathies, nor in their attachment to or rebellion against the existing social order, but in their science."[13]

But if Adam Smith had correctly understood the modern economy, why, a hundred years after The Wealth of Nations,

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[12]Ibid., p. 174.

[13]Ibid., p. 180.

was liberalism in decay? Why had it ceased to guide progressives who wanted to improve the social order? Why had it become "a collection of querulous shibboleths invoked by property owners when they resisted encroachments on their vested interests"?[14] Because, Lippmann believed, it had become sidetracked by a false notion, the laissez faire conception that there was a realm in which the exchange economy operated totally autonomously from the legal jurisdiction of the state. Consistently with his view that the market was a "scientific generalization," Lippmann compared the preoccupation of liberals with laissez faire to "the persistent effort of astronomers to explain the motions of the solar system by treating the earth as the fixed centre of it." The progress of astronomical science was arrested until heliocentricity cleared the way.[15]

Similarly sidetracked by laissez faire, liberalism became an apologist for unrectified social abuses. It lost standing among scholars, who abandoned it to the vested interests and attacked the interests with learning based on socialist premises. Liberalism simply had ceased to command intellectual or moral respect.[16] Meanwhile, liberals had fallen into another error, that of assuming that their economic science was a full expression of the natural laws under

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[14]Ibid., p. 183.

[15]Ibid., p. 191.

[16]Ibid., p. 184.

which the economy of divided labor operates. They were drawing "tremendous practical conclusions from the first phase of an incompleted scientific inquiry."[17]

Lippmann rescued liberalism from this strait with a remarkable argument. The subtler classical economists were aware that there were "disturbances" in the real world which they had left out of their economic models. They assumed, for example, that all labor and capital were mobile and that labor and capital knew where to move. They assumed, in short, that there was "only perfect and fair competition among equally intelligent, equally informed, equally placed and universally adaptable men."[18] In fact, the world worked otherwise. But these failures of correspondence between theory and reality were not an indication of weak theory so much as of unreconstructed reality. Economists had presented not a picture of the world as it is but of "the world as it needs to be remade." Had the economists

> realized this implication of their own hypothesis, they would have embarked at once upon the task of exploring the legal, psychological, and social circumstances which obstructed and perverted the actual society.
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> They did not do this. The liberal economists from Ricardo until recent times were obsessed by the deadly confusion that their imaginary world was not a critical introduction to research and reform but the delineation of an order to which the real world conformed approximately and sufficiently. This error sterilized the scientific advance of

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[17]Ibid., p. 195.

[18]Ibid., pp. 198-199.

> liberal thought, paralyzed the practical energies of liberal statesmen, and destroyed the prestige of liberalism.[19]

Properly understood, in other words, classical economics was not a descriptive science but a normative science like ethics, whose lack of correspondence with reality located the points where reform was needed.[20] The question Lippmann did not address is why socialism, which also has its disjunctures with reality, shouldn't be considered just as much a "normative science" as classical liberalism.

Lippmann believed that, now that its preoccupation with laissez faire was removed, classical economics could be articulated and confirmed by research. In its relation to the industrial revolution, Lippmann compared it to the early chemical theories of Davy and Faraday and to the early insights into experimental science of Roger Bacon and William Ockham.[21] Like his own concept of disinterestedness in relation to psychology and education, he believed classical economics to be one of those great insights waiting to be established more firmly as a science.

The areas of reform to which the normative science of classical economics points are the maladjustments of people to the way they earn a living. These maladjustments include handicaps, "the deterioration of the stock from which they

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[19] Ibid., pp. 201-202.

[20] Ibid., p. 208.

[21] Ibid., pp. 239, 343.

spring," disease, malnutrition, neglect, a vicious family life, poverty, squalor and inadequate education. "The economy of the division of labor requires, and the classical economics assumes, a population in which these eugenic and educational problems are effectively dealt with."[22] And the money to deal with them is to come out of the increase in overall wealth brought about by technical improvement. Quit of the mistaken idea that trade operates in a realm free of the legal jurisdiction of the state, society can divert part of its wealth "to insure and indemnify against its own progressive development."[23]

> If technological improvement increases wealth -- and of course it does -- then some part of the increased wealth can be used to relieve the victims of progress.[24]

Such social insurance not only relieves human suffering, however, it also facilitates further technological change by reducing the resistance from those who might otherwise see themselves as the victims of progress.[25] And in a more basic sense, it can bring about the general improvement in the intelligence of the populace that Lippmann believed was necessary in the modern economy. To live in a world in which jobs are both increasingly specialized and increasingly interdependent, he wrote, "requires a continual increase of adaptability,

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[22]Ibid., pp. 212-213.

[23]Ibid., p. 224.

[24]Ibid., pp. 223-224.

[25]Ibid., p. 224.

intelligence, and of enlightened understanding of the reciprocal rights and duties, benefits and opportunities of such a way of life."[26] It is an argument similar to that of A Preface to Morals, where Lippmann held that the machine technology "requires a population which in some measure partakes of the spirit which created it."[27]

The governmental obligations of liberalism will be to bring about the "eugenic and educational" improvement of the people; to guarantee the "technological honesty" of products -- the modern equivalent of guaranteeing the honesty of weights and measures -- and to protect the public from being victimized by the rapid changes of a technologically driven economy.[28] Its political principles are that there is a fundamental distinction between people and the state; that the "gross and formless power of the people" must be refined through political institutions; and that the function of the state is not to administer affairs but to administer justice between people who conduct their own affairs.[29] This definition, Lippmann wrote in a phrase reminiscent of The Method of Freedom, was not an abstraction he invented because it pleased him, but rather "a deduction from historic experience." Characteristically, he had tried to attribute to it something of scientific standing, although in doing so he had confused deductive with

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[26]Ibid., p. 212.

[27]Lippmann, A Preface to Morals, p. 240.

[28]Lippmann, The Good Society, pp. 212, 221, 224.

[29]Ibid., pp. 250, 267.

inductive processes.

Like the collectivist vision he attacks, Lippmann proposes a government that works on the basis of information supplied by experts, whose role remains crucial. Such tasks as managing the currency and regulating public markets are not simple. They require experts using specialized technical procedures. But in Lippmann's scheme, the more power is delegated to the experts, the more it is necessary for the courts and the legislature to perform a watchdog function over the experts.[30] What is needed to settle disputes arising out of the activities of the experts, however, is more like legal than scientific or technical knowledge.

> For in an administered order the officials must have all the wisdom of all the technicians and entrepreneurs and the greater wisdom needed to select and forecast the consequences of adopting a particular plan. A state which leaves these decisions to the citizenry and judges rights and duties according to general rules, improving the rules as equity requires, needs officials whose chief intellectual equipment is a sense of the value of evidence.[31]

Thus in Lippmann's liberal government, technical expertise is to be held accountable to the law, not for its facts but for the proper performance of its fact-finding mission. This new relationship in the structure of Lippmann's ideal of government mirrors a new relationship in his overall political thought: Law has become the central concept. The ideal of equal, certain law as opposed to arbitrary authority is a

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[30]Ibid., pp. 301-302.

[31]Ibid., p. 297.

necessary outgrowth of the industrial revolution and is the "political corollary of the division of labor." People who live by exchanging specialized products and services in ever widening markets need a society in which the ideal of law holds sway. Only in such a society is there a counterbalance against coercive overhead planning, arbitrary exercise of authority by government, and arbitrary behavior by distant trading partners. It is no accident, he wrote, that the division of labor, common laws, the ideal of justice, the restraint of privilege, the idea of international law and peace should all have grown up together in the West. They are all different facets of the "same momentous change in which men have been passing out of their primitive self-sufficiency into the intricate interdependence of the Great Society."[32]

At the heart of that momentous change, Lippmann had come to believe, was a natural, self-evident, higher law to which material force and authority could be held accountable. Not merely as ideal, the higher law actually existed in "the nature of things," as principles to which arbitrary human authority could be held accountable.[33] The highest of those principles is the inviolability of the individual, "the recognition that all men are persons, and are not to be treated as things."[34] That principle is Lippmann's answer to the moral

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[32]Ibid., p. 325.

[33]Ibid., p. 334.

[34]Ibid., p. 376.

relativity of a scientific and technical age. Comparing modern humans to travelers lost in a forest at night, he wrote:

> To explore minutely, however conscientiously and scientifically, the thicket in which some of the travelers are lost will not show them the high-road once more. They must find again the polestar which men have followed in their ascent from barbarism towards the Good Society. Where shall they find it but in a profound and universal intuition of the human destiny which, to all who have it, is invincible because it is self evident?[35]

The Public Philosophy

The Good Society is the book of a man whose mind was changing even as he wrote. Science and expertise have been subordinated to the law, but science still provides much of the imagery and emotional authority for the argument. Socialism was attacked, for example, not only because it was impractical but because it was unscientific. Throughout, Lippmann's effort is to find a political theory that would conform to the requirements of a scientific and technological society. The hero of The Good Society is Galileo. In The Public Philosophy all that was changed.

The theme of the book is that the West is in decline because political power has passed from the executive to the public. Unable to wield it effectively, the public has in turn ceded power to the pressure groups, the political bosses and the media magnates. The result is an enfeeblement of the

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[35]Ibid., pp. 371-372.

power to govern.[36]

In matters of war and peace, the public is usually wrong because it usually vetoes change precisely at the time change is needed. It does this because public opinion, which is inadequately informed, is slow to catch up to reality. At the same time, political leaders in modern democracies are unable to lead because they are in electoral servitude to public opinion.[37]

In short, the powers of government in modern democracies are deranged, and the only thing that can save them is a return to the principle that elected executives owe their allegiance not to the voters but to the office.[38] Democracies must either restore the ability of the government to govern or they will fail and be replaced by some form of totalitarianism.[39]

Modern democracy is in such dire straits because it followed the worse of two roads. In healthy liberalism, change is evolutionary and comes about by assimilation of dissenting elements into the power structure. In unhealthy liberalism, which Lippmann called Jacobinism, change takes place by the overthrow of the inflexible and caste-bound governing class. "Of the two rival philosophies, the Jacobin

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[36]Lippmann, Essays in the Public Philosophy (New York: Mentor Books, 1955), pp. 13-20.

[37]Ibid., pp. 21-29.

[38]Ibid., pp. 45-46.

[39]Ibid., pp. 52-53.

is almost everywhere in the ascendant," Lippmann believed.[40] Seeing revolution itself as the definitive creative act, Jacobinism offers no plan for governing society after the revolution. Undermined by Jacobinism, the educational systems in modern democracies no longer transmit the traditional moral values of a civilized society.[41]

To Jacobinism, Lippmann opposed the idea of natural law, which he identified as the public philosophy of the 17th and 18th centuries. In essence, it was the doctrine that there is a transcendant natural law over all of society, including sovereign and people.[42] The doctrine fell out of fashion, and the most important question facing the West is whether it can be revived.[43] The answer is important because the loss of a common belief in natural law leaves men anxiety-ridden, alienated and vulnerable to the authoritarian security of totalitarian governments.

> With Gide they are finding that the burden of freedom is too great an anxiety. The older structures of society are dissolving and they must make their way through a time of troubles. They have been taught to expect a steady progress toward a higher standard of life, and they have not been prepared to withstand the frustrations of a prolonged crisis in the outer world and the loneliness of their self-centered isolation.

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[40] Ibid., pp. 54-58.

[41] Ibid., pp. 58-65.

[42] Ibid., pp. 76-78.

[43] Ibid., pp. 78-81.

> They are the men who rise up against freedom, unable to cope with its insoluble difficulties and unable to endure the denial of communion in public and common truths. They have found no answer to their need and no remedy for their anguish.[44]

Lippmann's answer is that the public philosophy can indeed be revived, but only if there is a return to respect for its basic principles: that there are laws above all; that these laws can be developed and refined by rational discussion; and that "the highest laws are those upon which all rational men of good will, when fully informed, will tend to agree."[45]

In American Inquisitors, the Fundamentalist distrusted the nature of man -- that is to say, distrusted the ability of most people to find their way in a world of relative moral value. In The Public Philosophy, Lippmann came to agree with his Fundamentalist. The life of the spirit, in which desire is disciplined to what is possible, is finally conceded to be only for the elite. For the rest, detailed rules of conduct based on the principles of natural law are required.[46] Moreover, the elitist role model of the book is not the scientist Galileo but the philosopher Socrates, who denies his natural, human instinct of self-preservation to affirm a higher value.

> The point of the story is that Socrates would not save himself because an Athenian citizen could not cheat the law, least of all for his own personal advantage. If Athens was to be governed, it must

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[44] Ibid., p. 86.

[45] Ibid., p. 123.

[46] Ibid., pp. 110-115.

> be by citizens who by their second natures preferred the laws to the satisfaction of their own impulses, even to their own will to live. Unless the citizens would govern themselves with such authority, the Athenian city would be ungovernable. If they followed their first natures, Athens would be trampled down in the stampede.[47]

In its treatment of science, The Public Philosophy abandoned or reversed practices that Lippmann had followed for years -- in some cases throughout his career. It is his first book, for example, in which the general attitude toward science is not positive. Science is mentioned as one of the aspects of the West to which "less advanced" people looked up, but it is mentioned in the context of the West's decline since 1917.[48] Whatever science did for Western society, it was not able to prevent or repair the derangement of the powers of government that threatened the survival of democracies. In fact, far from being able to prevent the decline, science contributed to it. The positivism of the democratic public -- "the growing incapacity of a large majority of the democratic peoples to believe in intangible realities" -- stripped government of its imponderable authority and helped weaken the power of the executive.[49] And since the natural law itself is not a scientific but a legal, moral and philosophical law, that same positivism continues to stand in the way of its renewal.

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[47] Ibid., p. 107.

[48] Ibid., p. 13.

[49] Ibid., p. 49.

> We cannot start again as if there had been no advance of science, no spread of rationalism and secularism, no industrial revolution, no dissolution of the old habitual order of things, no sudden increase in population. . . . Since the public philosophy preceded the advance of modern science and the industrial revolution, how can it be expected to provide a positive doctrine which is directly and practically relevant to the age we live in?[50]

In earlier books, Lippmann might have replied that if the doctrine were not suited to the age, the age could do without the doctrine. In The Public Philosophy, for the first time, the burden of proof is on science and modernism, not on the traditional wisdom.

Along with a generally positive attitude toward science, more specific aspects of Lippmann's relationship with science also were abandoned.

There is only the slightest use of scientific imagery and vocabulary. The decline of governmental power in the West toward factionalism and loss of liberty is "a tendency to be drawn downward as by the force of gravity."[51] But the allusion is literary rather than an attempt to invoke the emotional authority of science in behalf of the statement. Lippmann comes closest to doing that sort of thing when he compares the proper relationship between the governor and the governed to the relationship between the sexes. The executive's power to act and the representative's power to consent or refuse are "rooted in the nature of things," Lippmann

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[50]Ibid., p. 80.

[51]Ibid., p. 42.

wrote, like the duality of function of the two sexes. If the function of one is "devitalized or is confused with the function of the other sex, the result is sterility and disorder." But even in this mild example, Lippmann warned the reader that he was risking "reasoning by analogy."[52]

Likewise there are no citations of research to buttress his arguments and no suggestion that his ideas might be fruitful for scientific research. Indeed, Lippmann offers his main contention -- the possibility of renewing natural law as an overarching social ideal -- not out of "theoretical education, but rather from the practical experience of seeing how hard it is for our generation to make democracy work."[53] Lippmann was no longer striving to associate his ideas with science.

Also relinquished was the idea that science will transform the general public so that its members will attain the disinterestedness that will enable them to live morally in a relativistic world. Those who live by the spirit alone "have always been a mere handful," Lippmann wrote, but this time he did not speculate that the situation might change.[54]

For all of that, Lippmann's position hardly could be characterized as anti-science. He still recognized science as worthy of protection from tampering or influence by the voters

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[52]Ibid., p. 31.

[53]Ibid., p. 79.

[54]Ibid., p. 115.

or the government.[55] But he had come to believe that the objective world included more than the facts and relationships science could reach. Those facts and relationships that were accessible to science had no moral component, so human beings for whom science was the only sure way of knowing reality would be adrift in a morally relativistic world. The objective world, however, also includes the self-evident and therefore commonly accessible concept of the natural law.

> It was not someone's fancy, someone's prejudice, someone's wish or rationalization, a psychological experience and no more. It is there objectively, not subjectively. It can be discovered. It has to be obeyed.[56]

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[55]Ibid., pp. 46, 76.

[56]Ibid., p. 133.

Chapter VI

Conclusion

Science was an enormously influential element in Walter Lippmann's social thought over four decades. Throughout most of his career as a writer of books, science was a touchstone, an absolute in reference against which he justified his other ideas. It furnished him with vocabulary and imagery for the analysis of society, and with intellectual and personal ideals toward which he strove and urged others to strive. In addition, it was a key element in terms of which he analyzed the society in which he lived. He found in it both the solvent of the old formalism and the hope for a new order. Yet late in his career he turned from these patterns of thought. After a lifetime of attempting to construct a social philosophy that would itself be "scientific" and in which science would resolve the difficulties science had helped to create, Lippmann turned aside from science and toward tradition and law. An overview of the meaning and role of science in Lippmann's thought may suggest why.

Science's importance as a strong, emotional absolute is evident in all of Lippmann's books except the last. In A Preface to Politics, it was the standard against which he found Bryan wanting and Wilson adequate. In Drift and Mastery, it was Roosevelt who measured up to the scientific standard while Wilson's party did not. In Public Opinion, A Preface to Morals and The Good Society, socialism was attacked as anti-scientific, as was 19th century laissez faire

capitalism in A Preface to Morals. In The Good Society, the classical economics of Adam Smith was justified, at least in part, because it was better science than Marxism. Only in The Public Philosophy did science lose its absolute value for Lippmann as a touchstone against which ideas were to be measured.

The emotional appeal of science for Lippmann is also evidenced in his efforts to associate himself with it. In the early books, this effort takes the form of his borrowing of scientific imagery and vocabulary to explain and justify his own social ideals: For example, his use in A Preface to Politics of Freudian ideas of taboo and repression to justify a concept of the state as provider of services rather than as policeman.

But in Public Opinion the pattern changed, and Lippmann cited specific scientific research to buttress portions of his analysis of the process of communication. In this instance, he was not borrowing general concepts to apply to social problems, as before; instead, he was using specific research findings to help support a theoretical structure that he himself had developed. The research citations lend little to the credibility of the work, which continues to be discussed not because of its scientific underpinnings but because of its usefulness as insight. Nevertheless, Public Opinion was Lippmann's most concentrated effort to associate his work with science by building on a foundation of scientific research.

After Public Opinion, the pattern changed again. Lippmann began in The Phantom Public to suggest that his ideas -- the tests for public involvement in public issues, disinterestedness, liberalism -- might be fertile ground for scientific research. It was his hope for a time that political science, psychology and economics could show the same sort of progress that the physical sciences had demonstrated, and he wanted his own ideas on the role of the public, on morality and on economics to be taken up as insights and placed on a scientific footing through research. But in The Public Philosophy he gave up that hope as well.

Science offered Lippmann professional values with which he tried to associate himself; he also urged those values on others, including businessmen in A Preface to Politics and journalists in Liberty and the News. The question for Lippmann was not whether the professional values of scientists were appropriate ideals for others, but the extent to which others were able to adopt those ideals. That question was a crucial one in Lippmann's analysis of society.

Throughout most of his career, Lippmann saw science in a dual role. It was both the solvent of the old order and the hope for a new order; it offered both freedom from the old restraints and discipline that would prevent that freedom from decaying into chaos. But can a solvent also be the basis for a new social order? In Lippmann's books that question resolved itself into two component questions: 1) Can the mental habits of science be diffused throughout a democratic society so as

to inform the political decisions of the people? and 2) can science offer moral guidance?

The ability of the public to acquire the mental habits of science was a constant and troubling question for Lippmann. Even in his early books, in which science was defined as not much more than trial and error or cultivated reflection, he was concerned that its dry, technical surface would obscure from the general public the "luminous passions" beneath. Beginning with Public Opinion, however, Lippmann wrote with more awareness that science was a highly specialized, technical endeavor. He began to make references to his own lack of specialized scientific training at about the same time that his political thought began to posit a wide gulf between science and the public. He attempted to maintain in A Preface to Morals that the scientific spirit of the times would build a bridge across that gulf. But by the time of The Good Society, he had decided that it was more necessary to spread an understanding of mutual rights and obligations throughout the body politic. In The Public Philosophy, Lippmann specifically abandoned hope that the public at large would become "disinterested," his term for both the scientific habit of mind and the height of religious insight. Instead, he wrote, the mass of people will continue to need the detailed regulation that only a society of law and tradition can provide.

The second crucial question for Lippmann was whether modern society could find a basis for morality in science. It was a question that occupied him relatively late. In The

Phantom Public, he argued that moral values were not useful -- that the questions confronting society needed facts to resolve them, not values. In American Inquisitors, the difficulties of moral relativism are stated forcefully -- but by the "devil's advocate," the Fundamentalist. In A Preface to Morals, as in Drift and Mastery, science is characterized as having undermined the old moral order, but the sense of loss is far greater in the later book than in the earlier. And in the scientific and religious ideal of disinterestedness, Lippmann also creates a moral ideal, and even suggests that advances in psychology may eventually create a morality based on tested truths. But in The Good Society, the faith in progress of the social sciences fades, and in The Public Philosophy, Lippmann turned to the moral absolutes of the natural law, which are accessible not through science but because they are self-evident to reasonable people.

Lippmann's lifelong effort to construct a social philosophy with science at the center failed, then because of his inability to resolve two related problems.

One was the problem of the gulf between science and the lay public. At one extreme in his effort to find a way out of the dilemma, he restricted the role of the public in a democracy to little more than that of a referee. At the other extreme, he argued that the spirit of the age would force the public to adopt the scientific frame of mind. Part of his difficulty in resolving this problem may have been in the ambiguity of his own position. Despite his efforts to

associate his work with science, he was not a scientist and knew he was not. At the same time, he was unwilling to restrict himself to the limited role of an outsider unable to deal with the merits of the issues, about which he wrote virtually daily as editorialist and columnist.

The second problem was that of moral relativity in a scientific age. Could moral behavior find a basis in science? Again Lippmann moved between extremes. At one, he argued that moral education was useless, and that given the facts, people would make the right choices. As something of the Fundamentalist's realism about human nature took hold, Lippmann tried to argue that science itself created the conditions in which the mass of people would attain to the moral stance of disinterestedness.

In the end, he skirted both problems by asserting that all reasonable people could reach the objective and moral truth that was self-evident "in the nature of things." He never turned against science in the sense of opposing it. Its values of disinterestedness in observation of an objective reality and of humility in stating conclusions were just as important to The Public Philosophy as they were to A Preface to Politics. That is perhaps why he could recommend science as the model for journalists in his 70th year as in his 30th. But over the years he had given up the belief that only science was the custodian of those values, and that science alone could solve the dilemmas of modern times.

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