

Intellectual Hazard: A Liberal Selection of Quotations

Selected by D. B. Klein¹

ABSTRACT

Lock-in of Ideological Sensibilities by Age 25 or So

Adam Smith (1790, 158):

The opinion which we entertain of our own character depends entirely on our judgments concerning our past conduct. It is so disagreeable to think ill of ourselves, that we often purposely turn away our view from those circumstances which might render that judgment unfavourable.

Thomas Jefferson (1814, 1341):

[F]ew, in their after-years, have occasion to revise their college opinions.

Arthur Schopenhauer (1970, 124):

It is quite natural that we should adopt a defensive and negative attitude towards every new opinion concerning something on which we have already an opinion of our own. For it forces its way as an enemy into the previously closed system of our own convictions, shatters the calm of mind we have attained through this system, demands renewed efforts of us and declares our former efforts to have been in vain.

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M. Kent Jennings (1990, 347-48):

People do not generally change as much later on as they do during the pivotal first decade of adult life. People do tend to conserve what they have, what they are familiar with, what they have become habituated to. Thus, the composition of the 'crystals' involved in the crystallization process can make a substantial difference over the ensuing years for individuals as well as for the polity.

Duane F. Alwin, Ronald L. Cohen, and Theodore M. Newcombe (1991, 60):

Whether measured by their attitudes toward political issues, their voting preferences, their opinions toward various public figures, or their party identifications, Bennington women who were relatively conservative while in college remained relatively conservative a quarter-century later, and those who were relatively nonconservative while in college remained nonconservative in 1960-61.

David O. Sears and Carolyn L. Funk (1999, 1):

[R]espondents were measured on four occasions between 1940 and 1977, from roughly age 30 to retirement age. These partisan attitudes were highly stable over this long period... Examination of the trajectories of the individual attitudes reveals that the most common pattern was constancy across time... There was evidence of increasing attitude crystallization through the life span, infusing core predispositions with increasing psychological strength over time.

Reverence of the Powerful and Longing for Their Favor

Adam Smith (1790, 61):

This disposition to admire, and almost to worship, the rich and the powerful, and to despise, or, at least, to neglect persons of poor and mean condition, though necessary both to establish and to maintain the distinction of ranks and the order of society, is, at the same time, the great and most universal cause of the corruption of our moral sentiments.

Adam Smith (1790, 53):

That kings are the servants of the people, to be obeyed, resisted, deposed, or punished, as the public conveniency may require, is the doctrine of reason and philosophy; but it is not the doctrine of

Nature. Nature would teach us to submit to them for their own sake, to tremble and bow down before their exalted station, to regard their smile as a reward sufficient to compensate any services, and to dread their displeasure, though no other evil were to follow from it, as the severest of all mortifications.

Adam Smith (1790, 257):

[T]he vain man ... courts the company of his superiors as much as the proud man shuns it. Their splendour, he seems to think, reflects a splendour upon those who are much about them. He haunts the courts of kings and the levees of ministers, and gives himself the air of being a candidate for fortune and preferment, when in reality he possesses the much more precious happiness, if he knew how to enjoy it, of not being one. He is fond of being admitted to the tables of the great, and still more fond of magnifying to other people the familiarity with which he is honoured there. He associates himself, as much as he can, with fashionable people, with those who are supposed to direct the public opinion, with the witty, with the learned, with the popular; and he shuns the company of his best friends whenever the very uncertain current of public favour happens to run in any respect against them. With the people to whom he wishes to recommend himself, he is not always very delicate about the means which he employs for that purpose; unnecessary ostentation, groundless pretensions, constant assentation, frequently flattery, though for the most part a pleasant and a sprightly flattery, and very seldom the gross and fulsome flattery of a parasite.

Lord Acton, 1887 letter to Mandell Creighton, quoted in Neilson (1969, 87):

... I cannot accept your canon that we are to judge Pope and King unlike other men, with a favourable presumption that they did no wrong. If there is any presumption it is the other way, against the holders of power, increasing as the power increases. Historic responsibility has to make up for the want of legal responsibility. Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men, even when they exercise influence and not authority, still more when you superadd the tendency or the certainty of corruption by authority. There is no worse heresy than that the office sanctifies the holder of it. That is the point at which the negation of Catholicism and the negation of Liberalism meet and keep high festival, and the end learns to justify the means. You would hang a man of no position like Ravailac; but

if what one hears is true, then Elizabeth asked the gaoler to murder Mary, and William III ordered his Scots minister to extirpate a clan. Here are the greatest names coupled with the greatest crimes; you would spare those criminals, for some mysterious reason. I would hang them higher than Haman, for reasons of quite obvious justice, still more, still higher for the sake of historical science.

Unminding Important Things

Marvin Minsky (1986, 177):

In the course of pursuing any sufficiently complicated problem, the subgoals that engage our attentions can become both increasingly more ambitious and increasingly detached from the original problem.

Adam Smith (1790, 299):

Epicurus indulged a propensity, which is natural to all men, but which philosophers in particular are apt to cultivate with a peculiar fondness, as the great means of displaying their ingenuity, the propensity to account for all appearances from as few principles as possible.

Adam Smith (1761, 224):

What a Roman expressed by the single word, *amavissem*, an Englishman is obliged to express by four different words, *I should have loved*. It is unnecessary to take any pains to show how much this prolixness must enervate the eloquence of all modern languages. How much the beauty of any expression depends upon its conciseness, is well known to those who have any experience in composition.

Friedrich Nietzsche (1965, 25):

But now the whole scientific fraternity is out to understand the canvas and the colors—not the picture. In fact, one can say that only he who has a clear view of the overall picture of life and existence can avail himself of the individual sciences without harm to himself, for without such a normative overall picture the sciences are threads which nowhere lead to a goal and make our life's course all the more confused and labyrinthine.

Isaiah Berlin (1958, 119):

To neglect the field of political thought, because its unstable subject-

matter, with its blurred edges, is not to be caught by the fixed concepts, abstract models, and fine instruments suitable to logic or to linguistic analysis—to demand a unity of method in philosophy, and reject whatever the method cannot successfully manage—is merely to allow oneself to remain at the mercy of primitive and uncriticized political beliefs.

J. Shield Nicholson (1913, 425):

In England and in English-speaking countries in recent years far too much stress has been laid on those aspects of economics which lend themselves to mathematical illustrations. The consequence is that important parts of the subject have been neglected or, if not neglected, have been pruned and lopped until they can be put in the fashionable terminology and the usual curves.

William H. Hutt (1936, 208):

Moreover, the swamping of economic treatises with mathematics has not only tended to drive away the layman, but has diverted attention from fundamentals to points of analytical interest, and incidentally thereby led to some actual corruption or unjustifiable weakening of basic tenets. [T]he intricacies [of the mathematical method] appear to have caused some of those practicing it to lose their continuous intimacy with certain broad unquestionable elements of reality which ought always to dominate in applied theory.

John von Neumann (quoted in Dore et al 1989, xiv):

As a mathematical discipline travels far from its empirical source, or still more, if it is a second or third generation only indirectly inspired by ideas coming from ‘reality’, it is beset with very grave dangers. It becomes more and more purely aestheticizing, more and more purely *l’art pour l’art*. This need not be bad, if the field is surrounded by correlated subjects, which still have closer empirical connections, or if the discipline is under the influence of men with an exceptionally well-developed taste. But there is a grave danger that the subject will develop along the line of least resistance, that the stream, so far from its source, will separate into a multitude of insignificant branches, and that the discipline will become a disorganized mass of details and complexities. In other words, at a great distance from its empirical source, or after much ‘abstract’ inbreeding, a mathematical subject is in danger of degeneration.

Terence W. Hutchison (1994, 287):

[I]t may be assumed that enhancing their own feeling of scientific status has been an important element in the utility function of mathematical economists, which is satisfied by the lavish use of mathematics and by the promotion of abstract, vacuous ‘rigour’ as the – profoundly unsuitable – overriding criterion and aim of the subject.

Peter Bauer (1981, 264):

Once mathematical methods have become fashionable, the desire to be in the swim and the operation of the established interests set up forces of self-perpetuation.

Popular Sentiments and Approval

Adam Smith (1790, 116):

Nature, when she formed man for society, endowed him with an original desire to please, and an original aversion to offend his brethren. She taught him to feel pleasure in their favourable, and pain in their unfavourable, regard. She rendered their approbation most flattering and most agreeable to him for its own sake; and their disapprobation most mortifying and most offensive.

Friedrich A. Hayek (1944, 47):

It [economics] will be for you as well a choice between cherished and pleasant illusions on the one side and the ruthless pursuit of an argument which will lead you almost certainly into isolation and unpopularity . . .

Albert Venn Dicey (1905, 448):

[E]conomists themselves seem sometimes to dread that the attempt to treat economical problems in a scientific spirit should deprive them of that sympathy which they not only give to others but themselves require.

Friedrich A. Hayek's speech at the Nobel Banquet, December 10, 1974:

Your Majesty, Your Royal Highnesses, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Now that the Nobel Memorial Prize for economic science has been created, one can only be profoundly grateful for having been selected as one of its joint recipients, and the economists certainly have every reason for being grateful to the Swedish Riksbank for regarding their subject as worthy of this high honour.

Yet I must confess that if I had been consulted whether to establish a Nobel Prize in economics, I should have decidedly advised against it.

One reason was that I feared that such a prize, as I believe is true of the activities of some of the great scientific foundations, would tend to accentuate the swings of scientific fashion.

This apprehension the selection committee has brilliantly refuted by awarding the prize to one whose views are as unfashionable as mine are.

I do not yet feel equally reassured concerning my second cause of apprehension.

It is that the Nobel Prize confers on an individual an authority which in economics no man ought to possess.

This does not matter in the natural sciences. Here the influence exercised by an individual is chiefly an influence on his fellow experts; and they will soon cut him down to size if he exceeds his competence.

But the influence of the economist that mainly matters is an influence over laymen: politicians, journalists, civil servants and the public generally.

There is no reason why a man who has made a distinctive contribution to economic science should be omniscient on all problems of society - as the press tends to treat him till in the end he may himself be persuaded to believe.

One is even made to feel it a public duty to pronounce on problems to which one may not have devoted special attention.

I am not sure that it is desirable to strengthen the influence of a few individual economists by such a ceremonial and eye-catching recognition of achievements, perhaps of the distant past.

I am therefore almost inclined to suggest that you require from your

laureates an oath of humility, a sort of hippocratic oath, never to exceed in public pronouncements the limits of their competence.

Or you ought at least, on conferring the prize, remind the recipient of the sage counsel of one of the great men in our subject, Alfred Marshall, who wrote:

‘Students of social science, must fear popular approval: Evil is with them when all men speak well of them’.

Friedrich A. Hayek (1933, 121):

[T]he economist appears to be hopelessly out of tune with his time, giving unpractical advice to which the public is not disposed to listen and having no influence upon contemporary events.

William H. Hutt (1936, 34):

Every independent and serious economist who has some concern for the well-being of the community must, if his beliefs lie in the path of ‘orthodox’ or Classical tradition, be aware of a periodic recurrence of a sense of utter helplessness. On all sides he thinks he sees the survival of ignorance and confusion of thought on matters which affect human welfare; and he feels that nothing that it is within his power to do or say can have the slightest effect in checking the accumulation of wrong ideas and false policies which they bring forth. He recognizes that in spheres in which policy and action can be influenced, he is doomed to virtual dumbness to-day.

George Stigler (1988, 4):

[T]he convention of denouncing economists had been established [at the end of 18th century] and was pursued with enthusiasm by men great and small. ... Why has it been fashionable to abuse economists (even granting the possibility that they may deserve it)? The main reason is easily named—economists have been the premier ‘pourers of cold water’ on proposals for social improvement, to the despair of the reformers and philanthropists who support these proposals.

Stanislav Andreski (1972, 39):

[E]ven without pressures from the politicians, capitalists or the bureau-

crats, the desire for popularity can undermine independence of thought and induce anxious conformity. [A] student of society who does not go in for beating about the bush and mealy-mouthed pussy-footing has little chance of being left alone like his colleagues in the natural sciences. And, as not everybody has a stomach for a never-ending fight for intellectual integrity, most social scientists gravitate towards problems, methods and conclusions which, no matter how sterile, are least likely to incur the displeasure of the potentates or of the populace. Prompted by the desire to play safe they often go even further than necessary in trimming their sails to the prevailing winds.

Gordon Tullock (1966, 188-89):

[S]tudents in [the social] field have a strong tendency to devote large amounts of effort to ‘confirming’ popular opinions... New currents of opinion will develop in the ‘real world’ and then investigators [in social science] will undertake research which ‘proves’ them to be true. The 1930’s, for example, witnessed a tremendous change in the economic policies of most Western countries. This was not at all the result of economic research; in fact, the economists largely used theories which condemned the new policies. After it was clear which way the wind was blowing the bulk of the economic profession jumped on the bandwagon, and the economic journals were full of articles which fitted in well with contemporary opinion.

Escapism

Gordon Tullock (1989, 246-247):

[M]ost economists find themselves in a rather unfortunate situation. If they work on direct practical problems they’re almost certain to have fights with members of the English department at faculty cocktail parties. Consider trying to convince the typical noneconomist faculty member that the Minimum Wage Act is not terribly helpful for poor laborers... Suppose an economist, in an applied effort to help a very poor country, recommends to its government a program for attracting foreign capital. The suggestion is that bringing in plants to use semiskilled labor to produce low-quality textiles is possible, if you are willing to pay their workers a dollar a day, which is twice what they are now making on the farm. The economist feels that getting them off the farm and into industry is the only real way of raising

living standards in the country. The suggested wage is so low that the average member of the faculty at the university where the economist works would regard it as inhumane exploitation... Clearly, life in the university would be much less pleasant than if the economist had concentrated on Ramsey pricing.

Edwin Cannan (1933, 378):

You may say you know all this, and that I ought to apologise for drawing your attention once more to the putrid, stinking mass. I do apologise to those who are really helpless in the matter, if any such are here. But I do not apologise to the others, but appeal to them to do more than they are doing to make economic organization understood by the people. I appeal especially to the younger teachers to consider what sort of future they can look forward to if the popular English newspapers continue to get their readers to believe that at one and the same time the pound sterling may be worth twenty-twentieths of itself in London and Lisbon, thirty-one twentieths in Madrid, and only fourteen twentieths in Paris. Do not let them simply hold their noses and avert their eyes from the disgusting mess and run back to find peace and contentment in neat equations and elegant equilibria.

Arnold C. Harberger (1993, 2):

[Having] to endure with frustration, waking up every morning to go out and fight battles they rarely expect to win... This is the life of the typical policy economist; small wonder that after some years many end up disillusioned and drift off to less frustrating occupations and pursuits.

William H. Hutt (1936, 35):

[The economist's] response [to his impotence to influence opinion] may be to retire from that field of intellectual activity in which he could be of direct service to the community and... concentrate on the development of an intricate technique of analysis. He may then find himself the possessor of a logical system applicable to conditions which *might* conceivably exist, but a system which no legislator or administrator could be expected to understand, let alone find of service in the case of any concrete problem. Such an economist will correspond to the 'pure scientist' in other fields. The results of his efforts may occasionally have repercussions of the greatest moment upon knowledge relevant to the sphere of practical affairs (as the techniques of the pure mathematician and the pure physicist have had an immense

influence in the field of technology). But his studies can hardly be said to be consciously directed towards that end. He escapes, in consequence, from the sense of baffled striving, of frustrated effort ...

The Professional Academic Pyramid

Michael Polanyi (1964, 15):

To learn an art by the example of its practice is to accept an artistic tradition and to become a representative of it.

Robert S. Lynd (1948, 18):

The status of the professional economist, political scientist, or other social scientist is deeply committed, by training and by the need for security and advancement, to the official concepts, problems, and theoretical structure of his science.

Isaiah Berlin (1949, 37):

Today the tendency to circumscribe and confine and limit, to determine the range of what may be asked and what may not, to what may be believed and what may not, is no longer a distinguishing mark of the old 'reactionaries.' On the contrary, it comes as powerfully from the heirs of the radicals, rationalists, 'progressives' of the nineteenth century as from the descendants of their enemies. There is a persecution not only of science, but by science or at least in its name...

Karl R. Popper (1962, 29):

[I]t seems improbable that Hegel would ever have become the most influential figure in German philosophy without the authority of the Prussian state behind him. As it happened, he became the first official philosopher of Prussianism, appointed in the period of feudal 'restoration' after the Napoleonic wars. Later, the state also backed his pupils (Germany had, and still has, only state-controlled Universities), and they in their turn backed one another.

D. Klein (2005, 143):

Figure 3 plots percentage from the [worldwide] top 35 departments. At the top, more than 90 percent of faculty comes from the top 35 departments. The plot suggests that departments ranked around 44th have 80 percent from the top 35. These results show clearly that the

top 35 departments dominate the profession.

Groupthink

Irving L. Janis. (1982, 5):

In studies of social clubs and other small groups, conformity pressures have frequently been observed. Whenever a member says something that sounds out of line with the group's norms, the other members at first increase their communication with the deviant. Attempts to influence the nonconformist member to revise or tone down his dissident ideas continue as long as most members of the group feel hopeful about talking him into changing his mind. But if they fail after repeated attempts, the amount of communication they direct toward the deviant decreases markedly. The members begin to exclude him, often quite subtly at first and later more obviously, in order to restore the unity of the group. A social psychological experiment conducted by Stanley Schachter with avocational clubs in an American university—and replicated by Schachter and his collaborators in seven European countries—showed that the more cohesive the group and the more relevant the issue to the goals of the group, the greater is the inclination of the members to reject a nonconformist. Just as the members insulate themselves from outside critics who threaten to disrupt the unity and esprit de corps of their group, they take steps, often without being aware of it, to counteract the disruptive influence of inside critics who are attacking the group's norms.

Irving L. Janis. (1982, 9):

I use the term 'groupthink' as a quick and easy way to refer to a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive ingroup, when the members' strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action.

Thomas Szasz (1961, 261):

It seems to me that one reason, perhaps the main one, for not making value problems of this type more explicit is that whenever this is done it threatens the cohesion of the group which, until then, has kept its values officially undefined...

Thomas S. Kuhn (1977, xxi):

The hypotheses of individuals are tested, the commitments shared by his group being presupposed; group commitments, on the other hand,

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are not tested, and the process by which they are displaced differs drastically from that involved in the evaluation of hypotheses.

John Stuart Mill (1859, 511):

Nor is it enough that [a student] should hear the arguments of adversaries from his own teachers, presented as they state them, and accompanied by what they offer as refutations. That is not the way to do justice to the arguments, or bring them into real contact with his own mind. He must be able to hear them from persons who actually believe them; who defend them in earnest, and do their very utmost for them.

Martin Anderson (1992, 112):

With no effective check from the outside, academic intellectuals—who generally refer to themselves as representing a ‘field’ of study—have in effect been left to regulate and judge themselves. Those who produce the work judge the work. And if they say it is important—and no one else reads it—who’s to say it is not important?

Stanislav Andreski (1972, 203):

[N]othing will immediately blow up or fall down in consequence of a politologist’s or economist’s inanity; while the harm caused by his ignorance or dishonesty may not materialize until years later, and will in any case be debatable and difficult to blame on a particular man.

Edgar Allan Poe (1843, 210):

The ‘thousand profound scholars’ may have failed, first, because they were scholars, secondly, because they were profound, and thirdly, because they were a thousand.

Privileges of Graduation Make for Cartels and Social Pyramids

Adam Smith (1776, 780):

In modern times, the diligence of public teachers [that is, instructors at corporate bodies, including colleges and universities] is more or less corrupted by the circumstances which render them more or

less independent of their success and reputation in their particular professions. Their salaries, too, put the private teacher, who would pretend to come into competition with them, in the same state with a merchant who attempts to trade without a bounty in competition with those who trade with a considerable one. If he sells his goods at nearly the same price, he cannot have the same profit, and poverty and beggary at least, if not bankruptcy and ruin, will infallibly be his lot. If he attempts to sell them much dearer, he is likely to have so few customers that his circumstances will not be much mended. The privileges of graduation [that is, rights and opportunities denied to non-graduates], besides, are in many countries necessary, or at least extremely convenient, to most men of learned professions, that is, to the far greater part of those who have occasion for a learned education. But those privileges can be obtained only by attending the lectures of the public teachers. The most careful attendance upon the ablest instructions of any private teacher cannot always give any title to demand them. It is from these different causes that the private teacher of any of the sciences which are commonly taught in universities is in modern times generally considered as in the very lowest order of men of letters. A man of real abilities can scarce find out a more humiliating or a more unprofitable employment to turn them to. The endowment of schools and colleges have, in this manner, not only corrupted the diligence of public teachers, but have rendered it almost impossible to have any good private ones.

Adam Smith (1774, 174-75):

The monopoly of medical education which this regulation would establish in favour of Universities would, I apprehend, be hurtful to the lasting prosperity of such bodies-corporate. Monopolists very seldom make good work, and a lecture which a certain number of students must attend, whether they profit by it or no, is certainly not very likely to be a good one. I have thought a great deal upon this subject, and have inquired very carefully into the constitution and history of several of the principal Universities of Europe: I have satisfied myself that the present state of degradation and contempt into which the greater part of those societies have fallen in almost every part of Europe, arises principally, first, from the large salaries which in some universities are given to professors, and which render them altogether independent of their diligence and success in their professions; and secondly, from the great number of students who, in order to get degrees or to be admitted to exercise certain professions, or who, for the sake of bursaries, exhibitions, scholarships, fellowships, etc., are obliged to resort to certain societies of this kind, whether the

instructions which they are likely to receive there are or are not worth the receiving.

Cynicism and Acquiescence

Arjo Klamer (1990, 184):

‘Of course this assumption is absurd,’ a well-known economist noted during a recent seminar, ‘but, hey, isn’t all we do absurd and utterly unrealistic?’ People laughed, and he continued solving the model.

Martin Anderson (1992, 118-19):

The research ethos that now dominates the academic world has been tragic for many professions. They delude themselves when they claim their research is important, a significant contribution to knowledge—when most of it is irrelevant and unimportant. The tragedy is that most of them probably know what they write is not important. And when they act as if it were, when they allow others to assume it is, when they accept promotions and salary increases because of it, they are engaging in a subtle form of intellectual corruption. They begin by lying to others, and end up lying to themselves.

Martin Anderson (1992, 112-13):

Within many so-called fields of study there is widespread log-rolling. Many of the fields are small enough so that most of the members know each other. I remember one incident that occurred when a committee I served on was reviewing a fellow for promotion at the Hoover Institution. Someone asserted that he was ‘one of the top ten men in his field in the United States.’ Not being familiar with the ‘field,’ I innocently asked how many were in the field. ‘Oh, about six’ was the reply.

S.M. Macvane (1895, 132):

Now, it seems to me that the teachers of economics have a duty towards the general public in these matters. In all the Babel of fallacies to which this country has had to listen in the past six years, how many teachers of economics have done anything serious towards guiding the public thought aright? Here and there, at intervals, a solitary voice has been raised; but, on the whole, the professed teachers of economic truth have been silent. The mass of the citizens have been called on to pronounce a judgment on difficult economic questions, without effective assistance from the class most competent to give expert help

in arriving at the truth. On general principles, and in relation to any other than economic questions, I think all unprejudiced persons would agree that the case ought to be different.

Officialdom Validates Base Thinking

Simon Newcomb (1893, 381):

A few years ago, during the Congressional debate upon the proposed tax on artificial butter, it was claimed on one side that, if the free manufacture of this article were permitted, there was every prospect that within a few years butter would cost only ten cents a pound. One accepting the views of the economists would naturally suppose that this claim was made by an opponent of the bill, who desired to portray the good effects of free competition in the manufacture. Really, however, it was put forth as an argument against permitting the manufacture. The most curious feature of the debate, and the one which had led me to cite it in this connection, is that there seems to have been no one present bold enough to join issue on the conclusion, and to claim that, if there was a prospect that the community at large would soon be able to obtain butter at ten cents a pound, it would be a good thing for us all.

Friedrich A. Hayek (1983):

You can either be an economist or a policy advisor... By moving around the world I have avoided that corruption which government service regularly involves. And more sadly, I have seen in some of my closest friends and sympathizers—I won't mention any names—who completely agreed with me, how a few years in government corrupted them intellectually and made them unable to think straight... All my friends who have gone into it and stayed for any length of time have, in my sense, been corrupted.

Peter T. Bauer (1984, 153):

The practice of governments of appointing economists as advisers may have helped to propagate the notion of the influence of economists, notably as governments appear often to follow their advice. In fact, particular advisers are often chosen because governments rightly believe that their advice would accord with what they wish to do in any case.

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Peter T. Bauer (1984, 153):

Over the last half century or so, outside influences have much affected the activities, themes, methods and findings of economists. Even an incomplete list of these must include the extensive politicization of social and economic life; the spread of egalitarian ideology and of the belief in environmental determinism; the much-increased importance of media, and therefore of the influence of those working in it...

Marc J. Roberts (1976, 59-60):

[P]rofessional interest is more likely to follow social policy than to lead to it. Work on Keynesian models of the economy grew greatly only after Congress, in the Full Employment Act of 1948, assumed responsibility for the level of employment. Studies of urban housing markets, poverty and early childhood education all became much more extensive in scope after major federal programs were instituted in these areas. In part this pattern reflects the availability of outside funding, but not entirely. A failure of intellectual imagination is also at work. Because social science is a campfollower to public controversy, social and economic policy is often made at a time when only the slimmest scientific results area available.

Ludwig von Mises (1966, 67):

It is impossible to understand the history of economic thought if one does not pay attention to the fact that economics as such is a challenge to the conceit of those in power. An economist can never be a favorite of autocrats and demagogues.

Government Force and Funding

Morning Chronicle (Aug. 1851), quoted by Herbert Spencer (1853, 268):

From all parts of France, men of great energy and resource struggle up, and fling themselves on the world of Paris. There they try to become great functionaries. Through every department of the eighty-four, men of less energy and resource struggle up to the *chef-lien*—the provincial capital. There they try to become little functionaries. Go still lower—deal with a still smaller scale—and the result will be the same. As is the department to France, so is the arrondissement to the department, and the commune to the arrondissement. All who have, or think they have, heads on their shoulders, struggle into towns to fight for office.

Michael A. Bernstein (2001, 40):

A bit over a month after the Armistice [in 1918], the American Economic Association and the American Statistical Association held a joint meeting on the benefits that social scientific knowledge and practice could offer to the public sector. The conference was, in particular, focused upon ‘credentialed economic inquiry that a number of prominent government and business figures believed could greatly enhance a society’s capacity for planning and purposeful management.’ In arousing this conviction among the social scientists, the wartime experience had played an important part. In fact, the pressures and challenges of national mobilization had created an unprecedented demand for the skills of economists.

Stuart S. Blume (1974, 19):

In the United States, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere, World War II led to an enormous demand-induced expansion in the scale of scientific activity, financed largely by national governments. Governments acquired a new financial responsibility for science and, for the first time, scientists found themselves well supported by (but dependent on) politicians and bureaucrats. In the United States, for the first time, both sides had become conscious of their need for the other; in Britain a similar view, emerging under the pressures of an earlier war (that of 1914-1918), received new stimulus.

John K. Galbraith (1981, 35-36):

By the spring of 1934, after a year of F.D.R., the views of the young professors and especially of the graduate students at Berkeley had changed. Against all learned prediction, much was being attempted in Washington; Roosevelt now seemed a wonderfully compelling leader. Word had also reached university that a nearly unlimited number of jobs were open for economists at unbelievably high pay in the federal government. All the new agencies needed this talent. Students who had been resisting for years the completion of theses and the resulting unemployment now finished them up in weeks. So a new gold rush began, back across the American River ... the Rockies and the Plains to the Potomac. When I got to Washington in the early summer of 1934, many of my friends were already at work. ...

I went to Howard Tolley’s office in the Agricultural Adjustment Administration [he was my former teacher from Berkeley], and he immediately suggested that I go on the payroll for the summer. I

as promptly agreed... After filling in forms, I was, however, required to go to a small room on the upper floor and meet the resident representative of James A. Farley, the Postmaster General and custodian of Democratic patronage. There I affirmed that I was a Democrat; one could be a Democrat without being a citizen or a voter. My salary was at a rate of \$3200 a year. In the next month I paid off all my college debts, and not since have I been short of money.

Friedrich A. Hayek (1960, 291):

The organizations we have created in these fields [labor, agriculture, housing, education, etc.] have grown so complex that it takes more or less the whole of a person's time to master them. The institutional expert... is [frequently] the only one who understands [the institution's] organization fully and who therefore is indispensable... [A]lmost invariably, this new kind of expert has one distinguishing characteristic: he is unhesitatingly in favor of the institutions on which he is expert. This is so not merely because only one who approves of the aims of the institution will have the interest and the patience to master the details, but even more because such an effort would hardly be worth the while of anybody else: the views of anybody who is not prepared to accept the principles of the existing institutions are not likely to be taken seriously and will carry no weight in the discussions determining current policy... [A]s a result of this development, in more and more fields of policy nearly all the recognized 'experts' are, almost by definition, persons who are in favor of the principles underlying the policy... The politician who, in recommending some further development of current policies, claims that 'all the experts favor it,' is often perfectly honest, because only those who favor the development have become experts in this institutional sense, and the uncommitted economists or lawyers who oppose are not counted as experts. Once the apparatus is established, its future development will be shaped by what those who have chosen to serve it regard as its needs.

Lawrence H. White (2005, 329):

To put the number of Fed staff economists in context, the top 50 Ph.D.-granting US economics departments together employ about 390 economists in macroeconomics, monetary economics, and banking. That is, the Fed employs full-time about 27 percent more macro/money/banking economists than the top 50 US academic economics departments put together. (Note also that most of the economists in those departments have been visiting scholars at Federal Reserve banks.)

E.C. Pasour, Jr. (2004, 127):

[G]overnment farm programs over the years have provided a fertile field of job opportunities for agricultural economists. Second, and closely related, the funding arrangement for agricultural economists in the USDA land-grant university complex gives policy analysts an incentive not to question the appropriateness of the government programs they are analyzing. The implication is most obvious in the case of policy research within the Department of Agriculture. The review and publication process discourages research that is inconsistent with the policies of the current administration.

Although federal government funding is a less significant source of financial support for policy research in land-grant universities than it is within the USDA, political pressure from state and local farm commodity groups militates heavily against criticism of government farm programs there, too. These groups expect research and extension personnel to support government programs for their products. They often exert pressure on college officials and agricultural policy analysts who propose policy liberalization.

D. Klein with T. DiCola (2004, 327-28):

Our investigation establishes that the authors and editors of *Journal of Development Economics* have extensive ties to official policy, loan, and grant making institutions dealing with the developing countries. How such ties affect the character and intellectual content of the field of development economics is another question.

Gordon Tullock (1989, 244):

The second activity, firefighting, is the basic reason that most really influential government economists haven't read anything for the last twenty years. They find themselves in a government job and are asked to deal with some problem right now. They do so in terms of what they can remember. If they are successful, they are asked to do something else right now, and the process continues with the result that the higher ranks of government economic advisors aren't able to read.

Carsten A. Holz (2007, 36):

Academics who study China, which includes the author, habitually please the Chinese Communist Party, sometimes consciously, and often unconsciously. Our incentives are to conform, and we do so in numerous ways: through the research questions we ask or don't ask,

through the facts we report or ignore, through our use of language, and through what and how we teach.

Foreign academics must cooperate with academics in China to collect data and co-author research. Surveys are conducted in a manner that is acceptable to the Party, and their content is limited to politically acceptable questions. For academics in China, such choices come naturally. The Western side plays along.

China researchers are equally constrained in their solo research. Some Western China scholars have relatives in China. Others own apartments there. Those China scholars whose mother tongue is not Chinese have studied the language for years and have built their careers on this large and nontransferable investment. We benefit from our connections in China to obtain information and insights, and we protect these connections. Everybody is happy, Western readers for the up-to-date view from academia, we ourselves for prospering in our jobs, and the Party for getting us to do its advertising. China is fairly unique in that the incentives for academics all go one way: one does not upset the Party.

What happens when we don't play along is all too obvious. We can't attract Chinese collaborators. When we poke around in China to do research we run into trouble.

Carsten A. Holz (2007, 40):

If academics don't, who will? The World Bank and other international organizations won't because they profit from dealing with China. Their banking relationship depends on amicable cooperation with the Party, and a de facto requirement of their research collaboration is that the final report and the public statements are acceptable to Party censors. The research departments of Western investment banks won't because the banks' other arms likely depend on business with China.

Does this all matter? Does it matter if China researchers ignore the political context in which they operate and the political constraints that shape their work? Does it matter if we present China to the West the way the Party leadership must like us to present China, providing narrow answers to our self-censored research questions and offering a sanitized picture of China's political system?

The size of China's economy will exceed that of the U.S., in purchasing power terms, by 2008 or 2009. China is a country with which Western economies are increasingly intertwined: A quarter of Chinese industry is foreign-owned and we depend on Chinese industry for cheap consumer goods. Ultimately, our pensions, invested in multinationals that increasingly produce in China, depend on the continued economic rise of China. But does the West understand

that country and its rulers? At what point, and through what channels, will the Party leadership with its different views of human rights and the citizens' rights affect our choices of political organization and political freedoms in the West (as it has affected academic research and teaching)? And to what extent are China researchers guilty of putting their own rice bowl before honest thinking and teaching?

Chang-Tai Hsieh, Edward Miguel, Daniel Ortega, and Francisco Rodriguez (2009, 1):

Over an 18 month period starting in late 2002, more than 4.7 million Venezuelans signed one or more of the three petitions calling for a vote to remove President Chávez from office. After two failed petition drives, a third petition in December 2003 was successful in forcing a recall election that took place in August 2004. After Chavez won the recall vote, the list of the signers of the last petition was packaged into user-friendly software program known as Maisanta. There were soon widespread allegations that the Maisanta software was widely distributed throughout the public sector and used by the Chavez regime as an “enemies” list. Jatar (2006), for example, presents the stories of several individuals who lost their jobs after being identified in the Maisanta database as a Chavez opponent.

This paper looks for systematic evidence that the Maisanta database was used by the Chavez regime to identify and punish the voters who had attempted to remove Chavez from office, using the Maisanta database itself in the analysis. The information in Maisanta has sufficient detail to match two thirds of the adults in the Venezuelan national household survey to the voter lists. Using this data, we measure whether voters who signed petitions to recall Chavez experienced changes in income or employment after the Maisanta lists were widely distributed.

Figure 1 presents our key evidence from this data. The top panel plots the employment rate of the petition signers relative to that of the non-signers and the bottom panel plots their relative wage. Relative employment of the Chavez opposition was roughly constant from 1997 through 2004 before falling by 1.5 percentage points in 2005 and 2006. Similarly, the wage gap between the Chavez opposition and the non-signers was roughly constant until 2004, and then dropped by 5 percent in 2005-2006.

Ludwig von Mises (1944, 82):

In most countries of the European continent the universities are owned and operated by the government. They are subject to the control of the Ministry of Education as a police station is subject to the head of

the police department. The teachers are civil servants like patrolmen and customs officers. Nineteenth-century liberalism tried to limit the right of the Ministry of Education to interfere with the freedom of university professors to teach what they considered true and correct. But as the government appointed the professors, it appointed only trustworthy and reliable men, that is, men who shared the government's viewpoint and were ready to disparage economics...

Ludwig von Mises (1944, 87):

European totalitarianism is an upshot of bureaucracy's preëminence in the field of education. The universities paved the way for the dictators.

Pyramids Validating One Another

Marion Fourcade (2009, 249):

Finally, the manner in which each state [United States/Britain/France] has drawn upon economic expertise has made an important symbolic statement about the character of the discipline in each country, helping define the way economics is seen in society at large and thus powerfully shaping the way economists see themselves... [T]he state is not simply a material institution oriented to the monopolization of certain resources; it is also, importantly, a symbolic institution with a power of certification, consecration, legitimate classification, and categorization. ... In this perspective, the formalization of the role of economists within the structure of U.S. government, though much less direct than the making of special classes of economic experts within French administration (the énarques, the INSEE administrators), has probably no less symbolic importance. The existence of professionally exclusive agencies, such as the Council of Economic Advisors and the National Economic Council, and the manner in which they function send powerful messages about what it means to be an economist, and who is granted authority to claim expertise on economic issues. The involvement of economists in the constant back-and-forth between state and nonstate actors on matters of public policy also define their identity. Whether they serve as CEA appointees on loan from a university, prepare econometric analyses for special interest lobbying bodies, or testify as experts before congressional hearings, American economists officially enter the realm of the state as people who possess a specific form of expertise generally validated through research training in universities.

Richard Whitley (1984, 297):

These [science] policies have often involved the advice and preferences of relatively small group of élite scientists, especially physicists, who move easily between the universities, state agencies, and advisory groups. Claiming competence over a wide range of activities, they form a distinct ‘establishment’ which mediates the demands of state agencies and politicians on science on the one hand, and the claims for resources and autonomy from scientists on the other. Operating across the sciences, they claim to speak on behalf of their research colleagues and to interpret general state objectives and policies for resources allocation criteria between and with scientific fields. By seeking to integrate scientific research with state policies, or at least ensuring that they are commensurable, this establishment both legitimates and sells science and tries to manage intellectual priorities. The more it monopolizes the mediation function and becomes involved in coordination of the policies and practices of funding agencies, the more it dominates inter-field relations and the more interdependent scientific fields become.

Richard Whitley (1984, 297-98):

Within general and sometimes rather diffuse objectives, then, scientists pursue reputations and decide on the significance of results by assessing their contributions to reputational goals. Implicitly or explicitly it is usually assumed that these goals are consonant with, and contributing to, the general mission of the employment organization and funding agencies. The long-term goals of curing cancer or building a commercially viable fusion reactor are, in effect, elaborated and applied by biologists, biochemists, and plasma physicists who seek reputations from fellow specialists in terms of their intellectual goals and priorities. By delegating much control over goals and processes to scientists pursuing reputations, funding agencies and government departments have substantially expanded the public science system and also gained a considerable degree of influence over it. State science policies increasingly affect the framework in which present reputational organizations operate and new ones develop and become established.

Richard Whitley (1984, 140):

[S]o too scientists attempt to monopolize the assessment of knowledge claims and their reliability. Success in reducing uncertainty is decided by professional colleagues in many of the public sciences, rather than by employers or ‘clients’, and so collegiate control over how work is carried out, and for what purposes, is maintained. Scientists have, then,

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sought to monopolize control over both the definition, production, and certification of research skills, and the evaluation of task outcomes in terms of their validity and significance.

Richard Whitley (1984, 298-99):

The development of a policy for scientific research itself tends to promote a particular concept of science and how it is to produce knowledge. Conscious reflection and construction of any state policy implies some view as to the nature of the object being planned. Thus in the case of science the simple consideration of a research policy reifies a particular conception of knowledge and appropriate methods and people for producing it.

Peter Bauer (1984, 156):

The transgressions in development economics are not random: their thrust reflects systematic hostility to the operation and outcome of market forces, and accords with the views of influential groups within the modern political nation. The influence of these groups, including prominent academics, has been indispensable for the continued widespread acceptance of the simplest errors of fact and logic. These groups tolerate and shield crude lapses if that will help to discredit or to criticize the operation of the market forces. ...

The influential groups protect not only the invalid notions but also those responsible for them. Even when their statements have been conclusively refuted by evidence or exposed by criticism, the authors will continue to be acclaimed as experts so long as their stance accords with the prevailing ideology or vested interests.

Karl Kraus (1990, 81):

How is the world ruled and led to war? Diplomats lie to journalists and believe these lies when they see them in print.

The Pretense of Knowing Well Enough to Manipulate Beneficially

Adam Smith (1776, 456):

What is the species of domestic industry which his capital can employ, and of which the produce is likely to be of the greatest value, every

individual, it is evident, can, in his local situation, judge much better than any statesman or lawgiver can do for him. The statesman who should attempt to direct private people in what manner they ought to employ their capitals would not only load himself with a most unnecessary attention, but assume an authority which could safely be trusted, not only to no single person, but to no council or senate whatever, and which would nowhere be so dangerous as in the hands of a man who had folly and presumption enough to fancy himself fit to exercise it.

Friedrich A. Hayek (1988, 86):

The hypothetical assumption, customarily employed in theoretical descriptions of the market process (descriptions made by people who usually have no intention of supporting socialism), to the effect that all such facts (or 'parameters') can be assumed to be known to the explaining theorist, obscures all this, and consequently produces the curious deceptions that help to sustain various forms of socialist thinking.

Friedrich A. Hayek (1988, 76):

The curious task of economics is to demonstrate to men how little they really know about what they imagine they can design.

H.L. Mencken (1919: 63):

The effect of science is to make mankind vain. Penetrating so many secrets, we cease to believe in the unknowable. But there it sits nevertheless, philosophically licking its chops.

Ambrose Bierce (1993: 28):

Education, n. That which discloses to the wise and disguises from the foolish their lack of understanding.

Temptation of a Governing-Set Selfhood

Adam Smith (1790, 233-34):

The man of system, on the contrary, is apt to be very wise in his own conceit; and is often so enamoured with the supposed beauty of his own ideal plan of government, that he cannot suffer the smallest deviation from any part of it. He goes on to establish it completely and in all its parts, without any regard either to the great interests, or to

the strong prejudices which may oppose it. He seems to imagine that he can arrange the different members of a great society with as much ease as the hand arranges the different pieces upon a chess-board. He does not consider that the pieces upon the chess-board have no other principle of motion besides that which the hand impresses upon them; but that, in the great chess-board of human society, every single piece has a principle of motion of its own, altogether different from that which the legislature might chuse to impress upon it.

William Graham Sumner (1883, 97-98):

For A to sit down and think, What shall I do? is commonplace; but to think what B ought to do is interesting, romantic, moral, self-flattering, and public-spirited all at once. It satisfies a great number of human weaknesses at once. To go on and plan what a whole class of people ought to do is to feel one's self a power on earth, to win a public position, to clothe one's self in dignity. Hence we have an unlimited supply of reformers, philanthropists, humanitarians, and would-be managers-in-general of society.

William Gladstone (1878):

I trace in the education of Oxford of my own time one great defect. Perhaps it was my own fault; but I must admit that I did not learn, when at Oxford, that which I have learned since, viz., to set a due value on the imperishable and inestimable principles of human liberty. The temper which, I think, too much prevailed in academic circles was, that liberty was regarded with jealousy, and fear could not be wholly dispensed with.

Taboo

Frank H. Knight (1951, 5):

I am reminded of a deep philosophical observation made by a high politico in a speech some years ago... 'The time has come to take the bull by the tail and look the situation square in the face.' It has occurred to me that one of the interesting 'facts of life' is that the expression itself refers to things so ugly or unpleasant that they are to be kept out of sight or explicit mention.

Frank H. Knight (1951, 2-4):

The serious fact is that the bulk of the really important things that eco-

nomics has to teach are things that people would see for themselves if they were willing to see. And it is hard to believe in the utility of trying to teach what men refuse to learn or even seriously listen to.

Thomas Szasz (1992, 96):

Why do we now lack a right we possessed in the past?... Why... does the federal government control our access to some of mankind's most ancient and medically most valuable agricultural products and the drugs derived from them?

These are some of the basic questions not discussed in debates on drugs. Why not? Because admission into the closed circle of officially recognized drug-law experts is contingent on shunning such rude behavior. Instead, the would-be debater of the drug problem is *expected to accept, as a premise*, that it is the duty of the federal government to limit the free trade in drugs. All that can be debated is which drugs should be controlled and how they should be controlled.

Lawrence H. White: (2005, 334):

I have not found a single Fed-published article that calls for eliminating, privatizing, or even restructuring the Fed. Research on 'free banking' has been limited to evaluations of the antebellum state banking regulatory systems that went by the name. With one exception, the notion of *laissez-faire* banking has not been discussed.

A Cycle of Irrelevance and Bad Judgment

Shaftesbury (1714, 189):

But for the philosopher who pretends to be wholly taken up in considering his higher faculties, and examining the powers and principles of his understanding, if in reality his philosophy be foreign to the matter professed, if it goes beside the mark and reaches nothing we can truly call our interest or concern, it must be worse than mere ignorance or idiotism. The most ingenious way of becoming foolish is by a system.

Friedrich Nietzsche (1965, 29):

Now and then a person is equipped by nature with perspicacity... How easy it is for him to indiscreetly give reign to his talent, with the result that he is destroyed as a human being and leads no more than a

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shadowy existence in 'pure science' ...

Michael Polanyi (1966, 19):

But the damage done by the specification of particulars may be irremediable. Meticulous detailing may obscure beyond recall a subject like history, literature, or philosophy. Speaking more generally, the belief that, since particulars are more tangible, their knowledge offers a true conception of things is fundamentally mistaken.

William H. Hutt (1936, 208):

[S]ome economists seem to have given undue stress to *curiosa* in a manner that has tended to distort their judgment and weaken the authority of economists generally.

Peter Bauer (1984, 160-61):

How can one fairly assess a student's performance if what he says or writes is plainly untenable, even bizarre, and if at the same time he can cite in support a leading economist or two?

S.M. Macvane (1895, 137-38):

At all events, I think experience shows that the present college training in economics, so far from fitting men for giving popular instruction, really seems to go far towards unfitting them for it. The doctrine, as they have it, lies in a form quite unsuited to the case; and it hampers them at every turn when they try to see things and to state principles in a different way. What we need is a training that shall enable our students to apprehend economic truths in the precise forms best adapted for popular exposition.

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