6 The ideology of anti-populism and the administrative state

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Introduction

The people, the state, and expertise form an unstable triad, and relating the three in a coherent way, either institutionally or theoretically, is ultimately not possible. Finding a way of dealing with these relations nevertheless is a problem that needs to be solved and re-solved. The theorization of the problem goes back to Plato's *Republic* and the 'solution' of making philosophers kings. The example of the *Republic* is revealing, but one might also take the long European tradition of the three orders, those who pray, those who work, and those who fight (Duby, [1978] 1980). Unstable triads are mythogenic: making sense of their relations requires fictions, or myths, which legitimate arrangements, and these may temporarily stabilize what is inherently unstable, as Plato used the myth of the metals, and as Aquinas used a hierarchical natural law. As one would expect, the particular need for constructing myths of this kind will vary according to the circumstances, including the inherited institutional structures. What needs to be justified will differ.

Harvey Mansfield defined populism, by which he meant populism as a political idea, as the belief in the virtue of the people. 'A populist let us say is a democrat who is satisfied with his own and with the people's virtue' (Mansfield, 1996, p. 7). Populism is thus based on a myth as well. But it is a myth whose role is primarily negative: it does not constitute an order, but rejects one in the name of the people. Actual rule requires more. But to deny the myth of the superior wisdom of the people is to threaten the democratic idea itself. And this poses a special problem for ostensibly 'democratic' regimes. The need for rulers requires its own 'democratic' myths, such as the theory of representation. But the myth of the people constrains these myths.

Mansfield follows his line on the populist with another: 'This distinguishes him from a reformer who is satisfied with his own virtue but not with other people's. Giving over government to the people is not the same as lecturing them' (Mansfield, 1996, p. 7). Progressivism took this tack. The progressives of the early twentieth century wanted the support and enthusiasm of 'the people', and envied populism for this. But they wanted to lead the people themselves. And they asserted themselves not in the name of people's interests and wishes, but in the

name of expertise. Progressivism was to be the alliance of experts and an aroused 'people' (Turner, 1996). And this followed an emerging practice of social movements based on expertise, notably the prohibition movement, which employed the techniques presently associated with climate science under the heading alcohol science (Okrent, 2010; Turner, 2001, 2014), through this and other movements, became the third leg in the modern triad. And anti-populism came to take the form of a set of assertions about expertise and governance. My concern in this chapter will be the genealogy and significance of these assertions, and their function as governing myths.

The anti-populist, who is, unlike the populist, not satisfied with the people's virtue, faces a fundamental problem: to deny populism is to deny democracy, or a founding element of the democratic idea, that the people should be, and are the best, governors of themselves. Thus anti-populism, if it pretends to be democratic, cannot overtly deny the myth of the people. But the need for rulers and for the justification of their rule creates an opportunity to redefine the democratic idea, to create an appropriate counter-myth that enables the people to have a place, but not to rule. Anti-populism consists of myths and fictions of this kind, which can be identified in history.

Calling them myths is not to discount them. As W.I. Thomas and Dorothy Swaine Thomas said, '[if] men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences' (Thomas & Thomas, 1928, pp. 571–572). But it is to call attention to their role in discourse. My concern in what follows will be with the role they play, though it will be evident that many of the concepts at play in these discussions diverge from the thinking and experience of the people involved, and that these divergences are the source of the instability of the solutions to the triadic relation between people, state, and expertise. I will try to cut through some of these myths, by explaining the issues that gave rise to them.

The problematic idea of 'the people'

The place to begin, with populism, is with the pure democratic idea itself. Classically, it means rule by the people, the *demos*. But we are accustomed to adding disclaimers and qualifications, or specifications, to this idea: that expressions of the will of the people must take the form of laws and procedures, such as election laws and laws governing representation; or from a liberal perspective, that genuine democratic will-formation requires free individuals with freedom of speech and various individual rights; or from the Left, that substantive equality rather than mere formal equality is required for meaningful democratic participation. These additions function as temporary stabilizers to the relations between the three elements. But they each have their own difficulties, and are mythic on their own.

The critics of the concept of 'the people' are correct in one respect: the construction of the concept in different contexts has varied enormously, and there is no continuity between the various manifestations of the concept, which arise situationally and create unities in response to particular concrete issues. Where there

is commonality between populisms is in the targets of their antagonism. Populism is intrinsically a denial of the special superiority of rulers and elites.

This conflict has taken multiple forms in the history of government, and in the history of political thought. Indeed, one can think of government as a scheme of reconciling the two: of adjusting the relation between the wishes of the ruled and the superior power of the ruler necessary to achieve political goods.

'Democratic' solutions require some sort of democratic backstop. Democratic accountability through the direct election of officials is one such means; discretionary power of administrators coupled with a general sense of the beneficial character and hence legitimacy of their actions is another. These correspond to the shoe-wearer and the shoe-maker, respectively. And the latter solution has long been intertwined with the problem of expertise, for the simple reason that the main claim for the need for discretionary power is that desirable governmental actions require expertise that the public lacks. But this is not an unproblematic solution to the problem of triadic balance: indeed, it depends on its own fragile myths.

We tend to think of the problem of democracy in terms of modern democratic theory, which pertains primarily to liberal democracy, and its conception of the people. But there is a long separate history of rule by the people, *il populo*, and people's parties in Europe, which is the subject of extensive discussion by Weber under the heading of 'non-legitimate domination' (Weber, [1921] 1966) reaching back to the Greek notion of democracy itself. These parties and these constitutional forms were separated by several centuries from the political alignments of Europe in the nineteenth century at the time of the rise of the People's Party in the United States, the source of the term populism itself.

The American People's Party – what I will call Populism with an upper-case P in what follows – differed from these earlier parties in an important respect. Expertise was not a major component of the earlier historical conflict between the people – who in the case of *il populo* were a fixed social class – and the governing elite, also a fixed social class. Expertise was even then part of the claim of the elite to rule. The conflict is as old as Aristotle, who compared the expertise of the shoemaker to the needs of the customers whose foot was pinched. But expertise as an independent source of authority, expertise other than expertise about ruling itself, was a new element. The Populists challenged not only the elites, but an economic dogma supported by expert opinion.

Expertise adds complexity to the relation between rulers and ruled, but also stabilizes this two-element relation by adding a third leg. To claim expertise is to add a legitimacy claim. To claim to be acting in accordance with expertise is even better: it displaces the authoritarian character of the relationship onto a neutral third source. To have the third source accepted as neutral and authoritative is better yet: it means that consensus between the three elements of the triad has been achieved, and that there is no room for conflict. The exercise of discretionary power no longer needs democratic accountability. The people accept the experts, and the administrators merely use their discretion in accordance with their expertise. Both those who exercise power and those it is exercised upon accept the

legitimacy of the expert. And the expert never exercises power: the neutrality of the expert raises expertise above politics.

Populism, by asserting the superior wisdom of the people, rejects the identification of power and expertise. But in doing so it calls into question the notion of democracy itself. If governments are legitimated by experts, what, exactly, is the point of democratic accountability? What role do 'the people' have other than to obey, or perhaps to occasionally ratify the system of governance as a whole? This no longer seems to be democracy. It is, rather, paternalism.[1] But explicit arguments for paternalism, or elite rule, cannot be squared with the rhetoric of democracy: 'the people' still need to have an active role for a regime to be democratic. As a consequence, anti-populism takes an odd form: as an alternative account of democracy itself that developed in the course of the campaign against populism. My main concern will thus be with explaining anti-populism as an ideology, an ideology that gets concealed, in a Foucauldian way, in subsequent practice. As I will show, anti-populism is a product of a particular ideological need: to reconcile practices derived from absolutism with the claim to be a 'democracy'. As it happens, this is a need that is continually renewed, as new extensions of governmental practice rooted in the traditions of royal bureaucracies need to be justified, and new forms of 'populist' resistance to these practices need to be rejected. Claims about expertise play a large role in this reconciliation.

Populism is democratic in a specific sense: it is a reassertion of popular control as a remedy for the perceived failure or injustice of normal political and administrative practice, especially failures of representation and abuses by bureaucrats. In response to failures of representation, populists endorse referenda, plebiscites, constitutional amendments, or direct elections over mediated ones, depending on the system they are trying to circumvent. Populist movements happen when political parties, traditional leaders, elites, and politics as usual fail to deliver the expected goods, or fail to accord with the popular sense of reality, or are perceived as untrustworthy and corrupt.

What is typical in such cases is conflict with elites, and elite failure, as well as a rejection of the workings of the political system itself, particularly the parties. Populisms thus normally operate in conflict, with, or as an alternative to, parties, and commonly rely on charismatic leaders, or else create an alternative party, or attempt to take over an existing party. Populist tendencies are prone to co-optation, and typically do not outlast the situations that produced them, though they do represent a reserve of general sentiment against elites and particular ruling groups that can be activated in new situations. They differ from ideologies and ideological parties in that they are situational rather than analytic, in the sense that they have concrete targets and grievances rather than a developed analysis of political life that is extended to new situations and refined and elaborated. This accounts for many of the distinctive features of populist movements, especially the preference for leaders who promise to act decisively, in contrast to normal 'politicians', and their hostility to 'politics as usual'.[2]

Populisms are situation-driven rather than analysis-driven, or to put it differently, driven by specific crises or grievances, rather than by a permanent

ideological viewpoint, though these movements of course have an analytic component. The situational character of populism also bears on another important contrast. It is necessary to distinguish two aspects of governance, sometimes known as input and output legitimacy, but normally treated as the distinction between representation or legislation and administration, or between democracy as government by the people or government for the people. Traditional parties and normal politics are concerned with representation and legislation. Populism typically arises in situations in which there are larger failures, failures which extend beyond normal political processes, and therefore beyond mere legislation within existing political practices. They typically seek reform of these practices, such as the role of lobbyists.

The antinomy of populism is elite rule. Elites rule through particular strategies, and fail through typical issues. Elite solidarity is essential to elite rule; division among the elite is a typical cause of elite failure (Shipman, Edmunds & Turner, 2018). Elites rule through alliances between the elite and a significant non-elite group. The most stable of these alliances have been with the middle classes, normally under an ideology of meritocracy, property rights, and support of business, an alliance which is played off against the demands of the excluded group, the poor. But an upstairs-downstairs alliance is always possible, and the upper hand the elite has in dealing with the non-elite segments of society depends on its ability to choose alternative groups to ally with. Thus pluralism favours the elite, because it provides more opportunities to change alliances. Populism, in contrast, must produce enough unity in the population to effectively counter the elite, and must therefore transcend differences between segments of society in the name of the people. Both Left and Right populisms are anti-pluralist, as a simple consequence of the dynamics of elite alliance-making: neither kind of populism could succeed if the elite used its alliance-making power to divide the movement. To the extent that elite rule depends on manipulating and shifting alliances with non-elite groups, as is the norm (Shipman, Edmunds & Turner, 2018), an attack on pluralism is a threat to elite rule as a political system itself.

The distinction between situation and analysis driven has other consequences. Žižek captures this distinction in thinking by contrasting Marxism to populism:

> [For] a populist, the cause of the troubles is ultimately never the system as such but the intruder who corrupted it (financial manipulators, not necessarily capitalists, and so on); not a fatal flaw inscribed into the structure as such but an element that doesn't play its role within the structure properly. For a Marxist, on the contrary (as for a Freudian), the pathological (deviating misbehavior of some elements) is the symptom of the normal, an indicator of what is wrong in the very structure that is threatened with 'pathological' outbursts.
>
> (Žižek, 2006, pp. 556–557; see also Laclau, 2005)

The Marxist, in short, needs an analysis, or a theory, about the system; the Populist needs only villains, such as 'the 1%'. Žižek goes on to, in effect, reject the

populists' target, the elite, characterizing the 'pseudo concreteness of the figure that is selected as the enemy, the singular agent behind all threats to the people' (Žižek, 2006, p. 556). His is, therefore, a kind of Left-wing anti-populism. What makes Right-wing populism 'dangerous' is that the villains it identifies include not only the elite, but groups that are excluded from the populist's conception of the people, and therefore populism undermines 'pluralism'. The excluded groups are necessarily small, however, because the populist's strategy must be to break the alliances of the elite with subgroups and absorb them into 'the people'.

Populism is a response to the failure of ordinary political processes, and is therefore hostile to business as usual. Parties intervene between the 'people' and the state, in the course of electoral processes, so they are often understood as part of the obstacle to electoral control by 'the people' in the situation of the time. In the American case the solution was to form a new party. This failed, yet the issues raised by the populists were taken up by the extant parties.[3] Weber himself admired Gladstone for being able to go over the heads of the party leaders and speak directly to the people, and took this as a model for democratic control of the bureaucracy, which he saw as the preeminent danger to human freedom. This positive view of demagoguery points to something important: that the expression of non-elite opinion may be channelled in a variety of ways, dependent on the local political circumstances. Demonstrations, or manifestations, are a standard tactic in Europe, but less effective in the US. Charismatic leaders may represent popular opinion, either on the Left or the Right. These forms of expression are independent of the views being expressed. What is common to them is that they are responses to the imperviousness of the existing political order.

The common theme of populisms is accountability to the people, electoral accountability where possible, but through other means if necessary. Anti-populism is an attempt to restrict accountability. And here the claim of expertise becomes relevant. Experts are by definition not directly accountable to the public, but to their expertise, or their expert community, or collectively, as members of an expert class, or as part of an expert institution. Bureaucracies, notoriously, displace responsibility to rules that the bureaucracy interprets for itself, and conceal decision-making by distributing its contributory elements to multiple officials none of whom have complete responsibility, and by protecting officials from personal liability for actions. So there is a sense in which expertise and bureaucracy have an elective affinity, which is actualized as a means of avoiding accountability to 'the people'. One is an organizational, the other an epistemic means to the same end. Not surprisingly, they play a large role in the ideology of anti-populism.

Real populism

American Populism of the late nineteenth century is the source of the term and the model for the category. Some thinkers, eager to associate populism with fascism, either deny it was a genuine case of populism, or alternatively insinuate that it was a nascent form of fascism. My own reason for choosing the American late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are simple. It illustrates issues that are

submerged, for historical reasons, in cases of recent Right-wing European populism, which are nevertheless illuminated by the American case. My concern will be with the co-eval phenomenon of the American administrative state, and its justifying theory, which was explicitly anti-populist, and which becomes solidified in a vast subsequent theoretical literature in public administration. The parallel European literatures on this general topic, for historical reasons that will become apparent, lack the degree of explicit theorizing on the relation of democracy to administration that figures in the American discussion.

The major difference was this: the Continental administrative state did not need to be justified or explained in relation to democracy; it already existed prior to the many gradual steps toward 'democracy'. The American form had to be created, and was created through borrowing from, and reflecting on, Continental models. This meant that there was an explicit analysis of the administrative state and its relation to democracy, one which happens to have produced a specific intellectual tradition and body of practice, in which the issue of democracy is central. Much of the discussion focused on legal and constitutional issues, a topic I will not pursue here, but they may be briefly summarized. The People's Party in the United States invoked the original democratic impulses of the ordinary people as expressed in the American founding, and especially in the thinking of the anti-federalists, such as Sam Adams, that office holders should be voted on every year, thus maximizing electoral accountability. In comparative perspective, the fundamental constitutional feature of American government was rule by elected officials at all levels of administration, a practice that never emerged in Europe. It was this feature, and the complaints about such things as machine politics, that produced the negative view of American democracy that dominated European perspectives in the late nineteenth century, and is also central to the narrative of anti-populism.

The Populist movement arose in response to the world wheat price crisis of the 1880s, which coincided with the rapid expansion of cities, the world economy, and consequently the demand for capital, creating a crisis for credit that affected much of the capitalist world. Here the claim that the people had superior wisdom, an element not directly addressed in the UN definition, was important. There was an expert consensus on this, at least in the United States among economists and the elite, for strong currencies and the gold standard and against the radical expansion of money supplies. The platform of the People's Party of 1892 is the standard source for their views, though the movement, and the idea of reversing the turn to the gold standard, preceded it. This was the source of their key anti-elitist social analysis:

> Silver, which has been accepted as coin since the dawn of history, has been demonetized to add to the purchasing power of gold by decreasing the value of all forms of property as well as human labor, and the supply of currency is purposely abridged to fatten usurers, bankrupt enterprise, and enslave industry. A vast conspiracy against mankind has been organized on two continents, and it is rapidly taking possession of the world. If not met and overthrown at

once it forebodes terrible social convulsions, the destruction of civilization, or the establishment of an absolute despotism.

(National People's Party Platform, [1892] 1966, p. 91)

The platform, and the movement itself, went far beyond this, and in ways that are typical of populisms generally. The core of their position was an account of the situation:

> The conditions which surround us best justify our co-operation; we meet in the midst of a nation brought to the verge of moral, political, and material ruin. Corruption dominates the ballot-box, the Legislatures, the Congress, and touches even the ermine of the bench. The people are demoralized; most of the States have been compelled to isolate the voters at the polling places to prevent universal intimidation and bribery. The newspapers are largely subsidized or muzzled, public opinion silenced, business prostrated, homes covered with mortgages, labor impoverished, and the land concentrating in the hands of capitalists. The urban workmen are denied the right to organize for self-protection, imported pauperized labor beats down their wages, a hireling standing army, unrecognized by our laws, is established to shoot them down, and they are rapidly degenerating into European conditions. The fruits of the toil of millions are boldly stolen to build up colossal fortunes for a few, unprecedented in the history of mankind; and the possessors of those, in turn, despise the republic and endanger liberty. From the same prolific womb of governmental injustice we breed the two great classes – tramps and millionaires.
>
> (National People's Party Platform, [1892] 1966, p. 90)

The aim of the movement was 'to restore' popular rule, and in this respect it was a form of identity politics *avant la lettre*, but the identity was discussed not in the language of class, but in terms of 'the plain people', who were identified with the founders.

> [We] seek to restore the government of the Republic to the hands of 'the plain people,' with which class it originated. We assert our purposes to be identical with the purposes of the National Constitution; to form a more perfect union and establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty for ourselves and our posterity.
>
> (National People's Party Platform, [1892] 1966, p. 92)

The populist movement allied itself with the Knights of Labor, the largest union of the time, and the Knights, whose 'identity' was so broad as only to exclude bankers, were ultimately supplanted by trade unions. There were, however, exclusions that followed from their account of the situation. The Knights and the trade

unions generally were also opposed to unrestricted immigration, and for the same reasons. The party platform reflected this:

> That we condemn the fallacy of protecting American labor under the present system, which opens our ports to the pauper and criminal classes of the world and crowds out our wage-earners; and we denounce the present ineffective laws against contract labor, and demand the further restriction of undesirable emigration.
>
> (National People's Party Platform, [1892] 1966, p. 95)

Their attitude to the state was, however, paradoxical. On the one hand they wanted an increase in government power:

> We believe that the power of government – or in other words, of the people – should be expanded (as in the case of the postal service) as rapidly and as far as the good sense of an intelligent people and the teachings of experience shall justify, to the end that oppression, injustice, and poverty shall eventually cease in the land.
>
> (National People's Party Platform, [1892] 1966, p. 92)

But they did not want the creation of an unaccountable administration or massive bureaucracy.

Thus in a platform item calling for government control of the railroads, they qualified this demand by asking for an amendment to the Constitution by which

> all persons engaged in the government service shall be placed under a civil-service regulation of the most rigid character, so as to prevent the increase of the power of the national administration by the use of such additional government employes [sic].
>
> (National People's Party Platform, [1892] 1966, p. 93)

This may seem to be a contradictory demand: more government action without more power for the national administration and more bureaucrats, and less money in the hands of the state. But their suspicions of state power were foremost. They held that 'the money of the country should be kept as much as possible in the hands of the people', and thus demanded 'that all State and national revenues shall be limited to the necessary expenses of the government, economically and honestly administered' (National People's Party Platform, [1892] 1966, p. 94).

These demands were made in the larger context of a demand for greater electoral control, for example for the popular election of senators, and the imposition of one-term limits for the President and Vice-President, and for the secret ballot. The theme is clear: democracy requires the maximization of electoral control of the state, and a state that is responsive to the demands of the people as expressed in voting, with as little mediation as possible by professional politicians. But the

situational aspects of the demands were epistemic: they were rejections of the guiding, and often 'expert', opinions of the elite.

The enemies of populism

Woodrow Wilson, writing in the nineteenth and early twentieth century as a professor, the only American president with this background, provides a complete intellectual articulation of anti-populist thinking. The basic elements are these: the people cannot be trusted to perform certain tasks, such as voting for administrators. But they can be led, by opinion leaders, which gives them the illusion of choice, to accept what they are given, and administrators can be given actual discretionary power, and a great deal of it, under the fiction that what they do is not 'politics' but pure administration, and that political choices determine the ends which administrators seek. The justification for this arrangement is that the people are rather stupid, and administrators possess knowledge, expertise, that the amateurs who get elected to the excessive multitude of democratically accountable office do not. Moreover, the electoral process needs to be radically curtailed: it is corrupted by political machines and the like. So the vast number of political offices needs to be reduced, by centralization, thus eliminating the need for local, independent, politically accountable office holders. The administrators who will replace them can be trusted and are accountable to the public because their responsibilities are well-defined, despite the lack of an electoral method, or indeed any method but trust, of holding them accountable. Pluralism means that there is no 'people' left for them to be democratically accountable to, as there once was, so the ideal of democratic accountability in the present leads instead to corruption and incompetence. Hallowed political ideas, such as the separation of powers and the rule of law, need to be discarded. Similarly for the rule of law, it is inefficient to have the courts and lawyers in a position to correct and supervise administrators. They need a wide zone of discretionary power, and this needs to include powers to regulate of the sort normally thought to be part of legislation. This arrangement 'saves' democracy, but saves it from itself: it not only produces better results, but it limits the domain of democracy to the range of things that opinion leaders of a kind resembling the British aristocracy, responsible but also benignly concerned with the general good, can exercise their influence over.

The temporal and logical order of this argument matters. It was not an argument of the form 'we have the relevant expertise, and are prevented from using it by an ignorant public, and therefore need positions of authority which are free from electoral supervision, which we can be trusted to use correctly'. Instead it took the form of 'the public is ignorant, officials need to be protected from them, they can be trusted if they are given a free hand, and then they can develop the expertise to act'. It is more an argument *against* the people than an argument for the alternative. Obviously, this was not, so to speak, an argument that could be made as part of an open political agenda. It needed to be disguised as something else. And the disguise came in the form of a variety of claims about the

inadequacies of the electoral process. Wilson's solution was, invariably, to limit electoral accountability. And this directly clashed with Populism.

The novelty with Populism was that the case for the people no longer rested on the virtues of the Yeoman Farmer. Now it rested on the falsity of the beliefs of the elite, particularly with respect to the Gold Standard. The anti-populists seized on this. This was a matter on which the elite claimed overwhelming expert support. Wilson's own animus against Populism verged on the hysterical, despite his professorial language.

> There could be no better illustration of this than the constant re-argument, *de novo*, of the money question among us, and the easy currency to be obtained, at every juncture of financial crisis, for the most childish errors with regard to the well-known laws of value and exchange. No nation not isolated like ourselves in thought and experience could possibly think itself able to establish a value of its own for gold and silver, by legislation which paid no regard either to the commercial operations or to the laws of coinage and exchange which obtained outside its own borders. That a great political party should be able to win men of undoubted cultivation and practical sense to the support of a platform which embodied palpable and thrice-proven errors in such matters, and that, too, at a great election following close upon protracted, earnest, frank, and universal discussion, and should poll but little less than half the votes of the nation, is startling proof enough that we have learned to think, for the most part, only in terms of our own separate life and independent action, and have come to think ourselves a divided portion of mankind, masters and makers of our own laws of trade.
>
> (Wilson, 1901, p. 294)

This represents an early appearance of an appeal to expertise and a complaint about its lack of effect on the voting masses. Wilson concedes to at least some of his opponents the Jeffersonian virtues of cultivation and practical sense. But 'practical sense' now becomes an insult: this did not protect them from childish errors.[4]

The solution was to be found in reforming basic political institutions, under the pretext of 'efficiency', with the effect of eliminating electoral accountability, the basic aim of Populism. But the pretext was not based on an attack on the governance of big cities. As Woodrow Wilson expressed the complaints motivating him:

> Our later life has disclosed serious flaws, has even seemed ominous of pitiful failure, in some of the things we most prided ourselves upon having managed well: notably, in pure and efficient local government, in the successful organization of great cities, and in well-considered schemes of administration. The boss – a man elected by no votes, preferred by no open process of choice, occupying no office of responsibility – makes himself a veritable tyrant amongst us, and seems to cheat us of self-government; parties appear to hamper the movements of opinion rather than to give them form and means of expression;

> multitudinous voices of agitation, an infinite play of forces at cross-purpose, confuse us; and there seems to be no common counsel or definite union for action, after all.
>
> (Wilson, 1901, p. 291)

These were, so to speak, Populist complaints against the existing system, and paralleled the People's Party platform's strictures against rail lobbyists. But Wilson and the Populists had diametrically opposed solutions. Wilson believed that what was needed was elite rule, based on the model of the English aristocracy. Ever the Anglophile and secret Germanophile, Wilson used a German source to describe it.

> Until 1888, influential country gentlemen, appointed justices of the peace by the crown upon the nomination of the Lord Chancellor, were the governing officers of her counties. Practically every important matter of local administration was in their hands, and yet the people of the counties had absolutely no voice in their selection. Things had stood so for more than four hundred years. Professor Rudolph Gneist, the great German student of English institutions, in expounding English ideas of self-government as he found them exemplified in the actual organization of local administration, declared that the word *government* was quite as emphatic in the compound as the word *self*. The people of the counties were not self-directed in affairs: they were governed by crown officials. The policy of the crown was indeed moderated and guided in all things by the influence of a representative parliament; the justices received no salaries; were men resident in the counties for which they were commissioned, identified with them in life and interest, landlords and neighbors among the men whose public affairs they administered. They had nothing to gain by oppression, much to gain by the real advancement of prosperity and good feeling within their jurisdictions: they were in a very excellent and substantial sense representative men. But they were not elected representatives; their rule was not democratic either in form or in principle. Such was the local self-government of England during some of the most notable and honorable periods of her history.
>
> (Wilson, 1901, p. 295)

This was elite rule *on behalf* of the people, not self-government. And it provided Wilson with the model he developed for saving 'democracy'. The problem was to find a class of people who fit this model of representation, and to give them power. The new class was an invented one: administrators who would be granted vast discretionary power.

The case for the administrative state

The argument he developed was an attempt to discredit elections, and sanitize and justify administrative power and discretion. Expertise played a role in this argument, but not a simple one. Wilson's argumentative strategy was clear: to limit elections, and to limit electoral control of 'administration', which is conceived in

such a way as to replace offices under electoral control and to centralize power so as to eliminate them. The present system, he thought, gives

> so many elective offices that even the most conscientious voters have neither the time nor the opportunity to inform themselves with regard to every candidate on their ballots, and must vote for a great many men of whom they know nothing. They give us, consequently, the local machine and the local boss; and where population crowds, interests compete, work moves strenuously and at haste, life is many-sided and without unity, and voters of every blood and environment and social derivation mix and stare at one another at the same voting places, government miscarries, is confused, irresponsible, unintelligent, wasteful. Methods of electoral choice and administrative organization, which served us admirably well while the nation was homogeneous and rural, serve us oftentimes ill enough now that the nation is heterogeneous and crowded into cities.
>
> (Wilson, 1901, p. 296)

This brings together two ideas: that democracy requires homogeneity, and that heterogeneity requires administrative power. What this power was supposed to be was extensive and discretionary, but apolitical. 'Administrative questions are not political questions. Although politics sets the tasks for administration, it should not be suffered to manipulate its offices' (Wilson, [1887] 1941, p. 494). It requires not electoral accountability, but trust, and organization that inspires trust:

> *Trust is strength* in all relations of life; and, as it is the office of the constitutional reformer to create conditions of trustfulness, so it is the office of the administrative organizer to fit administration with conditions of clear-cut responsibility which shall insure trustworthiness.
>
> (Wilson, [1887] 1941, p. 497; italics in original)

But this has a specific meaning: 'large powers and unhampered discretion seem to me the indispensable conditions of responsibility' (Wilson, [1887] 1941, p. 497). The two are supposed to go hand in hand:

> If to keep his office a man must achieve open and honest success, and if at the same time he feels himself intrusted with large freedom of discretion, the greater his power the less likely is he to abuse it, the more is he nerved and sobered and elevated by it. The less his power, the more safely obscure and unnoticed does he feel his position to be, and the more readily does he relapse into remissness.
>
> (Wilson, [1887] 1941, p. 498)

So to advance efficiency required a different political model, and to be 'democratic' required not just the pretence of political neutrality and subordination to the goals set in the political realm, but a claim about expertise.

This represented a fundamental change in the very idea of representative government, which Wilson candidly admitted, and it was a change that directly

implicated the populist idea of the wisdom of the people, which Wilson demoted to 'the opinion of the street'. Only the right opinions should count, and they should arise in a particular setting, controlled by bureaucrats.

> Representative government has had its long life and excellent development, not in order that common opinion, the opinion of the street, might prevail, but in order that the best opinion, the opinion generated by the best possible methods of general counsel, might rule in affairs; in order that some sober and best opinion might be created, by thoughtful and responsible discussion conducted by men intimately informed concerning the public weal, and officially commissioned to look to its safeguarding and advancement, – by discussion in parliaments, discussion face to face between authoritative critics and responsible ministers of state.
>
> (Wilson, 1901, pp. 290–291)

The error of the past was clear to Wilson, and it was shown in the misinterpretation of the concept of self-governance. 'We printed the *SELF* large and the *government* small in almost every administrative arrangement we made; and that is still our attitude and preference' (Wilson, 1901, p. 296; emphasis in the original).

This simply did not work.

> We have found that even among ourselves such arrangements are not universally convenient or serviceable. They give us untrained officials, and an expert civil service is almost unknown amongst us. The aim of this response was to save democracy from itself, from electoral control, and from the opinion of the street, though the creation of an efficient and expert administrative state.
>
> (Wilson, 1901, p. 296)

What is distinctive about Wilson's writing, and that of such figures as John Burgess, who founded the Columbia University School of Economic and Political Science (Hoxie, 1955) precisely for the task of creating a class of professional bureaucrats, is this: it relied on European models, and the protagonists were Francophiles, Germanophiles, and Anglophiles, but provided a 'democratic' rationale for practices with a constitutional origin in either royal centralization or absolutism. The model was state bureaucracy, or what was openly called by Wilson, in the parlance of this pre-Bolshevik time, 'state socialism'. As Carl Schmitt pointed out, in Europe bureaucratic rule was a constitutional form that stood on its own, and European constitutions were mixed constitutions, with different elements that depended on different forms of legitimacy, of which this was one (Schmitt, [1932] 2004; Schmitt, [1928] 2008). In the American setting, bureaucratic powers of the sort that were normal on the Continent raised constitutional issues, particularly over the doctrine of separation of powers, which forbade administrators from legislating, and conflicted with the practice of judicial review, which empowered the courts to oversee regulation. What Wilson hankered after was the Continental

model. So he had to overcome resistance to the idea that it was incompatible with democracy.

> We have supposed that there could be one way of efficiency for democratic governments, and another for monarchical. We have declined to provide ourselves with a professional civil service, because we deemed it undemocratic; we have made shift to do without a trained diplomatic and consular service, because we thought the training given by other governments to their foreign agents unnecessary in the case of affairs so simple and unsophisticated as the foreign relations of a democracy in politics and trade, transactions so frank, so open, so straightforward, interests so free from all touch of chicane or indirection; we have hesitated to put our presidents or governors or mayors into direct and responsible relations of leadership with our legislatures and councils in the making of laws and ordinances, because such a connection between lawmakers and executive officers seemed inconsistent with the theory of checks and balances whose realization in practice we understood Montesquieu to have proved essential to the maintenance of a free government. Our theory, in short, has paid as little heed to efficiency as our practice. It has been a theory of non-professionalism in public affairs; and in many great matters of public action non-professionalism is non-efficiency.
>
> (Wilson, 1901, p. 291)

For efficiency, the system – democratic self-government – needed to go, or to be limited drastically. An area needed to be carved out that was free of the system of checks and balances between the branches, within the executive, that allowed for discretionary power free from direct electoral or judicial supervision.

> Our success is made doubtful by that besetting error of ours, the error of trying to do too much by vote. Self-government does not consist in having a hand in everything, any more than housekeeping consists necessarily in cooking dinner with one's own hands. The cook must be trusted with a large discretion as to the management of the fires and the ovens.
>
> (Wilson, [1887] 1941, p. 498)

The people would be given some say in the new model, but only on the terms granted by administrators, terms based on expert knowledge of 'the best means'. 'Let administrative study find the best means for giving public criticism this control and for shutting it out from all other interference' (Wilson, [1887] 1941, p. 499). Shutting it out of interference, judicial or political, was the goal.

The myths here are multiple, and they make up a more or less coherent whole. The 'less' in the coherence is itself valuable: the various parts can be substituted for or need not even be mentioned in contexts where they are taken for granted, so this does not look like an ideology. The key idea is the incompetence of the people to govern themselves, and the consequent need for the delegation of authority to administrators, who possess expertise that is beyond the ken of the people. These

administrators needed no supervision: merely by being given responsibility and discretionary power they would become paragons of apoliticality. Without democratic control, and free from the interference of lawyers and courts, government would become efficient. By giving up democratic control, and accepting the pale substitute of trust, 'democracy' would be saved. No one need believe these myths. They simply need to be embodied in practice: political parties need to ignore the discretionary actions of administrators, and thus give their tacit consent. Courts need to invent doctrines that enable them to deny relief to those who are injured by these acts. Politicians need to pass political problems off to 'experts'. Experts need to claim and thus take questions out of politics, with the tacit or explicit consent of politicians.

Populism and democratic theory

Wilson caught Populism in a basic practical contradiction: it wanted more government, but without bureaucrats, and without giving up electoral control. In a sense, this problem is a variant of the classic problem of the conflict between liberalism and democracy, in which a democratic vote can eliminate the freedoms that are a condition of a functioning democracy. The wishes of the people may lead them to what amounts to a practical contradiction. But these issues are intrinsic to democracy itself, in its original and core meaning. So is the problem of minorities: democracy as a majoritarian system of rule inevitably favours majorities over minorities, whether these are minorities of interest, opinion, or ethnicities with different opinions or interests than the majority. Much of the mythology of democracy involves the papering over of these hard facts.

Anti-populism is, like liberalism itself, anti-democratic. But liberal anti-populism relied on liberal means – on the rule of law and on constitutional restrictions on the state itself – to tie the hands of 'the people'. Liberalism is based on fear of the people. Left anti-populism or progressivism is also anti-democratic. It denigrates the people – the notions of false consciousness, misrecognition, and so forth are anti-democratic in the guise of anti-populism. But the guise is important: it allows anti-democratic ideas to be presented as 'saving democracy', or true democracy, when it is in fact a means of expanding the power of the state, and its discretionary power, which can then be used for 'progressive' ends.

Weber famously praised Gladstone for his ability to break out of the constraints of party and speak directly to the people, and promoted a constitutional design that was intended to maximize the possibility of this kind of leadership. He thought of this as the only means to control the bureaucracy, which parties would not do. Just as Weber viewed the fundamental form of democratic rule as plebiscitarian, and wished to amplify plebiscitary possibilities and forms, the American populists endorsed 'the legislative system known as the initiative and referendum' (National People's Party Platform, [1892] 1966, p. 95). The point of anti-populism was to prevent the use of these means, and restrict

accountability even more – to the point that it was anti-democratic in the name of democracy.

Notes

1 This, in fact, is what writers like Philip Kitcher (2001) actually argue for.
2 Left populism makes the same gestures, but in academic circles at least there is a model of democratic transformational change in which structures and societal norms are dissolved in a moment of collective fusion, i.e. without leadership; see Wolin (1993, 1996).
3 But not completely. Some issues were ignored or restructured. And populist sentiment remained a distinctive feature of local politics in many places, a half-century after the movement itself expired; see Key (1949).
4 It is worth noting that in three decades the gold standard was dead, on a worldwide basis.

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7 Roman Catholicism and democracy

Internal conservatism and external liberalism?

Rosario Forlenza and Bryan S. Turner

Introduction

Existing debates about the Catholic Church and democracy tend to focus on the external relationship of Catholicism to societies or political institutions such as governments. Typically, that impact is seen in a negative light. We can however develop a more comprehensive view of the issues if we consider this debate in terms of an external and an internal dimension of the Church. In this chapter therefore we examine the question of Catholicism and democracy in terms of the Church's internal ecclesiastical structure(s) and secondly in terms of its external relationships with political institutions and society more broadly. In terms of both dimensions, we treat Vatican II as a critical turning point in the Church's relationship to modernity in general and to democracy in particular, but the question remains as to what extent its internal hierarchical structures are compatible with modern notions of democratic participation. Vatican II, commencing under Pope John XII in 1962 and concluding with Pope Paul VI in 1965, revised the relations between the Church and the modern world. In particular, the Catholic Church adopted a more positive assessment of secular modernity and the value of democratic institutions. While we give prominence to Vatican II in our analysis of the transformation of Catholicism in the twentieth century, we note that the development of the political attitudes and strategies of the Church have to be located in the second half of the nineteenth century with the growth of Christian Democracy and its influence on political parties in Europe and Latin America.

The Catholic Church, at least historically, is an authoritarian institution in which the laity is largely excluded from any influence over its governance and leadership.[1] We argue that despite a major revision of its beliefs towards the outside world, it remains a hierarchical, priestly organization in which knowledge and power are controlled by the priesthood. Ultimately authority descends downwards from the Pope through his cardinals and bishops to local parishes. In more technical terms, the Church and its priests control the means of grace, that is, the keys that open the doorways to personal salvation. In short, Vatican II democratized the Church's relationship with the outside world, while leaving its conservative and authoritarian internal or domestic culture largely intact. We believe that describing the Church in this manner is not necessarily a normative judgement,

the dramatic redistribution of wealth and an open 'politics for the rich' have also revealed the long-time well-covered alliance of the global oligarchy with the Far Right that has the effect of undermining democracy. The contributions to this volume discuss a wide variety of processes of transformation, the social consequences, dedemocratization, and illiberalization of once liberal democracies through the destructive impact of neoliberal strategies. These strongly politico-economic contributions are complemented with general sociological analyses of a number of cultural aspects often neglected in analyses of democracy.

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