24. E.A. Nordlinger, *Conflict Regulation in Divided Societies* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Studies in International Affairs, 1972), p. 33.

25. J. Burnham, *The Managerial Revolution* (New York: John Day, 1941), p. 162.

26. *The History of Freedom in Antiquity* (1877). The quotation is from *Essays on Freedom and Power* (New York: Meridian Books, 1955), p. 56. Even though Acton's concern was religious freedom, it clearly extends to freedom in general.

27. G. Ferrero, *Il Potere* (Milano: Comunità, 1947), p. 217; trans. *The Principles of Power* (New York: Putnam, 1942).

28. J. Allen Smith, *The Growth and Decadence of Constitutional Government* (New York: Holt, 1930), p. 280.

29. H. Kelsen, *Vom Wesen und Wert der Demokratie* (Tübingen: 1929), chap. 1.

30. The majority rule issue is taken up again in chapter 8, especially sections 4 to 7. As for the many intricacies of the notions of majority and minority, see chapter 6, sections 1 to 5.

31. Interestingly, in the Gettysburg Address Lincoln did not avowedly define democracy. When he did, in his message to Congress of April 1861, he qualified democracy as a "government of the people by the same people." Presumably, "for the people" appeared to Lincoln an implication, not a defining characteristic.

3. The Limits of Political Realism

Politics should be realistic; politics should be idealistic: Two principles which are true when they complement one another, wrong when they are kept apart.
—M. Bluntschli

3.1 *What Is* Pure *Politics?*

It is far easier to know what a democracy should be than to understand what it *can* be. This is what "political realism" is supposed to find out—if political realism is conceived as taking stock of effectual truth, of Machiavelli's *verità effettuale.* I purposely recall the wording of Machiavelli because the misunderstanding of political realism can be traced back to him. Since the time of Machiavelli, the realistic approach to politics has been covered up, and covered up along two lines of explication that should be clearly differentiated: *(a)* as meaning that *politics is politics* and not something else; or *(b)* as implying that political realism embodies itself par excellence in a specific type of policy and political behavior called *pure politics.* In more recent times, pure politics has been rechristened *Machtpolitik,* power politics. Pure or power politics generally denotes a type of politics not committed to ideals but based entirely on force, fraud, and the ruthless use of power. And it is generally assumed that this is the kind of politics and policy advocated by political realism. Since I object to most of the foregoing, it will be useful to start from the old dispute about what Machiavelli himself said and what his interpreters made him say.

The Florentine secretary is considered to be the founding father of political realism inasmuch as he separates politics from ethics and from religion. This is more than to say that he was a dispassionate observer—for Aristotle too was a good observer. The difference between Aristotle's *Politics* and Machiavelli's *Prince* is that in the Greek vision of the world, politics, ethics, and religion were fused. Hence we can say in an up-to-date fashion that Machiavelli was value free, whereas Aristotle was not.[1]

Naturally, Machiavelli was not value free as a follower of Max Weber would be, in the modern meaning of value neutrality. But he happened to

live in an era in which the medieval idea of the *Respublica Christiana* had become meaningless, in which the word "state" acquired its modern meaning,[2] and in which the creation of the state appeared to be the paramount issue. Briefly, Machiavelli was recording the creation of the Renaissance principalities by a new kind of prince. This is not to say that politics formerly had been carried on in moral terms by gentle rulers. But Cesare Borgia was a shocking and unprecedented case even for his disenchanted contemporaries and victims. Thus Machiavelli became a value-free observer because, or partly because, what he observed was an unprecedented political "value void."[3] This helps to explain why Machiavelli is the first to state bluntly that politics does not bow to moral precepts, thus establishing the so-called autonomy of politics.

In interpreting Machiavelli it should always be kept in mind that the Renaissance principalities were unique political microcosms, especially in this respect: At that time politics and the prince were one. It might be argued that the same applies to all tyrannical rule. However, the tyranny described by Aristotle was grounded on popular support: The Greek tyrant started his career as a demagogue. Caesar put an end to the Roman Republic very much in a similar fashion: He was acclaimed ruler.[4] But Cesare Borgia and men like him were neither demagogues leaning on some kind of popular acclamation nor persons calling on a preexisting legitimacy. With respect to the distinction between tyranny *ex defectu tituli* (because of lack of title, of legitimacy), and tyranny *quoad exercitium* (on account of how power was exercised), Cesare Borgia was a tyrant in both respects—and thereby a new specimen. The upshot is, then, that Machiavelli observed a peculiar state of affairs in which politics coincided with, and was resolved into, the "nature of the Prince." In this perspective a most essential distinction goes unheeded, namely, the difference between *the politico* and *politics*.

Politics is *more* than the politician, than the politico. We speak of politics and/or a policy as being democratic, socialist, nationalist, and so on. This implies that no matter how powerful the modern prince may be, he is tied to a course of action that is, as such, more powerful than his personal will. Stalin was in a position to do almost anything, but he could hardly have dismissed his identification with communism even if he had wished to. So we must be careful not to equate politics with the politician. Speaking of the *politician,* we may well construct a typology on the basis of which the pure politico stands at one extreme and the idealistic politico at the other, meaning by this that the former is a cynical policy maker who despises ideals, while the latter pursues them at all costs. Having granted that we may well meet with a pure politician, as well as with an entirely idealistic politician, can we infer from this that "pure politics" and/or wholly "idealistic politics" ex-

ist? My answer is no. If we refer specifically to the Machiavellian Prince, however, we might be tempted to answer yes. This is why we must refrain from drawing hasty inferences from what Machiavelli actually did say.

He did say that politics *is not* ethics; but he did not say what politics *is* per se. Therefore, the inference to be drawn from the Machiavellian premises is that politics is "morally impure." We still have to find out what politics is in itself.[5] On that matter Machiavelli tells us only how a certain type of policy maker behaves. However, even the "pure politician," if he is shrewd, does not underestimate what he regards as the *impure* elements that help make his policy succeed, for the true man of politics knows that ideas are forces, that ideals are weapons, and as Machiavelli himself said, that even paternosters are useful bulwarks for a state.

The point is, then, that pure politics is as *unreal* as its opposite, a wholly ideal politics. Every policy is a mixture of idealism and realism; and if either element becomes overwhelming, if too much idealism eliminates realism, or vice versa, then a policy is likely to fail. No one has ever been able to institute successfully either a genuinely pure policy or a strictly ideal and/or moral policy. They both founder for the same reason. What today goes under the name of sheer "power politics" can function only insofar as it is nourished by an *ethos.* Indeed, *Machtpolitik* was originally founded on the Hegelian *Sittlichkeit,* Hegel's higher form of morality. This *ethos* may appear barbaric; in fact, the major bloodlettings and massacres of modernity have occurred and are performed either in the name of a racist ideal of nation or a classless ideal of society. The fact remains that so-called pure politics is also based on ideals and values. One might even go so far as to say that politics becomes more "pure" the more it is *Sache,* that is, devotion to a task. *Machtpolitik* is, all in one, *Sachepolitik.*

3.2 *Warlike versus Peacelike Politics*

My first conclusion is that the expression "pure politics" is pleonastic when it is intended to mean that politics is not ethics but just politics, and misleading when it is understood as an ideal-less politics. If a politico advocates a pure politics of the latter sort, this shows that he has very little knowledge about the reality of politics—that he is a bad realist. It follows from this that the distinction between ideal-less *pure politics,* on the one hand, and ideal-laden *impure politics,* on the other, draws a wrong boundary in the wrong place. The fundamental distinction is, rather, between *(a)* a *warlike view* of politics; and *(b)* a peace-oriented, *legalitarian view* of politics. In the former, force monitors persuasion, might establishes right, and conflict resolution is

sought in terms of the defeat of the enemy—of the "other" looked on as a *hostis.*[6] In the latter, force is kept in reserve as an *ultima ratio,* as a last and worse reason, and conflict resolution is sought by means of covenants, courts, and "rightful" procedures.

Since the import of this distinction has come to be unduly neglected, let me dwell on it. Clausewitz said that *war* was the prosecution of politics by other means. The dictum can be reversed to express a generalized warlike posture, as follows: *Politics* is the prosecution of war by other means. Politics is "like war"—a war without the arms of war—whenever its central experience is *hostility,* the perception of the neighbor as an enemy or, in any event, a danger or a menace. When Hobbes depicted the state of nature as a war of each against all, he was also pointing, at least implicitly, to the warlike conception of politics. Note that Hobbes detested it—so much so that he was prepared to pay any price for taking war out of politics. He had yet to see, in effect, how this could be done at a far lesser cost—without surrendering to a Leviathan—and in a far more reassuring way.

The first major mitigation of warlike, force-based relations among neighbors had been the Roman construction of civil law and, precisely, the resolution of litigations in courts according to precedent and equity. Roman citizenship was eagerly sought by people who had been conquered because it provided, above all, this precious kind of "peace." Yet the substitution of force by law was not transplanted from the private plane to the political one, to the power relationship between sovereign and subject. Ultimately, this was the feat of liberal constitutionalism. And since this constitutionalism largely consists of bringing politics under legal processing, of transforming the law of the jungle into the "law of law," it is appropriate to speak, at this juncture, of a legalitarian vision of politics—for politics-as-peace stands and falls with legality. It is the security afforded by a rule of law that permits, among other things, open access to, and alternation in, power. If the fall from power endangers the well-being and, eventually, the very life of a power wielder, he will not relinquish power. Conversely, if the security of staying well and alive hinges on "having power," then power will be sought ferociously, at all costs and with whatever means. Differently put, the peaceful mode of politics assumes that the stakes of politics are not too high; this requires, in turn, that politics be tamed by constitutional legality.

The foregoing clarifies two points. The first one is that he who forgets about politics-as-war can hardly appraise politics-as-peace. The latter obtains its due only when it is understood—in the light of this contrast—as a difficult and never-final victory of the laws of law over the law of force. The second, related point is that the best way of bringing back politics-as-war, no matter

how unwittingly, is to be blind not only to the fact that most of humankind has lived, historically, under conditions of might (not of right) but also to the fact that even today the suffering condition of most human beings around the world is the war-type, not the peacelike condition. Let alone that when Marx and his successors speak of "class war," the word war means what it says. Hence, on Marx's account the warlike conception of politics is being propounded in Western societies as well.

Resuming the thread of the argument, the question is: For which side—politics-as-war or politics-as-peace—does political realism contend? In the light of the distinction that I have just drawn, the answer is not clear-cut. It is true that the realistic school of politics has, far more often than not, advocated power politics. However, it has not advocated, as a rule, the politics of violence, it has not praised direct action. On the other hand, it is in the name and for the sake of high-flown ideals—today often called democratic ideals—that violence and the politics of violence are best promoted and legitimized.[7] So, who stands where?

Historically, the realistic and the democratic schools of politics have long clashed. It is a fact, that is, that the realists generally sneer at "democratic idealism" and that, conversely, the democratic persuasion looks on realism as an incongenial, if not antidemocratic, approach. Yet, if we ask ourselves why this should be the case, the reasons for this enmity generally turn out to be bad reasons. There is no *necessary* link between a realistic approach and a nondemocratic persuasion; and it is my further contention that the entire quarrel is largely based on taking "realism" for something that it is not. If it is true that there is no such thing, at least in the present-day world, as an *ideal-less politics* and if, therefore, any policy is committed to, and activated by, ideals, it follows from this that there is a ghost that we should exorcise: the ghost of realism as a distinct, self-sufficient type of politics and policy. What, then, is realism? Or, better, with what kind of realism are we left, once that ghost is exorcised? We are left, I suggest, where Machiavelli started, with his "effectual truth": taking stock of how things really are. That is to say, we are left with *cognitive realism.* And when the cognitive element and, indeed, *the* constitutive element of realism are brought to the fore, the argument takes on an entirely new turn.

The question, For what or for whom does political realism take sides? becomes a frivolous question. For the answer is, very simply, that a cognitive realism *does not side with any side.* Any correct descriptive proposition, any empirically verified statement, is a "realistic" statement. Thus, political realism is nothing less, but nothing more, than the factual ingredient of any and all policies. Political realism consists of making us cognizant of the *fact basis*

of politics—period. It cannot reach out at the grand *isms* of politics. If it does, it cheats. For the grand *isms* of politics—the policies of racism, nationalism, liberalism, socialism, communism, populism, and so forth—hinge on value options that are not derived *from* facts but superimposed *upon* facts.

Thus far I have left out of the discussion the charge that political realism is, like *Wertfreiheit,* tainted by a conservative bias.[8] The reason for the omission will now be apparent. In my argument the point becomes pointless. In my argument realism (or, if one prefers, descriptivism) is not supposed to stand alone, for it cannot, alone, dictate a policy.

3.3 *Facts and Values in Benedetto Croce*

Italy's fall to fascism in the 1920s provides a most cogent reminder and illustration of the point that when realists and democrats misperceive each other, and thus fight each other at cross purposes, the real loser is democracy. One of the reasons, hardly a minor one, why prefascist democracy turned out to be so fragile when it was put to test in the aftermath of World War I was that its ideals had been worn away and that they had been undermined most effectively, not by the people who would become fascists, but by the heirs of the *Risorgimento* tradition, by the very people who ought to have been the natural defenders of the democracy that fascism was in the process of burying. The emblematic case is the one of Benedetto Croce, the philosopher who, more than any other, influenced Italian culture during the first half of this century.[9] The case of Croce is not recounted in order to assign responsibility—a matter that is of no interest here—but because it is representative of errors repeated incessantly, today as much as ever, whenever we deal with how facts and ideals, realism and democracy, relate to each other.

Croce always advocated *Realpolitik.* And it was in the name of the "reality of politics" that for almost thirty years he attacked mercilessly the "hypocrisy" of democracy and fought in the breach against what he ironically called the "blandishments of the goddesses Justice and Humanity."[10] Yet, years later, Croce avowed that "it had never seemed to him even remotely possible that Italy could let herself be robbed of the liberty which had cost her so much and that his generation had considered a permanent acquisition."[11] This avowal implies that from 1896 to 1924 Croce fought a wrong battle on the wrong side; he expounded a philosophy of politics that was untrue to what Croce described, in another writing, as the real "tendency of his feelings," as his genuine "mental and moral conformation."[12] Furthermore, since Croce never admitted to this contradiction, the interest of his case resides precisely in how he changed camp—as he did—without retracting his *Realpolitik.*

To be sure, had Croce conceived political realism as a cognitive realism, no retraction would have been needed: He would simply have discovered that realism is, per se, neither democratic nor antidemocratic. However, Croce is an eminent representative of the idealistic, post-Hegelian school of philosophy. This implies not only that he cannot accept a cognitive realism but also that he treats the relation between *is* and *ought,* between reality and ideals, as idealistic philosophers do. Croce, like Hegel, actually does away with the distinction between *is* and *ought,* for the idealistic solution is to merge the *sein* and the *sollen* in a dialectical *Aufhebung* and equivalence. The end result of this merger is that the whole of his political philosophy hovers between too much realism first and too much ideality later, oscillating as it were between a matter-of-fact orientation that leaves no room for ideals and an ethereal approach that leaves no room for reality.

In Croce's antidemocratic phase, which ended in 1924, his failure to distinguish between the is and the ought brought him to cancel the *sollen,* the deontology. The only thing that mattered, in this period, was politics "as it really is." Instead of using realism in order to find a solution for the problems of a liberal-democratic order, he made the former the antithesis of the latter, and refuted the norms and values of democracy by adducing facts. In his next phase, Croce switched to a liberalism that was entirely reduced to a moral ideal of Freedom (always written with a capital). So, after 1924, Croce did become aware of the importance of the "ought" dimension, of those ideals that he had previously neglected; but in so doing he went to the other extreme. His liberalism is formulated only in moral terms, is only "ethical liberalism."[13] At the same time Croce never felt that he had to repudiate his former realism. Croce maintained to the end that politics consisted of nothing but expediency, utility, and force. The inevitable consequence is that Croce's ethical liberalism not only remains in midair but also is always undermined by a realism that is indeed inimical to liberalism. Whatever else the liberal civility may be, it surely is the civility that rejects politics-as-war. The liberal person, first and foremost, abhors violence and condemns direct action. Thus, by characterizing all politics as *Machtpolitik,* as power politics, Croce continued to deny—in his philosophy of Liberty—the typical modus vivendi of liberalism. Croce's solution was, then, to keep liberalism out of politics. In order to preserve his liberalism as a "pure moral ideal," he refused to taint his ideal of Freedom with the empirical techniques and instruments of the liberal state. To the end Croce was to reject constitutionalism, and with it all the practical means of bringing the liberal ideal down to earth and translating it into reality. All in all, in Croce's philosophy the realistic and ethical elements are, at best, merely juxtaposed; facts and values proceed indepen-

dently of each other, like a world and a superworld. When Croce attempted to carry the political realism of his first period over to the philosophy of Freedom of his next period, his doctrine bifurcated between two positions, each of which by itself was inadequate. On the one side, it is power politics in Bismarck's version; on the other, it is an extrapolitical ethic set in a "higher and different sphere."[14] The result is that his political realism conflicts with his liberalism, and that his ethical liberalism contradicts his realism. Realism and liberalism can very well coexist, but they do not do so in Croce. His political philosophy is vitiated first by an excess of realism and then by an excess of moralism. Having started from an inaccurate distinction between real and ideal, or rather by paying no attention to it, Croce never found a way of connecting what is and what ought to be.

The lesson yet to be learned from the exemplary case of Croce is, thus, the centrality of the fact-value relation. The standard wisdom is that facts and values interact. This is, of course, true; but hardly telling. It does not say in what respect the *is* and the *ought* must be kept separate, and in what respect we must never forget that the two poles are interdependent and complementary. With reference to the separation, a fact cannot refute a value, nor, vice versa, can a deontology reject a factual statement. On the other hand, in order to cover the whole case of democracy (or liberalism or socialism) we need both the facts and the ideals. It is only when these two preliminary points are kept in mind that we can spell out the proper interactions between "effectual truth," on the one hand, and our value options in favor of liberalism, democracy, socialism, on the other. Briefly put, no polity can be construed only realistically or only idealistically. If we understand political realism as the search for the factual basis of politics, then the account of the realist stops just where liberalism, democracy, and socialism begin. For liberalism, democracy, and socialism are not the fruit of a *Realpolitik* but, let us say on symmetrical grounds, of a *Phantasiepolitik*. They are built *on* facts, but *by* fantasy. The same applies to the case of the idealist. His *Phantasiepolitik* has to take off from factual knowledge—otherwise it will lead nowhere, just to Erewhon. Ideals cannot replace facts, they are superimposed on them.

3.4 *Mosca, Pareto, and Michels*

The misunderstanding of realism can be condensed in two arguments. The first is this: I do not believe in democracy because reality is in contradiction to it. The second, its retort, is this: Being a democrat, I refuse to be a realist. Neither argument withstands scrutiny. If we do not believe in democracy, it

is because we believe in different values and not because "reality" need exclude, or be in any way incompatible with, the choice of a democratic deontology. There is no contradiction between a realistic cognition and a democratic creed. If realism is "assessing the facts," then there can be democratic, just as there is undemocratic, realism. It is bad logic to maintain that we do not believe in democracy *because* the facts disprove it. Conversely, it is equally illogical to reject a realistic finding because it does not sustain a democratic belief. The way to refute alleged facts is to adduce counterfacts; and a victory over a state-of-fact presupposes that we acknowledge its existence.

Descending to a more concrete plane, the authors that have come to represent, somewhat paradigmatically, the realistic school are Mosca, Pareto, and Michels. This trinity was proposed, I believe, by James Burnham, who perceived the three authors as being, at the same time, Machiavellians and "defenders of freedom."[15] In truth, Croce was far more a Machiavellian than the other three authors. Mosca was not an admirer of Machiavelli;[16] and I find it very difficult, furthermore, to perceive Michels as a Machiavellian. However that may be, Burnham's message was that a Machiavellian could also be a defender of freedom. This is correct. Nonetheless, it is equally certain that Mosca was no admirer of democracy, that Pareto did not believe in parliamentary democracy at all (though admiring Swiss, direct democracy), and that Michels abandoned democracy. Thus the interesting question is: Were they antidemocratic because they were realists? And the complementary question is: Should we dismiss their realism because of its antidemocratic bent?

Let me first take up the latter question, since it can be disposed of more easily. Gaetano Mosca's law of the "political class" (not of the ruling class) is undoubtedly vague, as his basic concept is much too loose.[17] Yet Mosca's intuition is either correct or false and cannot be dismissed by calling it fascist or a provocation. If a somewhat cohesive political class is found in all political systems, then his law has truth value. Conversely, in order to show that he was wrong we should either find political systems in which there is nothing that resembles what he understood by political class, or challenge Mosca's law on the grounds that he wins his case by definition, that is, by defining political class so broadly as to escape falsification.[18] Similarly with Michels. I shall come later to his "iron law of oligarchy" and point to its many weak points.[19] What will not do, however, is to simply brush aside his argument as antidemocratic. His law of oligarchy must be tested, to begin with, on the same grounds on which it was built—on a fact-finding basis. As for Pareto, there is nothing inherently undemocratic in his law of the "circulation of elites." Certainly Pareto denounced the hypocrisies of democracy as vigorously as did Croce, and indeed at a higher pitch than Mosca.[20] But this aspect biases

his scientific work only to the extent that we can show—as it can be shown—that under the cover of a "pure science" Pareto was delivering, more than anything else, his deep and polemical pessimism.

Reverting to the first question, Can it be held that Mosca, Pareto, and Michels were antidemocratic because they were realists? The answer is both no and yes. No in the sense that the nexus is in no way an intrinsic, necessary nexus. The proof is that Mosca remained a realist but stood up, when fascism came to power, as a firm liberal[21]—paralleling Croce's experience. Pareto died in 1923, and thus we cannot know what would have been his long-run reaction to fascism, which in 1923 had not yet taken on the outright form of a dictatorship.[22] As for Michels, he was a disappointed socialist who sought self-government and democracy in organizations. Having discovered that intra-organization democracy was impossible, he was ultimately able to align himself even with fascism—disillusion is an erratic state of mind. Not so Croce, the philosopher, or Gaetano Mosca, the professor of constitutional law. Neither felt bound by his own realism to approve an illiberal system.

On the other hand, it is equally true that Mosca, Pareto, and Michels (like Croce) did derive and justify their dislike for parliamentary democracy from their findings. They all underplayed, though in different ways and for different reasons, the role of ideals and failed to perceive that a value choice is independent from, and by no means an extrapolation of, a state of fact. But if this is their mistake, then we should separate what they confused. That is to say that the antidemocratic bent of their theories is to be attributed to their "bad realism." Conversely, insofar as their realism was truly cognitive, they were not in favor of, or against, anybody; they sought and discovered "laws" that we are still discussing, reformulating, and testing. Mosca, Pareto, and Michels were in error, then, when they held, or implied, that reality contradicts democracy. This is a non sequitur. But the theory of democracy shares in the same error when it holds, or implies, that democracy is repugnant to realism.[23] It is precisely by denying citizenship to a "democratic realism" that we help produce, over and over again, a situation in which the realists are excommunicated, and eventually helped to join the antidemocratic ranks. I very much doubt this to be in the best interest of democracy.

3.5 *Realism versus Rationalism*

If the division between realists opposing democracy and democrats who reject realism is ill founded, we are left to wonder how it comes about. John H. Herz points out that political realism "arises inevitably whenever people become fully aware of the failure of repeated attempts to 'reform' political

life, to create a 'better' world, or to oust the 'wicked.' . . . History, which is the burial ground of such attempted changes, is also the birthplace of realist disillusionment."[24] Realist disillusionment, exactly. This does not mean, as it is often said, that realism spreads pessimism and engenders disappointment. Disillusion follows from illusion. It is idealism, not realism, that produces disillusionment. Realism would prevent it—if it were effective in time. A first consideration is, then, that realism tends to have an antidemocratic sequel in that it happens to be a retarded realism: It follows the disillusionment brought about by overidealistic policies, instead of preceding disillusionment and helping to prevent it. However, in order to get to the heart of the matter we must relate realism—defined as *cognitive realism*—to rationalism. For the misinterpretation of realism is characteristic of the rationalistic *forma mentis,* of the rationalistic mentality. At the source, it is rationalism that fights realism. Therefore, in order to touch bedrock it behooves me to begin by defining rationalism.

In the present context, rationalism is best defined as the opposite of empiricism, or in contradistinction to empiricism. Let it also be repeated that both rationalism and empiricism are being conceived as mental orientations, as mentalities, mental patterns, or, perhaps better, mental mechanisms. Finally, it should be understood that "empiricism" is used here as a shorthand for both empiricism and pragmatism. If the empirical mind expresses itself in the cautious "wait and see" motto, the pragmatic mind transforms it in the adventurous, dynamic "try and see" formula. Despite this and other dissimilarities between the progenitor (empiricism) and its progeny (pragmatism),[25] these internal differentiations arise from a common basis and lose salience vis-à-vis rationalism; for the latter is just as distant from empiricism as it is from pragmatism. So, the contrast can be stated, in brief, as the opposition between rationalism and empiricism.

A first difference is that the empirical (empirico-pragmatic) mentality stays in *medias res,* in the middle of things, and thereby close to what can be seen, touched, and tested, whereas the rationalist mentality soars to a far higher level of abstraction, to a level that is far removed from the facts. Thus, while the empiricist is inclined to work back from reality, the rationalist tends to remake reality as a reflection of "reason." The empirical instinct is to look at how things work out; the rationalist inclination is to rebuild everything *ab imis,* starting anew from a *tabula rasa.* While the empirical tenet is that if a program does not succeed in practice there must be something wrong with the theory, the rationalist tenet is that what is true in theory must also be true in practice. Therefore, if or when things go wrong, it is the practice, not the theory, that must be wrong. Hegel's famous equation was "the real

is rational" (and vice versa). His disciples developed two interpretations of this equation, namely, *(a)* it is the rational that must adjust itself to the real; or, conversely, *(b)* it is the real that must submit to the rational. The latter was the interpretation of the Hegelian left and eminently of Marx. And there is little doubt that it is the "left version" that is congenial, or more congenial, to the rationalistic mind. The victory of Marx and the Hegelian left over the Hegelian right is, at the same time, a victory of rationalism.

Perhaps the difference that generates all the other differences is that for the rationalistic *Gestalt* the criterion is coherence, not applicability. Rationalists are concerned with the construction of orderly logical relationships and do not wish to be asked whether such relationships tell us anything about the real world. Thus, while empiricism tends to be tentative, rationalism tends to be definitive; while the former is eager to learn from experience and to proceed by testing and retesting, the latter goes ahead without tests; while the empiricist pays little heed to rigorous coherence and long chains of demonstration, the rationalist believes only in deductive consistency. In the end, the empiricist turns out to be reasonable rather than rational, while the rationalist puts logical rigor above everything else and hence is rational even at the cost of being unreasonable.

It may appear that the contrast is not as clear-cut as I have drawn it. Yet I do not feel that it is overdrawn. Of course, there will be individuals who balance and blend, within themselves, a rationalistic and an empirico-pragmatic orientation. These exceptions do not detract from the fact that when reference is made to cultures and cultural patterns, the two mental mechanisms fall wide apart. Until the end of World War II and the revolution in mass communication, our two mental patterns clearly characterized the Anglo-American world vis-à-vis continental Europe. I am not implying that everybody who spoke English was an empiricist and that everybody who spoke French or German or Italian was a rationalist. Obviously, we are dealing with prevalences and tendencies; and it is also the case that every culture has its non-conforming, rebellious intellectual minorities. There is a rationalistic undercurrent in Anglo-American thought, just as we find an anti-rationalistic line (which is sometimes empirical but more often plainly irrationalistic) in the history of European culture. Nonetheless, even today American or English "rationalists" are much less such than their European counterparts. Conversely, the continental European "empiricists" still are an impure breed. As reciprocal communication exposure and actual mobility increased, the geographical lines of division have become increasingly blurred. Yet even the hybrids remain, to date, very different hybrids. By and large, Westerners are still marked either by a rationalistic or by an empirico-pragmatic underlying cultural imprint.

Reverting to the initial point, How does realism relate, respectively, to rationalism and empiricism? the reply has already been detected, I trust, between the lines. The empirical mind instinctively conceives problems from a practical angle and is characterized by a matter-of-fact anchorage; and this is the same as saying that the empirical mind is characteristically "realistic." A person nurtured by an empirical culture instinctively tends to use words as a means of arriving at the thing and, therefore, in their observational and descriptive meanings. This is the cognitive orientation of which realism consists. Conversely, rationalism is neither interested nor suited to describing the world as it really is. Rationalists are interested in constructing prototypes and seeking definitive solutions. They want to reconstruct reality in accordance with *la raison,* which is the same as saying that rationalism is poorly equipped to face practical problems and that an anti-realistic or, at least, an unrealistic attitude is congenial to rationalism.

It is, then, within the ambit of a rationalistic culture that the hostility between realists, on the one hand, and democrats, on the other, is deeply rooted. The rejection of "realism" is a recent and still marginal import in the Anglo-American world; it is, instead, a long-standing feature of the rationalistic democracies. And when a democracy is characterized by an anti-realistic bias, this starts a vicious circle. A democracy deprived of internal realistic correctives becomes more and more an "unreal" democracy in which rhetoric and deeds, ideals and practice, fall more and more apart. Under such circumstances it is only natural that political realism should link with antidemocratic stands. But, let it be repeated, this is not because realism is against democracy as such. It is, rather, the enemy of unrealistic, that is, rationalistic democracy.

3.6 *Rational Democracy and Empirical Democracy*

The preceding discussion winds up at this conclusion: Empirical democracies are naturally realistic, while rational democracies are apt to be anti-realistic. In the light of this conclusion the argument shifts to, and hinges on, the distinction between rational (rationalistic) democracy and empirical democracy. The former can be identified, historically, as French-type democracy. The latter is, at least historically, a democracy of the Anglo-American type. But the distinction needs buttressing. The question is: What is meant by *rationalistic democracies,* and what distinguishes them from *empirical democracies*?

A first obvious difference is that whereas the democracies of the French type were born *ex novo* from a revolutionary rupture, the Anglo-American democracy is the outcome of a gradual and largely continuous process of historical growth. The English Revolutions did not vindicate, politically, a fresh

start but the restoration of the Englishman's "birthright," that is, a pristine Anglo-Saxon constitution (a largely mythical one, to be sure) that had been affirmed against the Norman kings in Magna Charta and had been trampled upon by the Tudor and Stuart usurpations. As for the American Revolution, it was not, in truth, a revolution—it was a secession. The American Declaration of Independence of 1776 was, in essence, a claim for the right to advance along the path of the liberties already existing in England. The French Revolution was, instead, a very deliberate break with, and rejection of, the past. This original difference implies a sequel of other differences. It would lead me astray to review them, but two points are worth recalling. As Bryce pointed out, the French people adopted democracy "not merely because the rule of the people was deemed the completest remedy for pressing evils . . . but also in deference to general abstract principles which were taken for self-evident truths."[26] And Tocqueville seized on another important difference when he noted: "While in England those who wrote about politics and those who engaged in it shared the same life . . . in France the political world was sharply divided into two non-communicating provinces. . . . In one [the politicians] administered; in the other [the writers] formulated abstract principles. Above the real society . . . little by little an imaginary society took shape in which everything seemed simple and coordinated, uniform, just, and rational."[27]

The connection of French-type democracy with rationalism (abstract principles and imaginary society), on the one hand, and of Anglo-American democracy with empiricism, on the other, has long been detected. But the theme still awaits systematic treatment. It should be understood that reference is specifically made, in what follows, to how a people conceive and construct their own democracy and, therefore, to internal (not foreign) politics. It should also be understood that while it can be plausibly argued that realism is nurtured by time, that is, by an adequate span of historical experience, the incidence of the time factor is a complex issue that I cannot afford to discuss.[28]

Both empirical and rational democracies have popular sovereignty as their point of departure. Yet the English constitution does not recognize any such entity as "the people" as having a constitutional status. Likewise, the bulk of the American literature on democracy has addressed far less the question, What is democracy? and far more the question, How does democracy work? Until the early 1960s, American authors have generally dwelt more on the instrumentalities of democracy than on the concept of popular sovereignty. In the overall, then, the characteristic of the Anglo-American theory of democracy is to be a theory on the ways and means of democratic government, hardly a theory on its ultimate principles and premises. By contrast, in the first article of the Constitution of the Weimar Republic—indeed a prototype

of constitutional rationalism—we read that *die Staatsgewalt geht vom Volke aus,* that the power of the state goes from the people up; and this premise lays the foundation of a tightly knit deductive argument. Again, it is no accident that neither Rousseau's general will nor the Romantic *Volksgeist* have ever struck roots on Anglo-American soil. It is not only that "people" is, in English, a plural, while it is a singular in French, Italian, and German. The grammatical difference reflects a difference in levels of abstraction. The English people are *concrete* people; the French *peuple* (and equivalents) is an abstract entity, a *one* resulting from the abstractive elaboration that is congenial to the rational *Gestalt.* The difference, then, is that from the beginning of their respective constructions the rationalistic democracies have leaned heavily on a concept of the People (capitalized to render the difference) that is not even understood, let alone approved, by the empirical mind.

The same difference that we find at the point of departure exists at the point of arrival. In English-speaking countries it is customary to speak of "government," while Europeans almost always say "State" (capitalized). Now, there is the same distance between government and State as between the people (plural) and one People (singular). Once again, it is a difference in the level of abstraction. The rationally trained mind is concerned with the State and not with the government—and even less with governments—also because the latter are fluid and changing occurrences, while the State is a fixed structure. And, needless to say, the rationalist (unlike the empiricist) is ill at ease when confronted with muddling through, with shapelessness and fluidity. So, "State" does not mean in the Anglo-American context what it means in the European one. The empiricist, even when he switches from the concept of government to the concept of State, is likely to keep in mind that behind the entity there are still concrete persons. The rationalist, instead, has in mind a depersonalized, impersonal, juridical form.[29]

Between the people and the state, the term *a quo* and the term *ad quem,* the difference that separates a rational from an empirical democracy can be ultimately reduced to whether the chain of argument is tight or loose, rigid or flexible. That is to say that rational democracies are constructed deductively and rigorously from premise to consequence, joining one link of the chain to the next one as tightly as possible; whereas the construction of empirical democracies largely results from feedbacks and, in this sense, from inductive elements.

To illustrate, it is certainly no accident that democratic regimes in a large part of continental Europe evolved in the direction of parliamentary systems, if not assembly systems, whereas a similar development did not take place either in England (where parliamentary government is an inaccurate name

for a cabinet system) or in the United States. Likewise, it is surely not fortuitous that all continental European democracies have abandoned (or never adopted) the single-member district system and have basically settled for electoral systems of proportional representation. If the people's power premise is developed with deductive rigor, it follows that *(a)* true representation is, and can only be, proportional representation; *(b)* parliament must be the real site of representative sovereignty; and *(c)* governments should only be (as the wording says) "executives," i.e., executors of the wills that precede the governmental will. In a deductive chain of reasoning all of the above is a must, a set of necessary logical consequences. How is it, then, that the Anglo-American democracies have not obliged to such "must"? In my argument it is because they are empirical democracies that are not construed deductively but, rather, on the experience that efficient and effective government is important, that assembly systems are malfunctioning systems, and that proportional representation may create more problems than it solves. The point is that the empiricist is impressed neither by "democratic consistency" nor by the display of a "well reasoned" democracy.

The foregoing is not intended as an appraisal of the respective merits and demerits of rational and empirical democracies but as a way of buttressing differences. To be sure, it can well be held that the explanation of dysfunctional, so-called nonworking, democracy is precisely that it is a rational democracy. As Goethe said, there is nothing more inconsistent than supreme consistency[30]—and the fruit of extreme consistency, at least in politics, is that the rationalistic democracies are always in danger of becoming imaginary democracies, far too removed from reality to be able to master the problems arising in the real world. But this is not the point that I wish to pursue.

As I was saying earlier, rationality is not reasonableness, and reasonableness seems to descend from, and corresponds to, the empirical mentality. Probably, the democratic fabric and modus vivendi do require reasonableness more than Cartesian rigor. If this is so, and this is the note on which I wish to conclude, the worldwide appeal of empiricism is not in proportion to its merits. Rousseau, Hegel, and Marx travel throughout the world, and the last is read (and perhaps understood) even in China; whereas no English or American author has been able to gain any comparable influence outside the borders of his own culture. "Rousseau fired a thousand for one whom Benthamism convinced"—it is Bryce who acknowledged it.[31] Rationalism travels and empiricism does not. Why? In order to be able to circulate a political doctrine must acquire a universality, a level of abstraction and a theoretical backbone to which the empirical mentality pays insufficient heed. While the diffusion and penetration of ideas—at least, in their ideological form—increase all over

the world, the empirical mind often manifests itself into a "practicalism" (to use the term of William James) that makes a point of being able to do without ideas. To the extent that this is so, the Anglo-American culture may well train a formidable *homo faber,* but is in danger of not being able to live up to its responsibility to educate the *homo sapiens* needed to nourish and complement him. Thus, if the rationalist is not trained to solve practical problems, practicalism lacks an adequate intellectual grip and, indeed, intellectual force. It would be much to the advantage of both sides if the rationalistic and empirical approaches could meet halfway. This is the path that I attempt to pursue in this work.

Notes

1. H.D. Lasswell and A. Kaplan measure the difference between Aristotle and Machiavelli as follows: "A rough classification of a sample of three hundred sentences . . . yielded these proportions of political philosophy (demand statements and valuations) to political science (statements of fact and empirical hypotheses): Aristotle's *Politics,* twenty-five to seventy-five. . . . Machiavelli's *Prince* . . . consisted entirely (in the sample) of statements of political science in the present sense" (*Power and Society: A Framework for Political Inquiry* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950], p. 118, n. 15).

2. Until Machiavelli, "state" generally meant *status,* station. The term designates for the first time a political entity in the opening sentence of *The Prince:* "All states and powers that have held and hold rule over men are . . . either republics or principalities." The new meaning reappears in this passage: "When the Cardinal of Roano said that the Italians did not understand war, I replied that the French did not understand the state" (chap. 3). However, both in the *Discourses* and in the *History of Florence* Machiavelli used the term state in the medieval sense. See O. Condorelli, "Il Nome 'Stato' in Machiavelli," *Archivio Giuridico* 6 (1923), pp. 77-112; F. Chiappelli, *Studi sul Linguaggio del Machiavelli,* and *Nuovi Studi sul Linguaggio del Machiavelli* (Firenze: Le Monnier, 1952 and 1969).

3. This development results from a secularization of politics that differed, in Italy, from what was happening elsewhere in that the Italian prince of the Renaissance did not cloak his power with any sacred or charismatic attributes: for him it was *potestas,* power, which gave him *auctoritas,* not vice versa. See F. Chabod, *Del "Principe" di Nicolò Machiavelli* (Milano: 1926).

4. So much so that in Franz Neumann's tripartition of dictatorships, the type "caesaristic dictatorship" indicated the mass-approved dictator (this being the difference with respect to "simple dictatorship"). See *The Democratic and the Authoritarian State* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1957), pp. 233-47.

5. This inquiry is pursued in G. Sartori, "What Is Politics," *Political Theory* 1 (1973).

6. See Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political,* trans. G. Schwab (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1976), who provides the most articulate advocacy of

this approach. An excellent selection (by G. Miglio and P. Schiera) of his writings is C. Schmitt, *Le Categorie del Politico* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1972).

7. This point is addressed in chapter 4, section 6.

8. The analogy with *Wertfreiheit* (see chapter 1, section 1) does not entail that realism and freedom-from-value are assimilable. In themselves, value cancellation and/or value avoidance are not of cognitive import. *Wertfreiheit* may thus be a necessary but not a sufficient condition of descriptive knowledge.

9. Croce's production is truly enormous: some 80 volumes (in the final edition of his works) and some 4000 titles. For an assessment of his political philosophy, see N. Bobbio, *Politica e Cultura* (Torino: Einaudi, 1955), chap. 7 and esp. chap. 13; and G. Sartori, *Stato e Politica nel Pensiero di B. Croce* (Napoli: Morano, 1966). The essentials of Croce's political philosophy are in the writings collected in *Materialismo Storico ed Economia Marxistica* (1896-1906), in *Etica e Politica* (1915-30), and in the 1923-25 issues of the review *La Critica*.

10. *Materialismo Storico ed Economia Marxistica* (Bari: Laterza, 1919), Preface to 3d ed., p. xiv.

11. *Filosofia, Poesia e Storia* (Napoli: Ricciardi, 1951), p. 1172.

12. *Pagine Sparse* (Napoli: Ricciardi, 1943), 2:382. See also p. 373; and *La Critica*, 1925, p. 347.

13. See in *Etica e Politica* (Bari: Laterza, 1943), the essay of 1926: "La Concezione Liberale come Concezione della Vita"; and Croce's conclusive article of 1939, "The Roots of Liberty," in R.N. Anshen, ed., *Freedom: Its Meaning* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1940). Note that in Croce "liberalism" and "liberal" are used in their historical meanings (which are quite different from those in American usage, as explained in chapter 13, herein).

14. *Etica e Politica*, p. 284.

15. As his title says: *The Machiavellians: Defenders of Freedom* (New York: John Day, 1943).

16. This is well pointed out by J.H. Meisel, *The Myth of the Ruling Class: Gaetano Mosca and the Elite* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1958), pp. 246-85, esp. 264-65.

17. Mosca's major work bears in Italian the title, *Elements of Political Science* (1896), not *The Ruling Class*, as misleadingly translated in English. His doctrine is thoroughly analyzed by Mario delle Piane, *Bibliografia di G. Mosca* (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1949); idem, *G. Mosca, Classe Politica e Liberalismo* (Napoli: E.S.I., 1952). See also Ettore Albertoni, ed., *Studies on the Political Thought of G. Mosca* (Milano-Montreal: Giuffrè, 1982).

18. This analysis is pursued in chapter 6, section 5.

19. In chapter 6, section 6.

20. In truth, as Bobbio correctly points out, "the democracy against which he [Mosca] constantly directed his attacks was the pseudo-scientific theory . . . according to which the better political societies are those where the majority governs. . . . But if 'democracy' was understood in the only sense which, according to Mosca, corresponded with the facts, that is, the tendency which brings on a gradual or total renewal of the political class, he . . . was favorable to the development . . . of such a tendency, even if he wanted it to take place with the utmost circumspection" (N. Bobbio, "Gaetano Mosca e la Scienza Politica," in *Saggi su la Scienza Politica in Italia*

[Bari: Laterza, 1969], pp. 188-89). Actually Mosca's aversion to democracy was above all a condemnation of the parliamentarianism of his epoch.

21. On Mosca's liberalism (in the European sense), in addition to the works cited of Delle Piane and Bobbio, see P. Piovani, "Il Liberalismo di G. Mosca," *Momenti della Filosofia Giuridico-Politica Italiana* (Milano: Giuffrè, 1951); and A. Passerin d'Entrèves, "Gaetano Mosca e la Libertà," in *Il Politico* 4 (1959).

22. That Pareto too would have resented Mussolini's dictatorship is suggested by G. La Ferla, *Vilfredo Pareto Filosofo Volterriano* (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1954), esp. pp. 160-71 (a work that approaches in a suggestive, though incomplete, manner the complex figure of Pareto). S.E. Finer reaches the same conclusion on the basis of Pareto's correspondence; see "Pareto and Pluto-Democracy," *American Political Science Review*, June 1968.

23. This is very much the stance, today, of anti-elitists and, I believe, their error. See chapter 6, section 8.

24. *Political Realism and Political Idealism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 27.

25. The descendance can be rendered as follows: English empiricism transforms itself into American pragmatism when faced with, and challenged by, a limitless virgin continent to be conquered. It is the "moving frontier" element that goes to explain, though not alone, the diversification.

26. *Modern Democracies* (New York: Macmillan, 1924), 1:208.

27. *L' Ancien Régime et la Révolution* (Paris: 1856), II, chap. 13, pp. 222-23.

28. This incidence may be left at noting that European short-lived democracies are unrealistic in internal matters but much less so in their foreign policy, where continuity has been manintained despite the changes of regime. Conversely, American democracy is internally realistic but highly idealistic in foreign policy, a relatively new ambit in its experience.

29. As correctly pointed out by F.W. Maitland, the reluctance of the English to use the word "state" is correlative to their reluctance to accept the doctrine of the juridical personality of the state. See "The Crown as Corporation," in *Collected Papers*, vol. 3 (Cambridge: 1911).

30. *Maximen und Reflectionen*, 899.

31. *Modern Democracies*, 1:46.