

A STRATEGY FOR THE COMPARATIVE STUDY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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PURPOSE AND PROSPECT

Our purpose in this paper is to describe, illustrate, and argue the merits of a *strategy for the comparative study of local government*.¹ This strategy was developed in the course of the authors' attempts to work out a satisfactory approach to the study of local government in the developing areas and particularly in South and Southeast Asia. Our initial criteria for a "satisfactory approach" were fairly primitive, but they proved to be demanding nonetheless. We want to work out (1) a fairly *low-budget* scheme (2) which would have fairly high payoffs in *general significance*. Before very long we began to feel that any research scheme whose results would be likely to have much general significance would have to employ conceptual frameworks and methods of data collection and analysis which could be applied to local government phenomena not only in South and Southeast Asia, nor even only in the developing areas, but indeed wherever such phenomena might be found. These considerations led us to redefine and, in the process, substantially to complicate the criteria which an approach would have to meet if it were to be regarded as being "satisfactory." The result is a strategy of inquiry which we feel may have considerable general import.

During the next few years we intend to implement this strategy, within the limits of our own somewhat meager resources, in connection with data to be drawn from South and Southeast Asia. We intend to do so, that is, unless the judgement of our

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professional peers leads us to believe that it is either wicked or foolish to do so. "Free personal investment counselling," however, is not our only objective in presenting this paper. In thus submitting our proposal to review by a wider community of local government scholars we are also explicitly suggesting that the strategy we propose might deserve to enlist the collective resources of all or many of those scholars who are interested in local government and thus achieve implementation with data drawn from all parts of the worlds, both "developing" and, if there are such things, "developed" areas. Two basic questions therefore underlie our motives for presenting this paper: (1) Is the implementation of our strategy in South and Southeast Asia a worthwhile project for the *authors*? (2) is the more general implementation of the same strategy a worthwhile focus for the attention and energies of *local government scholars generally*?

Any decision to adopt and implement a strategy for inquiry involves a willingness to exploit some parcel of *resources* in the execution of some *method* on behalf of some *goal*. Any such decision is fraught with risk. Resources are scarce. The value that may be forthcoming from yet-to-be-achieved goals, even when achieved, is always problematical. Method designed to achieve goals are seldom more than untested hypotheses. Yet strategic decisions have to be made if scholarship is to be a rational enterprise. Goals have to be formulated and sought. Method have to be invented and used. Resources have to be made available and exploited. The problem is one of estimating an optimum use of scarce resources in the pursuit of goals. Political research operates in a context of sharply limited resources. Intellect, organization, energy, time, cost--all are scarce. Waste, whether it derives from the ineffective pursuit of right goals--or from the pursuit of wrong goals, effective or otherwise, is a luxury we can't afford.

Summing up, it seems that an evaluation of the worth of the strategy which we are about to propose should manifest itself in the form of answers to the following two questions:

(1) How sizeable a portion of our resources--the authors' own personal resources and/or the collective resources of the general community of local government scholars--does the *goal* posited in our strategy deserve, if indeed it deserves any at all?

(2) If the resources required by the method we propose fall within this permissible limit, how much of a contribution to the achievement of the posited goal is the *method* likely to make, if indeed it can be expected to make any contribution at all.

Evaluation of the strategy therefore requires both a *value judgement* (whether or not the goal is desirable) and an *empirical prediction* (whether or not the method is adapted to the goal). In the next section, we shall describe the key characteristics of the goal to which we have directed our attention. In the section after that, we shall describe the method by means of which we hope to make considerable progress toward achieving that goal.

THE GOAL

Criteria for a Theory

The goal presupposed in our strategy is a certain kind of *theory*. This theory, if it is to satisfy us, must meet a set of *six criteria*:

(1) It must be a *theory of local government* and not a theory of anything else, i.e., not a theory of community politics, nor of small governments, nor of city government, etc.

(2) It must be an *empirical theory* and not only other kind of theory, i.e., not a normative theory, etc.

(3) It must be a *dynamic theory*, i.e., a theory which focusses on the explanation of change-in-time and not on the description of static conditions.

(4) It must be a *general theory*, i.e., a theory which purports to apply over the entire range of relevant phenomena, unrestricted by time and place,

(5) It must be a *political theory*, i.e., a theory whose central subject-matter focus is on a distinctively "political" side of human life and from a distinctively "political" point of view.

(6) It must be an *ethically significant theory*, i.e., a theory whose empirical content is focussed on questions whose answers have direct implications for the value judgements and value systems of human beings.

Such in a nutshell is the kind of theory which we are proposing as a worthwhile objective for students of local government. However, we need to get beneath these summary abstractions and convey more concretely what each of these criteria involves. In the remainder of this section we shall examine each of them in turn and in that way round out the picture of our strategic goal.

A Theory of Local Government

If the theory we have in mind is to be a theory of local government we need to have a reasonable clear idea about what "local government" means to us. What is the nature of the class of phenomena to which, for purposes of this theory, we wish to apply the term "local government?"

Local government is a *pattern of binding rules, rule-making, rule-obedience, and rule-enforcement activities*, which is characteristic of a *territorially defined collectivity* of human beings, and which meets three additional criteria:

(1) There is some set of binding (enforced and obeyed) rules applicable to the membership of the collectivity under consideration.

(2) There is at least one other set of binding rules applicable both to the collectivity under consideration and to at least one territorially more inclusive collectivity under consideration is a part.

(3) When rules appertaining solely to the collectivity under consideration are in conflict with rules appertaining to the more inclusive collectivity (or collectivi-

ties), then rules heretofore binding only on the collectivity under consideration cease to be binding.

Under these conditions, then, a collectivity's "local government" is that set of rules, rule-making, rule-obedience, and rule-enforcement activities which is binding only on the collectivity when that same collectivity is also subject to rules binding on at least one more inclusive collectivity. Such, in brief, is the fundamental unit of analysis to which the theory of local government which we want to devise must purport to apply.

There are four important things about this definition that are worth noting at this point. In the first place the definition contains no expectation that collectivities will necessarily have governments of any kind, "local" or otherwise. From our point of view a territorially defined collectivity may or may not have a government of any kind. For example, collectivities presently lying athwart the political boundaries of two or more nation states probably in most case do not have government of any kind, i.e., government which are fitted coterminously to the boundaries of the collectivities themselves. True, various parts of any such collectivity may be governed but the collectivity, taken as a whole, is not. Furthermore, a collectivity may be governed but it may not be governed "locally." That is to say it may submit to patterns of governance but not to patterns which are applicable over any more inclusive collectivity. Such a collectivity has no local government even though it certainly has a government--usually in this day and age, a "national" government. Within the present frame of reference, therefore, collectivities: (1) may or may not have government; (2) if they have government, these governments may or may not be local governments.

A second implication of this definition is that "state" governments under so-called "federal" systems are local governments since, in every case, conflicts among rules are resolved by rules, rule-making, rule-obedience, and rule-enforcement acti-

vities appertaining to the more inclusive "national" collectivity. In the United States, for example, the U.S. Constitution and its chief interpreter, the U.S. Supreme Court, are national entities. If conflicts between state-wide and nation-wide rules are to be resolved then they must be resolved by deference to national rulings, whether accepted locally as legitimate or imposed from the national center against the will of the locality. If such conflicts are not resolved this way then the only other solution is then destruction of the national system of government and the simultaneous shift in the political status of the "state" from that of a "local government" within the original nation to that of a new local government within a new nation or to that of a "national" government in its own right. In federal systems, in short, "states" are not sovereign entities. If they were they would be nations and would relate to others in patterns of inter-national relations rather than in a pattern of joint deference to a more inclusive national pattern of rule. In referring to "local government," therefore, we are referring to federated states no less than to municipalities, counties, boroughs, and other such more "obviously" local governments.

A third implication of this definition is that in it the meaning of "local government" inheres in the relationship existing between territorially defined collections of human beings and not in any non-relational characteristic such as size. Local government is not "small" government, or "village government" or "city" government. While a "small" collectivity may be governed locally in one part of the world, in another part of the world an equally small collectivity may be governed supra-locally. History—both ancient and contemporary—reveals the city-state or near city-state as a political phenomenon which is scarcely a "local government" but which if size were the criterion, would certainly be "small." Similarly, very "large" collectivities may come to be governed as local units. For example, if one is willing to take a dynamic view of the future, should contemporary pretensions to national sovereignty ever subside, then the collec-

tivities currently identified as "The United States," "Great Britain," "France," etc., may very well become units of local government subordinated to a limited number of regional governments or even to a world-wide government to which all presently "national" entities will defer.² In any event, the main point should be clear: government is "local" by virtue of nothing other than its relationship to some more inclusive pattern of rule.

A fourth and final characteristic of this definition which may deserve mention here is that it says nothing about local "self-government" or about "local representative government." We choose to regard degrees of self government and of the development of local representative institutions as dimensions or variables with respect local government may vary and not as adjuncts to the definition of local government itself. Within our frame of reference, furthermore, local governments may be more or less "self-governing" and have more or less highly developed representative institutions associated with them and there need be no regular empirical relationship between these two variables, i. e., highly "self-governing" localities may do their local governing

² Indeed, our thinking on the problem of local government seems very frequently to make us feel that there is a key point at which any theory of local government must contain some of the same propositions as an adequate theory of international relations. The questions of the conditions under which collectivities of human beings come to have, or cease to have, local governments coterminously associated with them is, it seems to us, a question which has importance both for the study of international relationships and for the study of local government. When does a locally governed collectivity become a nation and when, obversely, does a national collectivity become a locally governed unit, are clearly crucial concerns of the international politics students. This is true, in a way that is not entirely facetious, not only in a theoretical sense but in a very pragmatic sense as well: when the world government emerges the international relations specialist is likely to be out of a job and local government specialist, by dint of the same development, cast into a prominent role in the discipline of political science.

through extremely non-representative institutions and governments characterized by highly developed local representative institutions may be found in localities which enjoy extremely low levels of "self-government." In any event, these two aspects of local government are carefully deprived of any definitional status. We do not have to find self-governing localities with developed representative institutions to say that we have found an instance of local government.

So much for the definition of local government with which our proposed theory must be centrally concerned. If the theory applies to this kind of phenomenon then the first of our six theoretical criteria will have been met. But what of the other five criteria.

An Empirical Theory

What is involved in the requirement that our theory of local government be an empirical one with respect to which *it seems tenable to assume that sensory data can be found which can confirm or disconfirm any proposition contained in the theory.* A theory cannot be an empirical theory if sensory data (facts) cannot be distinguished from value judgements, or if the meaningfulness of such a distinction is denied. We incline, along with a good many if not all of our peers, to the view that fact and values can indeed be distinguished. From this point of view there is a major class of propositions, one which figures prominently in theorizing about local government, for which the assumption that validating or invalidating sensory data can be found, seems untenable to us. Such propositions are "normative" ones and have as their identifying characteristic an ethical injunction or distinction, i.e., they purport that certain acts should be undertaken or that some states of affairs are better or more

desirable than others. Such propositions, in our view, do not qualify as empirical ones and therefore have no place in an empirical theory.³

All of this is not to say, however, that values are not intimately involved in the development of empirical theory. They are value judgements impinge directly on the selection of theoretical questions to pursue and theoretical distinctions to emphasize. Such judgements also impinge upon the identification of the kinds of sensory data that will be construed as validating or invalidating evidence and the conditions under which they will be so construed. They impinge, furthermore, on the selection of criteria by means of which the occurrence of particular sensory experiences will be detected. Nor is this in any sense a complete inventory of the points in the research process at which values intercede as causal agents affecting the character of hypotheses, observations, and conclusions.⁴ However, to say that values influence theory and research, influence even what kinds of circumstances are construed as "facts," is not to say that facts and values are *indistinguishable*. The essence of the "normative" proposition is that it cannot be "validated" or "invalidated" without some prior judgment about the value or desirability of some empirical condition or state of affairs to which the proposition applies. In contrast, an empirical proposition quite simply contains no such prior judgment concerning the desirability of any particular state of affairs referred to in the proposition and can therefore be evaluated without reference to any standard of value which is appropriate for the evaluation of such states of affairs.

For example, while all sorts of prior value commitments may be involved in the decision to concern oneself with "political development" as a variable and in the decision to accept a particular configuration of observations as an index to "political development," it is perfectly feasible to set forth propositions which can be regarded as being relatively valid or invalid without reference to any standard of value appropriate for the evaluation of "political development" as an empirical state of affairs or process. To define "political development"

³ This is not to say, however, that we enter upon our strategy from a "value-free" perspective or that we are looking toward the development of a theory which has no normative or ethical implications. Indeed an explicit criterion for the theory we have in mind is that it be an "ethically significant" one. Later on in this paper we will try to indicate what we mean by ethical significance and how it is possible for a wholly empirical theory to qualify for such significance.

⁴ For an imaginative and provocative discussion of the role of values in social inquiry and of the possibility or desirability of a "value-free" mode of social inquiry see Robert E. Agger, "Political Research as Political Action," in Robert S. Cahill and Stephen P. Hendley, (eds.), *The politics of Education in the Local Community* (Danville, Illinois: The Interstate Printers and Publishers, inc., 1964). pp. 207 - 232.

as a particular configuration of data, or to theorize that some other particular configuration of data gives rise to "political development" as thus defined, implies absolutely nothing about the *desirability* of "political development," and one need not himself arrive at any value standard applicable to the evaluation of "political development" versus other states of affairs in order to employ the definition or validate the proposition.⁵

So much for the discussion of the requirement that our theory of local government be an empirical one. In the hope that this discussion has clarified more than it has confused, let us proceed to an analysis of the third basic theoretical criterion which seems important to us.

A Dynamic Theory

The theory which we are trying to develop must also be a dynamic one. This means that its central focus must be on *change* and on the causes and *consequences* of change. A dynamic theory of local government should contain propositions which assert the causal conditions under which local government phenomena undergo change and/or the consequences for other aspects of social life of shifting local government phenomena. A dynamic proposition is an "if...then" proposition. It states that *if* some condition or set of conditions undergoes a specified kind and degree of change *then* some other condition or set of conditions can be expected subsequently to undergo a specified kind and degree of change. In short, a dynamic theory deals centrally with cause and effect relationships. The basic concern of a dynamic theory of local government must be with the causes and effects of changing local

⁵ Something that often happens, however, is that a particular theorist - - and this is probably true of most if not all political theorists - - does in fact prefer some states of affairs to others. That being the case he is apt to designate those states which he desires by names which, in his culture, have acquired positive value connotations, and to treat less desirable states of affairs in a less complimentary manner. All this means is that we can often infer what states of affairs he *does* value positively or negatively on the basis of terms he uses to identify them. At the same time, however, if we concede him his use of terms for purposes of analysis - - however much we may feel that he has misappropriated positive words and applied them to conditions which seem of negative value to us - - we can still determine the relative validity of his propositions without reference to a value standard which is applicable to the evaluation of the states of affairs to which the proposition refers.

government phenomena and propositions which do not themselves reflect that concern have no place in such a theory.⁶

A General Theory

Our theory of local government, in addition to being empirical and dynamic, must be general in purport. A general theory of local government is one whose propositions purport to be applicable throughout the universe of instances of local government phenomena, whenever and wherever such instances might occur.⁷ It does not limit itself to propositions applicable only to particular areas (eg., South and Southeast Asia) or to particular periods of history (e.g., modern times). It purports that certain kinds of local government phenomena can be expected to occur not simply at certain places or in certain times but instead under specific dynamic conditions, i.e., when one or more dynamic explanatory variables take on particular values. Place and time are not dynamic variables but only media in which phenomena undergo variation. Theory of local government, if it is to have general import, must contain no reference to place and time and must instead focus exclusively upon relationships between dynamic variable.

It is moderately interesting to know, for example, that local government assumes one form in India and another form in Thailand in the year 1964. It would be inordinately *more* interesting to know, however, precisely *why* this pattern of variation has taken place and under what conditions it might be otherwise. Yet no one would seriously suggest that "India" or "Thailand" or "1964" are instances of variables of variables which have *caused* these particular patterns of local government to come about. "India" and "Thailand" don't cause things; nor does "1964." Instead, "India in 1964" and "Thailand in 1964" must be regarded simply as symbols which *stand for* particular constellations of variables interacting

⁶ Later on in this paper, when we take up the matter of the method we have elected to employ as a part of our theory-building strategy we will take due account of the much observed fact that observed patterns of correlation or covariation do not necessarily reflect cause-and-effect relationships. While that is true, and while the method we intend to employ is essentially a method of the imaginative interpretation of correlational data, still our basic concern in theory-building in local government is to isolate cause-and-effect relationships and therefore, at the theoretical level, propositions should be of a cause-and-effect nature.

⁷ Such a theory may be probabilistic or deterministic in character. It will probably, in this case, be probabilistic. Even probabilistic theories, however, purport to be true -- at some level of probability or confidence -- for an entire universe.

in particular ways and having particular patterns of local government as their consequences. It may be quite possible to devise a dynamic proposition stating that if and as constellations of these underlying variables undergo specific kinds of changes then specific patterns of change in patterns of local government may be expected to emerge. This proposition may be stated in the most general terms. Observation of the cases of India and Thailand in 1964 may then reveal that the local governmental differences observed in 1964 between the two countries do indeed stem from underlying differences with respect to these underlying variables and that, therefore, not only has the observed difference been satisfactorily explained but furthermore we have as yet found no empirical reason for rejecting the general proposition in terms of which this explanation has been advanced. Our proposition might equally well encourage us to predict that if and as the underlying causal variables undergo change in the direction of convergence in the two countries, then their respective patterns of local government may similarly converge, or that if trends in underlying variables should be divergent then similar trends in local government should follow.

It is worth noting that it is precisely the dynamic focus on change and variation, and on cause-and-effect relationships, that makes generalization both feasible and meaningful in theory-building. Except in the limiting and probably unattainable condition of an absolutely static universe of local government phenomena, the only kind of proposition which can possibly have general import is the dynamic cause - and - effect proposition. Static generalizations, which purport simply that some condition exists generally, or exists in some places and times and not in others, and which contain no reference to the dynamic contingencies which generate that condition, cannot possibly have general significance unless the universe is kind enough to sit still for it. The universe, however, seems to be by no means so docile. It changes constantly. Dynamic propositions, propositions expressing cause-and-effect relationships among dynamic variables, are literally the only hope for those of us who are searching for general knowledge in a variable and changing world.

A Political Theory

What is entailed by the requirement that a theory of local government be a specifically "political" one? We base our answer to this question on our own best estimate (1) of the kinds of things which we think it is important to know about local government and about government in general and (2) of the kinds of things which we think have been at the center of the Western tradition of systematic thinking about "politics" and "government," at least

since Plato and Aristotle. Our analysis of our own interests and our analysis of those interests which have captured the main attention of the Western tradition are remarkably convergent.⁸ However, since we were attracted to that tradition of inquiry fairly early in our lives,¹ and since we were quite literally "brought up" in it, it is perhaps not too remarkable that we see eye—to—eye with it.⁹ In any event, we feel at the present writing that what we are proposing as a set of key general questions about the "political" side of life, and as a definition of the "political" side of life, are both clearly identified with the Western tradition of political inquiry and equally well suited to serve our own estimates of what needs to be known. In a sense, therefore, the perspective we are about to present purports to identify the kinds of knowledge... "political" knowledge... which we are best equipped, by motivation and background, to help produce.

Let us begin this section by indicating, at their most abstract level, the kinds of theoretical questions to which we feel tradition and self-interest direct the primary attention of the political scientist who is interested in studying "politics" and "the political." Having done that we can then indicate precisely what features of human life seem to us to qualify for designation as being specifically "political" in character. Finally, we can trace the implications of these two preliminary analyses for the specific kinds of questions to which theory—building in the field of local government ought to be addressed and for the specific kinds of propositions which a theory of local government ought to contain.

It seems to us that, whatever central conceptions of "politics" and "the political" contributors to the Western tradition of political inquiry have employed, they have always been fundamentally concerned with raising and answering the following five distinct but closely interrelated questions *about* that central conception :

⁸ It must be understood, of course, that the authors can hardly qualify as experts in the field of the history of political thought. We are merely people who are interested in politics and government and also in having our interest focused on problems which have relatively high levels of significance.

⁹ Again, since we are not scholars in the history of political thought, this finding of "convergence" between our own interests and the interests of traditional Western political thought, may be little more than a grand rationalization and glorification of our own personal whim. Even though we have not done the scholarship that would validate our analysis we have certainly not consciously attempted to distort the tradition with which we "discover" such convergence. Furthermore, we would certainly endorse and encourage any scholar who was interested in testing our analysis of the central emphases of the Western tradition.

- (1) What kinds of alternative political arrangements are *conceivable and/or possible*?
- (2) What kinds of alternative political arrangements can actually be discerned *to exist or to have existed*?
- (3) What are the underlying causes of alternative kinds of political arrangements?
- (4) What are the *consequences* of alternative kinds of political arrangements for other aspects of human life?
- (5) What are the respective *advantages and disadvantages* of alternative kinds of political arrangements?

Of course, not all systematic political thinkers have been evenly interested in all of these questions. Most have been much more concerned with some of them than with others, but an analysis of western political thought would show that nearly all have been concerned to some degree with all of these questions and with little else. The emphasis has consistently been on causes and consequences, on change and stability, on the prospects for and the limitations upon political change, and on assessing the relative worth of changeable political arrangements.

To give only a few examples, Plato's *Republic* is an artful attempt to deal with all five of these questions, yet his emphasis on the first, fourth, and fifth questions is his identifying mark. Aristotle's *Politics* is a massive attempt to deal with the entire set of basic questions but is distinguishable from Plato's early work chiefly by its much greater concern with the second and third of those questions and its tendency to underplay the first. Social contract theorists such as Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau similarly focussed on these same five questions and on little else. To be sure, each of these men revealed his own distinctive emphasis on some questions in preference to others, and each demonstrated distinctive concrete concerns stemming from differences in the environment with which he was contemporary and the perspectives from which he confronted that environment. Nevertheless, whatever their particular emphases, they are joined by a common concern with these five basic questions and with few others. More recently Robert Dahl has put together the elements of a theory designed to contribute at least partial answers to all five of these questions while placing special emphasis on the question of the causes of alternative arrangements and particularly on the underlying causes ("social and constitutional prerequisites") of polyarchal

democracy.¹⁰ A thorough-going analysis of the history of Western political thought would, we think, yield innumerable similar examples. These are the basic questions that have been asked and for which answers have been offered. Within the frame of reference we are trying to develop in this paper, they are also the basic questions to which scholars interested in developing theories of local government ought to address their primary attention.

It remains, however, to discover the identifying characteristics of this political aspect of life--let us say this "political system"--with respect to which these five questions need to be asked.¹¹ Here again our decision reflects our estimate jointly of what we think we want to know and of what we think the Western tradition of political inquiry has characteristically sought to find out.

In our frame of reference, at the center of the political system is the following set of three interdependent elements--entities or phenomena capable of variation and change:

- (1) Patterns of Public Authority
- (2) Patterns of Public Power
- (3) Patterns of Public Policy

As will shortly be shown there are other elements which need to be included in the political system, but before we go much further we should take time to indicate, the nature of these three central elements. We must indicate, that is to say, what we mean to convey by these three identifying terms.

For purposes of developing our strategy we have defined each of these three terms with reference to a fourth basic concept which, it will be recalled, figured prominently in our definition of local government itself--the concept of "rule," and its derivatives, "rule-making," "rule-obedience," and "rule-enforcement." "Rule" occurs in a collectivity when there is some code, formal or informal, which specifies prohibited and required acts which the entire

¹⁰Robert Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959). See especially his chapter on "Polyarchal Democracy" pp. 63-89.

¹¹There are, of course, a number of competing conceptions of the way in which the expression "political system" should be used among contemporary political analysts. It is, however, beyond the scope of the present paper to delineate contrasts and similarities between our own and others' conception. See, for example, David Easton, *The Political System* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1953), pp. 94-148; Talcott Parsons, *The Social System* (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1951), pp. 122-132; Gabriel A. Almond, James S. Coleman (ed.), *The Politics of the Developing Areas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), pp. 3-64.

membership of the collectivity expects and is expected to forego and perform, respectively, and when deviations from these expectations are punished in the name of the code.¹² "Rule," in short, is the formation, imposition, and enforcement of a code of behavior on a collectivity. But how are "authority," "power," and "policy"

We define "public authority" as *the right to make and enforce rules binding upon a collectivity*. "Public power," in turn, is *effective participation in determining the particular set of rules by which a collectivity is bound*. Finally, "public policy" is *the set of binding rules itself*. Persons *have* authority, *exercise* power, and both *determine and submit* to policy. A person has public authority, i. e., has the right to make and enforce rules if the people to whom the rules apply *believe* that he has the right to do so. A person exercises public power if he engages in activities explicitly intended to carry some weight in determining the nature of rules to be enforced in the collectivity and if such activities do indeed carry some amount of weight in that process. A collectivity is governed by a policy, in turn, if there is indeed some set of enforced rules to which its membership submits.

Implicit in this set of definitions are two assumptions which deserve special mention at this point. First of all, authority and power are regarded as distinguishable phenomena having no necessary empirical connection with one another. People who have authority over a collectivity may themselves exercise little or no power and people who exercise considerable or even monopolistic power may be utterly lacking in authority. So long as patterns of power do generate enforced sets of rules over the collectivity then we can say that the collectivity is "governed," but it need not be governed legitimately...authoritatively. So long, too, as this set of rules is itself subordinate to some more inclusive pattern of rule then the collectivity can be said to have a specifically "local" government, but again this local government need not be authoritatively or legitimately maintained.

However, a second underlying assumption is that collectivities may exist in which patterns of authority, power, and policy, local or otherwise, simply are not in effect in any

¹²Not all "rules" in the code need require the same behavior relative to the rule form all members of the collectivity, nor prohibit the same acts to all members of the collectivity, but it is understood that interference with a person who is required to do something under the code, or failure to facilitate the punishment of someone who has infringed his obligations under the code or engaged in an act prohibited to him by the code, is itself punishable under the code.

form that is coterminous with the collectivities in question. Anarchy may characterize the relations which exist between the individuals and groups which comprise any particular collectivity such that there is simply no policy imposed, legitimately or otherwise, on the membership of that collectivity.

Perhaps this is the best point at which to indicate, at their most abstract level, the two broad kinds of propositions which we think should figure in a theory of local government and which acquire meaningfulness in the light of the set of definitions which we have just presented. The first kind of proposition is that which deals with the causes and consequences of the presence or absence in a collectivity of local government in *any degree*. The second kind of proposition, in turn, deals with the causes and consequences of alternative *forms* of local government among collectivities which have acquired at least some degree of local government. There is, after all, a "politics of power" as well as a "politics of policy" *within* patterns of power and authority, and the political theorist whose special focus is local government should be equally concerned with identifying the correlates of shifts in the *scope* of local authority and power as he is with the uses to which local authority and local power, within some given scope, are put.

So much for the definitions of the trinity of concepts we suppose to constitute the "political center" of the political system.¹³ At the center of the political scientist's interest in politics and government is his concern with knowing who has the right to impose rules, who has the practical effect of imposing rules, what kinds of rules are enforced and, even more importantly, how these patterns of rules come about and what consequences they have for changing patterns of human life, political and otherwise.

Now perhaps we can proceed to fill out the picture of the political system which we are trying to develop. In the first place, the three main elements which comprise the political center of the system are themselves interconnected by cause—and—effect relationships such that these elements themselves manifest patterns of covariation. In the second place, ranging around the political center is a political periphery constituted by an array of other elements... "social," "economic," "psychological," "ideological," "cultural,"

¹³ Some of the students who have been involved this past year in the authors' "Seminar in Comparative Local Government" have used the term "Trinity" to refer to this set of ordering concepts. Others, less favorably inclined or perhaps sharing different semantic predilections, seem to prefer "Troika."

etc...which function as causes or consequences, or as both causes and consequences, of variation in the political center. The picture, then, is one of a political center, represented by dynamically interrelated patterns of local authority, power, and policy, and a periphery represented by other patterns of human life related to the political center by radiating bands of cause—and—effect. (This picture is represented schematically in Figure 1.) The object of inquiry is to discover what elements, both "central" and "peripheral," and what patterns of variation in these elements, bear what kinds of cause—and—effect relationships with one another.¹⁴

With this picture of the local political system in mind we can now point out that the five key questions to which we feel that theory-building in political science has addressed itself, and should now address itself, manifest themselves specifically as guides to the study of local government in the following way.

(1) What kinds of patterns of local authority, power, and policy are *conceivable and or possible*?

(2) What kinds of patterns of local authority, power, and policy can be discerned to *exist or to have existed*?

(3) What are the underlying *causes* of alternative patterns of local authority, power, and policy?

(4) What are the *consequences* of alternative patterns of local authority, power, and policy for other aspects of human life?

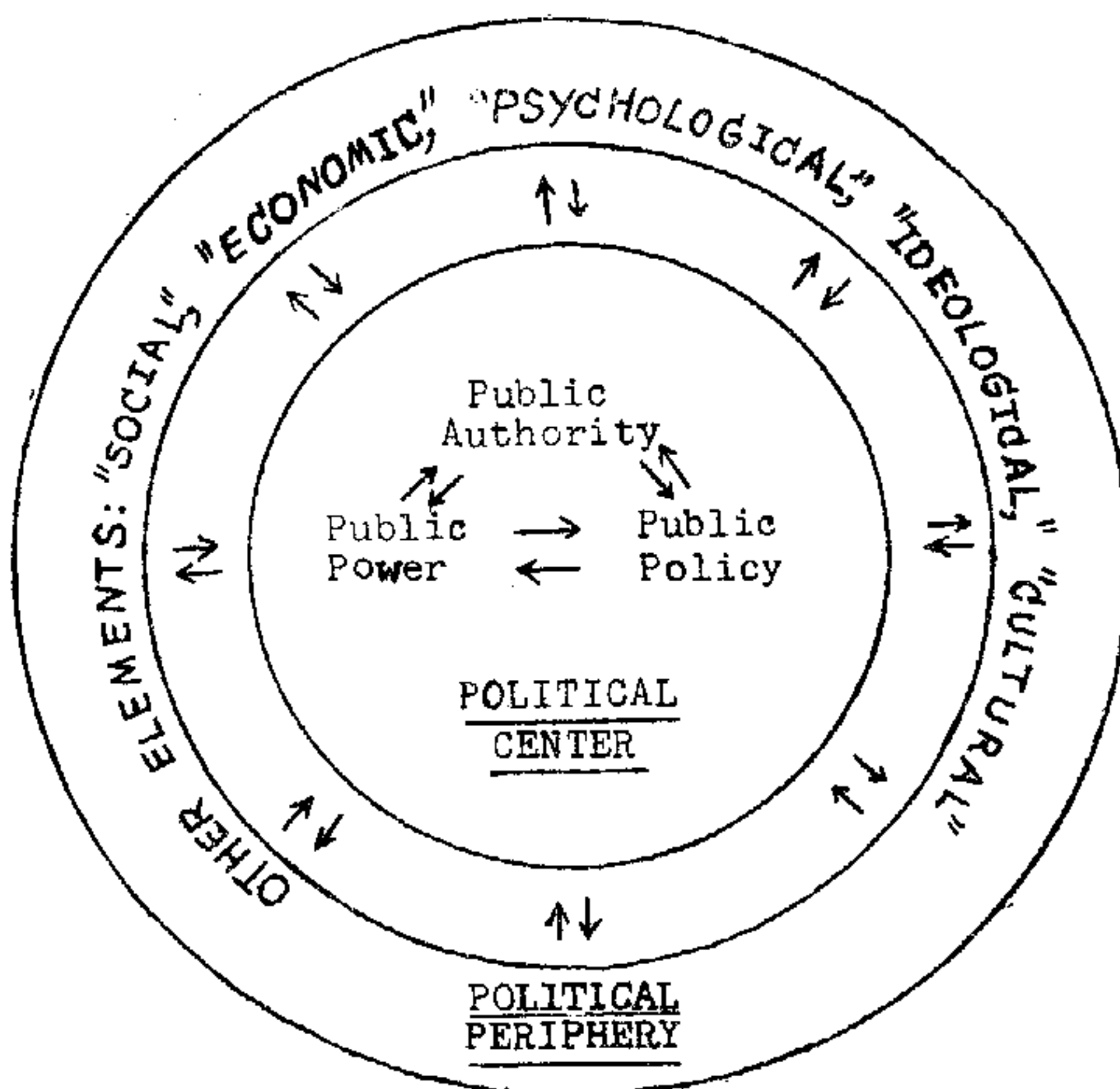
(5) What are the relative *advantages and disadvantages* of alternative patterns of local authority, power, and policy?

It needs to be pointed out, however, that while *theory - building* should be concerned with all of these questions the developed *theory* should itself contain propositions dealing directly only with Questions 3 and 4, i. e., with the problem of the causes and consequences of alternative patterns of local authority, power, and policy. Attempts to answer Question 1 may figure prominently in the *process* of theory — building, if not in the *outcome* of that process, since we may well want to theorize about the conditions under which as-yet-

¹⁴ This means, of course, the identification of particular theoretical *variables* with reference to which elements both at the center and at the periphery undergo variation with important consequences for one another. In the present paper, except for purposes of illustration, we make no attempt to indicate what specific variables might play this role and thus figure prominently in a developed theory of local government. In the present paper, by and large, our purpose is solely to indicate the *form* which a desirably theory of local government will take.

unobserved but conceivable patterns of local government might come into existence and about the possible consequences of such patterns -- a variant of the concern for which Plato is deservedly famous. Attempts to answer Question 2 fall largely in the category of data collection and analysis relative to discovering grounds for accepting or rejecting proposed theories and will have to be discussed in detail later on in this paper when we deal with the question of "method." Finally, while attempts to answer Question 5 are intimately involved in the theory-building process and, as we shall shortly point out in our discussion of "ethical signifi-

Figure



Note : \rightleftarrows : represent cause-and-effect relationships

cance" as a criterion for theory, should be facilitated by the emergence of the developed theory, answers to this question are not themselves embodied in the theory. The only propositional content of the theory, in short should be propositions dealing with the causes and consequences of alternative patterns of local government.¹⁵

It is meaningful to distinguish three different loci of cause-and-effect relationships to which the proposed theory needs to be addressed :

(1) Cause-and-effect relationships operating between the political center and the periphery.

(2) Cause-and-effect relationships operating *within* the political center *among* its three component elements.

(3) Relatively more complex cause-and-effect relationships involving *both* relations between the center and the periphery and among the elements which comprise the center.

Perhaps we can best round out the perspective we have been trying to develop in this section by examining each of three different kinds of relationships in turn and in each case illustrating what specific kinds of propositions might be developed with respect to each.

Propositions dealing with cause-and-effect relationships operating between the center and the periphery of the local political system explain the way in which variations at the periphery give rise to variations at the center and vice versa. For example, it may be proposed that equalization in the distribution of wealth among members of the local collectivity will lead to equalization in the distribution of local political power. Or, to turn the direction of causation around, it may be proposed that increases in the scope of local authority will yield increases in the extent to which members of the local population see the local government as a significant source of gratification and deprivation. Finally, cause-and-effect relationships between specific variables may be theorized to operate, in a sense, in both directions. For example, it may be proposed not only that equalization of wealth leads to equalization of political power but that equalization of political power itself functions as a guarantor of equalization of wealth. In this case changing distributions of wealth function theoretically both as cause and consequences of change at the political center.

¹⁵Which question includes, of course, the question of the rise and fall of specifically "local" governments of any *kind* whatever.

Propositions dealing with cause-and-effect relationships operating among the three component elements of the political center, on the other hand, will explain how variation in one or more of these elements will induce subsequent variation in one or more of the remaining elements. For example, it may be proposed that increase in the scope of local authority give rise to equalization in the distribution of political power among members of the locality or it may be proposed that equalization in the distribution of local power leads to shifts in the direction of public policy toward increased conformity with majoritarian values. Many similar possibilities come easily to mind.

Finally, propositions may link elements from the center and the periphery into rather more complex causal chains involving both cause-and-effect relationships between the center and the periphery and relationships among the elements of the center itself. To cite only one possible example, it may be proposed that increases in the scope of local authority a center variable give rise to increases in the local citizenry's sense of the gratificational importance of the local government (a "periphery" variable), that this in turn leads to increases in activity designed to alter the shape of local government (another "periphery" variable), and finally that this in turn leads to increased equalization in the distribution of local political power and simultaneously to the redirection of public policy in directions preferred by the newly activated citizenry (two "center" variables). Again, it is comparatively easy to imagine many similar examples of this sort of complex evolutionary sequence.

Summing up, a theory of local government which is not only empirical, dynamic, and general, but is also specifically "political," will contain propositions which reveal the causes and consequences of change and variation in patterns of local authority, power, and policy, and will contain only such propositions.

An Ethically Significant Theory

A theory of local government may be wholly empirical in character and yet have either great or little ethical significance, depending upon the nature of the values of those who interpret the theory and upon the degree to which those values are explicit. From the authors' point of view an ethically significant theory is one *whose empirical propositional content has direct implications for the value systems of those who develop it* and may therefore play an important role in the *clarification* of those value systems. What kinds of implications for values can empirical proposition have, and what forms can be taken by the value clarification process to which we refer?

It seems that there are basically two kinds of values in whose realization people take an interest: (1) *intrinsic values*, or states of affairs valued "for their own sakes" and without reference to any other values; (2) *extrinsic values*, or states of affairs valued exclusively for their capacity to bring about still other states of affairs which are intrinsically valuable.¹⁶ The process of value clarification, in turn, involves the person who in this process in the conscious analysis of his system of values with a view to deciding: (1) which valued states of affairs are more valued than others and in what degree; (2) which valued states of affairs are valued intrinsically and which, instead, are valued only extrinsically as instrumentalities for the realization of still other values. An important characteristic of value systems, for all their emphasis on questions of good and bad, is that the particular states of affairs which are valued, whether positively or negatively and whether intrinsically or extrinsically, are themselves *empirical* conditions. General empirical knowledge of cause - and - effect relationships, if it deals directly with those empirical conditions to which positive or negative value is attached, and if the valuing person who confronts such knowledge is prepared to employ it in a process of value clarification, can therefore have important implications for that person's value system.

General empirical knowledge of this kind can play this clarifying role in either or both of the following two ways:

(1) It can demonstrate: (a) whether *extrinsic* values are or are not in fact instrumental to the realization of the intrinsic values with which they are supposed and whether or not they are instead instrumental to the realization of other states of affairs which are either positively or negatively valued; or (b) the kinds and incidence of empirical conditions under which extrinsic values do indeed have their supposed instrumental quality.

(2) It can demonstrate: (a) whether or not *intrinsic* values have, as a matter of fact, empirical *consequences* which themselves are valued positively or negatively; and, in the latter case, (b) the extent to which values once regarded as being intrinsically valuable ought rather to have been regarded as being intrinsically valuable with positive consequences and now known to have negative ones.

¹⁶ A useful and eminently readable discussion of this distinction, although not one which employs the same terminology, permeates Bertrand Russell's *Human Society in Ethics and Politics* and especially his short chapter in that book on "Good and Bad." (New York: The New American Library, Mentor Edition, 1962), pp. 41-48.

Empirical cause-and-effect knowledge, can have the effect either of reaffirming value systems or of altering them either moderately or drastically, provided that the holder of such knowledge is willing and able to employ it in this way or to allow it to have this effect.

A simple example, admittedly over-simple but still essentially representative of the kind of value clarification process which we have in mind, might help to bring this role of empirical knowledge into sharper focus. Suppose that the value system in terms of which, say, a local government scholar presently approaches his research in the developing areas maintains that: (1) "local democracy" is an *intrinsically valuable* state of affairs; (2) "land reform" is an *extrinsically valuable* pattern of change because it is expected to play an instrumental role in the development of "local democracy;" (3) "psychic contentment" among members of collectivities is an *intrinsically valuable* state of affairs. Suppose further that as between "local democracy" and "psychic contentment" the scholar makes no quantitative distinction with respect to their relative worth. Now suppose that research upholds the following two empirical propositions: (1) there is no demonstrable causal connection between "land reform" and "local democracy;" (2) the greater the "local democracy" the less the "psychic satisfaction." It would seem, in this case, that the new empirical knowledge has drastic implications for the scholar's value system.

To the scholar who is willing to alter his system of values in the face of evidence of this kind the first of these propositions, if verified, would have the effect of denying "land reform" its former status as an extrinsic value for him. If similarly verified the second proposition, in turn, would have the effect either of: (1) denying "local democracy" as an intrinsic value for him; or (2) denying "psychic contentment" as an intrinsic value for him; or (3) forcing him to reappraise the relative worth of "local democracy" and "psychic contentment" as intrinsic value and to realize that both of these values cannot simultaneously be maximized. Either or both of these propositions would have the effect, in short, of involving the scholar in the kind of value clarification process to which we have previously referred. Furthermore, this is precisely the kind of value clarification process which we want any theory of local government to facilitate.

If a theory of local government is to have ethical significance, therefore, it must focus on aspects of life which figure prominently in the ongoing but changeable value systems of the theory-builders and of those with whom they share common value systems. Only such a theory can have the effect, when verified, of clarifying, either by reaffirmation or by altera-

tion, the systems of value from which the theory-builders begin their enterprise. This means that the elements to be included in the emergent construct of the local "political system," and the particular theoretical variables with respect to which changes in these elements are to be characterized and interrelated in theory, should refer to states of affairs and patterns of change which themselves play important roles in our value system, either as positive or negative value, and either as intrinsic or extrinsic ones. This means, finally, that a fundamental and continuing part of the theory-building process must be the serious and self-conscious attempt to make our own value systems explicit and that value explication of this kind needs also to be a central aspect of any serious attempt at collaboration and cooperation among members of the community of local government scholars.

Summary

So much for the six basic criteria which we propose as guides to the development of the theory which figures as the central objective of the strategy of inquiry which we are suggesting as an approach to the study of local government. The theory we have in mind must, in addition to being a theory of local government, be theory which is at once empirical, dynamic, general, political, and ethically significant. It must deal in questions of fact. It must focus on the causes and consequences of change. It must be equally applicable whenever and wherever local government phenomena are found. It must focus sharply on a distinctively "political" center - - one composed of patterns of local authority, local power, and local policy - - and devote itself exclusively to propositions which identify the important causes and consequences of change at this political center. Finally, even while it must deal in questions of fact it must do so from perspectives which have significance for important values.

THE METHOD

In this section we want to describe the method which we have chosen to adopt for purposes of building a theory of local government. First of all, however, we want to give some picture of the decision-making criteria which led us to choose one method in preference to others which we might well have chosen.

Two Approaches to Theory - Building

It is possible to distinguish two basically different methods by means of which to build theories. (1) On the one hand, theories may be constructed without any prior systematic

appraisal of empirical data pertaining to the subject - matter of the theory and, instead, on the basis of a postulated model constituted by variables and relations among variables and capable of giving rise to theoretical propositions. (2) On the other hand, theories may be constructed not on the basis of any very explicitly formulated model and, instead, on the basis of a systematic appraisal of available data drawn from the subject - matter field. For short - hand purposes we can refer to these two methods of theory - building as a *a priori* and *ex post facto* methods, respectively. When a theory is generated on the basis of an *a priori* approach the main criterion which the developed theory must fulfill is that its propositions make sense in terms of those involved, on the other hand, the identifying characteristic of a satisfactory theory is that its propositions conform with and effectively summarize the data on which they are based.¹⁷

Examples of theory - building according to each of these two approaches are not very hard to come by. Perhaps the best and most familiar example of the *a priori* approach is represented by the genesis and internal structure of classical economic theory. Perhaps an equally familiar example of the *ex post facto* approach, and certainly one of the very best examples of that approach, is represented by George Homans' widely - read monograph on *The Human Group*,¹⁸ in which Homans carefully and meticulously analyzed an array of empirical observations and then, as he has said elsewhere, tried to work out a set of proposi-

¹⁷ To be sure, no method of theory - construction is ever either wholly *a priori* or wholly *ex post facto*. We are all enmeshed in a web of experiences, past and present, which make it impossible to propose an empirical theory which does not in some way reflect the impact of past experience; and we are all enmeshed in a set of organizing concepts, however fuzzy and inexplicit they may be, which make it impossible to approach any set of "raw" data without some initial expectations about how it may be ordered. Whether a method is *a priori* or *ex post facto* is therefore a matter of degree and emphasis. The key difference between the two is that, in the latter approach, not mere "experience" but rather a *systematically examined* experience lies at the base of the theory while the experience which necessarily underlies even the most *a priori* approach is not systematically examined prior to the development of the theory.

¹⁸ George C. Homans, *The Human Group* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1950). This book might well serve, in a very real sense, as a model for the theory-building strategy which the authors of the present paper have developed and is a "must" for anyone who is interested in witnessing the structure and implications of the *ex post facto* approach to theory - building worked out in sensitive and disciplined detail. This is especially true of his chapter on "Plans and Purposes," pp. 1-23.

tions "that seemed empirically to hold good with the data."¹⁹ "What came first," he has written, was always the data in detail."²⁰ Which of these two basic approaches have we elected to adopt and what are our reasons for making the choice we have? Our first task in this section will be to indicate in general terms what choice we have made and our grounds for making it. The second final task will then be to describe the salient features of the particular method we have actually chosen to employ as a means of developing a general theory of local government.

Choosing Among Alternative Approaches

In the first place we have consistently felt that there were two major criteria on the basis of which the choice between these two major alternative approaches ought to be made. We have felt, in short, that the approach to be chosen should be that which is *most likely* to generate a theory (1) which can be *tested*, after it has been constructed, against data drawn specifically for that purpose and from a predictive point of view; and (2) which, *when tested*, achieves a relatively high degree of *validity*. If these were the criteria for a choice between methods, what were the expectations which led us to feel that one method more nearly met those criteria than the others?

Consideration of these criteria and of the nature of the theory which we wanted to develop, when coupled with some basic expectations about the complexity and variability of human society and about our own conceptual limitations in making sense of that complexity and variability, led us to adopt an *ex post facto* approach in preference to an *a priori* approach. Remember, first of all, the crucial fact that we had posited as our strategic goal a theory which was at once *general* and *empirical*. If such a theory is to be *tested* then we must be capable of finding *data* which constitute *indices* of the *concepts*— elements and variables — which figure in its propositional content, and we must be able to find such data *whenever and wherever* local government phenomena are themselves to be found. Our view

¹⁹ George C. Homans, *Social Behavior: Its Elementary Forms* (New York and Burlingame: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1961), p. 14. This book, Homans' second major work, unlike *The Human Group*, is an almost perfect example of the *a priori* approach to theory-building. The two books taken together might indeed constitute the best available examples of two strategically different approaches to the achievement of the same goal: a dynamic empirical theory with general import.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

of human society, its complexity and variability, led us to expect that if we were to adopt an *a priori* approach, since it would necessarily be based on a set of concepts which had itself developed from our own rather limited and particularistic experience, we would run the serious risk of constructing central concepts and propositions at such a relatively low level of *abstraction* that they could not possibly be either *tested* generally or be generally *valid*. And, as Homans has put it, "Abstraction is the price paid for generalization".²¹

The conceptual apparatus which most *American* scholars are able to bring to bear in social inquiry derives, after all, primarily from the particular patterns of experience and thought which comprise the history of the United States and the more "developed" portions of the Western world. While this conceptual apparatus may be quite appropriate for building theories applicable over the limited universe of American or Western experience, there seems to us a very real probability that the same conceptual apparatus may be too much concrete and particularistic to yield theoretical propositions which are susceptible to general testing and validation -- especially, for example, in the developing areas of Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America. The time may indeed have arrived at which it is feasible for Western scholars to construct *a priori* theories intended to apply only to the West. We feel, however, that for those who share ambitions for truly *general* theories that time has not yet arrived. Because of our ignorance of local government phenomena outside of the Western mainstream, and because of our underlying expectation that there really are significant intercultural differences in local government phenomena and their correlates which, in all probability, do not admit of specification in terms of concepts which have been generated by and are therefore clearly appropriate only to Western analysis, we have opted in favor of an *ex post facto* approach. With Homans, what comes first will always be "the data in detail" and only after the data will we hope to find a set of propositions which seems "empirically to hold good with the data."

The Specific Method to be Used

The method we have chosen, then, bases the development of a theory of local government on the systematic appraisal of observations generated by the subject-matter field. The key components of the method we propose might best be encapsulated by the phrase *multi-variate explanatory analysis of cumulated and creatively reconstructed case histories*. In the remainder of this paper we shall try to describe this method in substantial detail.

²¹*The Human Group, op. cit., p. 14.*

The method we have in mind is analytically divisible into *two component operations*: (1) *data collection*; (2) *data analysis*. Data collection refers to the collection of specific observations pertaining to case histories and their interpretation as indices to theoretical variables. Data analysis, on the other hand, refers to the identification of possible cause-and-effect relationships among the theoretical variables so indexed. While we shall examine each of these operations separately it will be seen that they are intimately related with one another.

Data Collection

What kinds of data do we hope to collect? How much of it do we expect to collect? Where do we expect to get it? These are the questions which need concern us at this point. Perhaps by describing how we expect to implement our method in South and Southeast Asia we can give a reasonably clear picture of what would be involved in a more extensive implementation of that method.

Who, Where, and How Much. In the first place we intend to take literally *no on-the-spot field observations* ourselves. The method we have in mind calls instead for the use of observations initially collected by other people and often for purposes by no means directly associated with our own.

In the second place, we intend to collect data pertaining to a large and ever-growing set of *case-histories of collectivities* in which local government phenomena are likely to be found. Most of the collectivities studied will probably fall loosely into such categories as "cities," "towns," "provinces," "villages," "counties," and so forth. We will seek data on the largest possible number of such collectivities and will seek it wherever we can find it. While we will most certainly be "sampling" we will make no attempt at *random* sampling since we will have no basis for doing so, i. e., no population of potential histories for which data are known to exist and which can be regarded as a sampling universe. We will simply try to find as much information on as many collectivities as we can. We will operate throughout on the assumption that the larger the number of different collectivities we study, and the broader the range of variation among those collectivities, the more likely we will be to accomplish our goals.

In the third place, data developed for our case histories will be derived from a *variety of different sources*. Our objective will be to get as much information as we can from whatever sources it can be derived.²² At present it looks as though we will be relying heavily on consciously designed "case studies" or "field researches" conducted in various collectivities by a wide range of different scholars representing many different academic disciplines...anthropology, political science, sociology, social psychology, history.. and many different nationalities. However, we will want to supplement their observations, wherever desirable and possible, with observations derived from other sources as well: nationally published statistical tabulations; reports of journalists and travelers who may be able to offer bits and pieces of information about particular collectivities at particular times; letters from graduate students working out of our own East—West Center's program of "field—study" tours but not explicitly involved in field research connected with our own project; correspondence with people... case-study authors or others...who are in a position to know particular details; interviews with returning Peace Corpsmen; and so forth, as the need arises and the opportunity presents itself.

In the fourth place, all observations reported from whatever sources derived will be clearly *fixed in historical time*. Recurrent studies of any given collectivity by the same scholar or by different scholars or still other kinds of observers will be superimposed on one another to build as comprehensive and timeful a picture of the relevant history of the collectivity as it is possible for us to build.

From Observations Through Creative Interpretation to Data. What specific kinds of information about collectivities will we collect, how will we need to interpret it, and how might we best record it?

To begin with, of course, the nature of the theoretical goal which we have posited for us to look for information which seems to have some bearing on patterns of local authority

²² Of course some information from some sources will probably have to be regarded as more reliable than others. Generally speaking, we will try to use as much information as we can while simultaneously taking explicit note of the degree to which we think it is reliable.

power, and policy and on the causes and effects of variation in these phenomena.²³ That much is obvious simply from a consideration of the theoretical goal. Yet before this objective can be accomplished an important intervening process involving the creative interpretation of collected observations needs to be carried out. If the nature of that process is to be understood an important distinction needs to be drawn and its implications for theory-building traced out.

We find it useful and necessary to distinguish between *observations* and *data* and to accept the proposition that *any given observation may constitute many different kinds of data*. What do we mean by this distinction and what is its significance for *ex post facto* theory-building? Both observations and data are reflections of sense experiences which have been experienced by someone. An "observation," however, is any piece of information pertaining to an observation. It may, but it need not, be reported as an instance of any larger, more *abstract*, class of phenomena. Indeed, it may be reported in the form of a unique *sui generis* event. A "datum," on the other hand, is an "observation" reported as *a position on or with respect to a theoretical variable*. From this point of view the same observation may represent many different positions on as many different theoretical variables and at as many different levels of abstraction. The "data collection" process in the *ex post facto* approach to theory-building, if it is oriented toward the development of a general empirical theory, involves a process of *creative interpretation of observations to generate data*. i.e., classifications of observations with reference to matrices of theoretical variables, at ever higher levels of abstraction until they produce variables with respect to which collectivities may be *generally* classified and in terms of which *general* cause-and-effect relationships can be stated.

²³That we are looking for such information, of course, reflects two main a priori notions which underlie our otherwise essentially *ex post facto* method: (1) we assume that patterns of local authority, power, and policy - - as these concepts have been defined - - can actually be found in collectivities generally; (2) and we assume that there really are lawful cause - and - effect relationships operating between phenomena in human society. Reject the first assumption and the damage may not be too great: some other conception of a small core of minimal organizing concepts can be substituted for our own. Reject the second assumption, however, and with it you reject the possibility of political science.

To give only one example, suppose that we already have some reason for believing that the forms of local government operative in two widely separated communities are very similar to each other. Suppose, then, that an anthropological field study of one of these villages reports that "most of the inhabitants are engaged in scale agriculture" and reports elsewhere that "agriculture is based on irrigation from large catch - basins maintained by the village and more or less adequately filled depending on the weather." Suppose, finally, that another anthropological field worker, studying the other community in which we are interested reports that in that community "everyone who is not engaged in domestic chores spends the bulk of his time at fishing, provided the off - shore shoals, on which the fishermen depend for their supply, are for some reason barren of fish - - and, as often as not, they are."

In one sense, i. e., *at one level of abstraction*, these two sets of "observations" are quite different. Such differences could hardly be employed as potential explanations for the *similarities* already discovered between the forms of local government associated with the two communities. We could, for example, contrive a theoretical variable - - call it "nature of dominant economic pursuit" - - and define "fishing" and "small-scale agriculture" as positions on that variable. This variable would then afford no explanation for the local government phenomena we have discovered. However, at a somewhat higher level of abstraction, we could define another variable, call it "extent of concentration of activity in an activity whose productivity depends on a single and relatively uncertain source of supply for a major factor of production." With respect to this variable, both communities might well be regarded as occupying the same position, and we would have developed at least one possible explanation for the governmental similarities which the two communities have exhibited. This is, of course, only the simplest of examples. Even in this case however, when one considers that he is looking for variables which can ultimately figure in quite *general* cause and - effect relationships involving extremely large number of separate collectivities, each generating its own distinctive set of "observations" and potential "data," one can readily see the difficulty of the task we are setting for ourselves. Be that as it may, it would seem that a necessary part of theory - building by *ex post facto* methods is precisely this creative reconstruction of observations into data at many and successively higher levels of abstraction. Without it, generalization is impossible. How else can we isolate those key variables which will figure in a testable and valid general theory?

What level of abstraction will be required before generalization can be achieved, and what particular abstract variables will finally figure in the developed general theory are, of course, questions which we cannot even begin to answer at this time. In any event, the "data collection" component of our method involves first the collection of "observations" and then the creative interpretation of these observations as manifestations of one or more theoretical variables which might reasonably have some connection to the phenomena of basic interest to us, i.e., variables which might reasonably be significantly interrelated to ethically significant patterns of variation in local authority, local power and local policy.²⁴ The systematic examination of observations which this approach calls for is admittedly an onerous chore and not one to be undertaken lightly. Homans' comments on his own approach in *The Human Group* are equally appropriate here :

By "examining systematically" we mean only that we shall consider in regular order the relation of each set of facts to each of the others. In so doing, we shall be patient, methodical, and slow. We must be so if we are to keep control over the whole of our material while giving special attention to each part of it in turn. Unless we hold our material down in this way, it may get away from us. It has a lot of spring.

Operationally Speaking. What specific plans do we have for recording "observations" and "data" so that they can be subsequently submitted to analysis? First of all, we intend to keep a running "master observational account" of each of many case histories which we intend to be more or less continuously collecting. In these master accounts we will record in detail the specific observations that have been reported by sundry original sources of information. Master observational accounts will then serve as sources of *data*, i.e., information which classifies each case history with respect to one or more theoretical variables. Data, in turn, will be coded and punched on IBM cards, each

²⁴ This is another instance, of course, of the sense in which *a priori* elements enter into our *ex post facto* method. Very clearly what "might reasonably have some connection" with the phenomena of central interest depends on some preliminary notion, however vague and gauzy it might be, of what sorts of things it is "reasonable" to expect of the world. It is true, nevertheless, that our emphasis is still very much on the "data first" and then the explicit and data-consistent theory, no matter what partial and implicit theories might guide us in our foray through the data.

card dealing with a given case and representing a classificational matrix in which that case is classified with respect to an array of variables. Data analysis cards will then be employed in the technique of data analysis which we will describe shortly.

Given what has been said about the variety of data that can be provided by a single observation it is clear that we will probably be building up a number of different sets of data analysis cards, each such set of cards representing a different combination of abstract theoretical interpretations of the original observational accounts. This process might well go on almost endlessly. In general, however, we will want to cease this kind of activity when we have worked out a set of data yielding a theory which accounts for a "sufficiently" large amount of variation in a "sufficiently" large range of political phenomena with a "sufficiently" small number of key theoretical variables to warrant the statement of a theory which is deserving of being tested...predictive testing...designed specifically for that purpose. As for what "sufficiently" may mean in this context, time alone will tell. In any event, should we be able to achieve a theory which seems to come close to meeting the six criteria which we want it to meet, we will at that point want to test it by means of much more rigorous, much more clearly predictive, methods.

Data Analysis.

Supposing that we have managed to gather together a set of data - - not observations - - a relatively large sample of collectivities, one important question remains: to what kind of analysis do we submit the data?

Since our goal is to develop a dynamic theory, one whose propositions state cause-and-effect relationships among variables, any technique of data analysis we use must provide a basis for such propositions. This problem, it seems to us, resolves itself into finding a technique of analysis which approximates as closely as possible the technique of *controlled experimentation*. The logic of cause-and-effect analysis has it that a particular causal relationship may be said to obtain between two variables, A and B, when it can be shown that a specific change in A is succeeded by a specific change in B within some period of time during which other variables, changes in which might reasonably be expected to produce changes in B, remain unchanged. Any data analysis technique which we use must therefore be fitted to these logical requirements as closely as possible.

A prominent social - psychologist and sociologist, Herbert Hyman, has worked out a line of reasoning which we think readily applies to the problem we face. This is true even though Hyman's reasoning was worked out explicitly in the context of a consideration of appropriate kinds of data analysis techniques to employ in connection with *sample survey data pertaining to samples of individuals*.²⁵ In more ways than one, indeed, the technical requirements for the mode of analysis which we will have to use in our study of local government are analogous to those which underlie the kind of survey research with which American social scientists have become so familiar in recent decades, e.g., in public opinion studies, voting research, and so forth. At least this is the case when our own research problem is compared with that involved in sample surveys whose analysis is expected to have *explanatory* rather than simply *descriptive* significance. The key difference is simply that in our approach the units of observation which are "surveyed" are collectivities rather than individuals. Otherwise the analogy is complete. From this point of view Hyman's line of reasoning is extremely appropriate to the problem at hand.

Hyman begins his analysis of the problems involved in the "explanatory survey" by accepting the postulate that "the scientific model for the study of cause-and-effect relationships is the *controlled experiment*, in which the responses of an experimental group, exposed to the crucial stimulus, are compared with those of an equivalent control group from which the stimulus has been withheld."²⁶ Then, speaking with specific reference to survey analysis, he goes on to say:²⁷

²⁵ Herbert Hyman, *Survey Design and Analysis*. (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1955), especially pp. 178-329, all of which is extremely relevant to the discussion here and to the general problem of assessing cause-and-effect relationships in the absence of some or many of the conditions usually regarded as requirements for a "true experiment."

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 243.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 245.

There are various ways in which the logic of experimentation can be approximated, but the type most often used in survey analysis is that of *sub-group comparisons*. This involves a comparison of the frequency with which groups *characterized in different ways* express a certain attitude or exhibit a particular characteristic... In such comparisons the analyst assumes that the sub-groups which he has formed approximate the experimental and control groups of an actual experiment, and that the characteristic which distinguishes the different groups approximates the experimental stimulus.

Hyman's logic, if it applies to "sub-group" comparisons in which the sub-groups compared are composed of individual human beings, applies equally well when comparisons are made among sub-groups of collectivities.

The fundamental core of the data analysis technique which we have chosen to adopt for our own research in local government is represented in the remainder of Hyman's line of reasoning. He continues:²⁸

...these sub-group comparisons are a form of truncated experimentation, in which one decisive step is missing. One of the essential features of experimentation... is that, through matching and/or randomization procedures, the experimenter makes sure that his two groups are initially identical in all important respects. The survey analyst, on the other hand comes upon his groups when they are already constituted... In other words, he has no opportunity to control the composition of his "experimental" and "control" groups in advance, so as to be certain that they are initially identical. Then, there is always the danger that the relationships which the analyst finds in his survey data are spurious, that

²⁸*Ibid.*, p. 246.

they arise out of initial differences between the groups being compared. The so-called "stimuli" may erroneously appear to have an "effect" only because of initial variations between the groups. Since they destroy what otherwise seem to be meaningful relationships, the factors making for initial differences between the sub-groups under study will be called "invalidating factors,"

And finally, Hyman writes:²⁹

...in order to minimize the danger that such spurious relationships remain undetected, we employ analytical procedures which enable us to examine the relationships between assumed cause and assumed effect when the influence of the possible invalidating factors is eliminated. That is, we try to eradicate initial differences between the sub-groups which might produce spurious relationships. The analytical procedures for achieving it involve some manner of "holding constant" or "controlling" the possible invalidating factors.

Hyman then devotes the remainder of his discussion of the "explanatory survey" to stating and illustrating, one by one, various specific operations -- data interpretations and manipulations -- which can serve this purpose of "control."³⁰

The particular techniques which Hyman suggests as being capable of playing this role, while they differ in ingenious and useful ways, have one telling characteristic in common. They give rise to an arrangement of the coded data such that relationships between any two or more variables, in whose possible causal connections the analysis interested, may be examined -- insofar as sample size and available data about each representative in the sample permit -- under conditions

²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 247.

³⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 247 - 329.

such that remaining variables which might conceivably be relevant either : (1) are equated between subgroups ; or (2) vary in a known and systematic manner between sub-groups. In either case analysis therefore provides basic information about the manner in which a possible cause-and-effect relationship behaves under some set of known conditions.^{31,32} Then, on the basis of observed patterns of inter-correlation among variables, under conditions such that a serious and thoughtful attempt has been made to "control" extraneous variables, either by eliminating their effect or by systematically taking their effect into account, it may be cause-and-effect propositions which, as Homans has put it "seem empirically to hold with the data."

What this means is that we may be able to develop general cause-and-effect propositions by means of which the observed pattern of intercorrelation may be meaningfully summarized in general and abstract terms. The resulting set of propositions, moreover, may then be regarded as one among other possible contending general theories of local government and one which may be susceptible to field testing under much more rigorous, much more nearly experimental, conditions. Our basic contention in this paper is simply that a theory developed under these conditions stands a better chance both of being generally testable, and of surviving any test, than does any theory developed on a *a priori* foundations.

³¹ Of course, the expression "variables which might conceivably be relevant" belies another essentially *a priori* feature of the largely *ex post facto* method which we have adopted. Some sort of "theory;" however gauzy and/or implicit, necessarily underlies and conception of what is "conceivably relevant" and therefore of what needs to be "controlled" in experimental or quasi-experimental research designs. One's assessment of relevance could be wrong either in the sense that one simply doesn't bother to "control" for a variable on the grounds that it is not expected to have any effect, or in the sense that one simply isn't aware of the possibility that such a variable exists. This, of course, is a problem facing any experimenter in any science, social or otherwise.

³² The statistical technique has come to be known generally as "multi-variate analysis." We will not go into its technical details in this paper.

Inasmuch as observations may receive multiple interpretations as data, of course, there is the very real possibility that the analysis of different sets of data based upon the same initial set of observations will lead to the formulation of *alternative theories*. Our objective will be to continue this process of interrogative data production and intercorrelational analysis until we have established a relatively small number of alternative theories which are demonstrably superior to others which we ourselves generate, i. e., more general, more ethically significant, more capable of summarizing their data, or until we have come to the conclusion that no better theory can be generated by our approach than those which we have already generated.

So much for the method which we propose as a means of achieving a specifically political theory of local government which is at once general, empirical, dynamic, and ethically significant. Remember that it is proposed not as a method for *testing* a theory—even though it probably does constitute some sort of a test -- but instead as a method for developing a theory. It is therefore properly evaluated not in comparison with alternative methods for testing theories but in comparison with alternative methods, *ex post facto* or *a priori*, for developing theories which have yet to be tested. It remains for another strategy to orient itself to the problem of devising and executing relatively more powerful tests of alternative theories of local government, whether such theories are developed in the way in which we have proposed or in some other way.

CONCLUSION

We do not have to be reminded that the strategy which we are proposing is awesomely ambitious. Merely to posit the theoretical goal which we have described is to argue that a major portion of our notoriously frail resources be committed to the achievement of something which has never been even remotely approached in centuries of serious thinking about politics and government. Merely to begin to

carry out the method we shall need, at the very least, all of the "human qualities" which George Homans knew were called for both kinds of theory-building which was manifested in *The Human Group*.³³

We shall need, first, the innocence of the child, not the good little boy or girl but the *enfant terrible* who stops the conversation by asking the wrong questions. For we shall have to ask, "What do I actually see?" And..... no question is more devastating. We shall also need the sophistication of the man of the world in order to make use of the past experience of the intellectual disciplines in dealing with problems of complicated fact..... Sophistication includes knowing when not to be sophisticated..... No one is more a creature of fashion than the average intellectual. He is quite ready to belie, at any moment, that certain kinds of work are the only respectable ones to go into..... No matter where it comes from, we shall need all the help we can get. Above all we need humility. Always, in the end, we must remember Francis Bacon's counsel: "The subtlety of nature is greater many times over than the subtlety of the senses and understanding."

Nor is this short inventory of prerequisites, even though no mean achievement in itself, by any means an exhaustive one. As with Captain Ahab, the problem is one of deciding whether to go after big white whales or little blue ones. As Melville has made abundantly clear, once one decides to go after Moby Dick life can become quite troublesome.

The question remains: is any of this worth doing? Is the goal worth pursuing? If the goal is, worth pursuing, then does the method a reasonable chance of contributing significantly to its achievement? If it is worth doing, and we think it

³³ Homans *op. cit.*, pp. 21-23.

is, then how can our resources be harnessed and integrated into collaborative, cross-fertilizing, cumulative enterprises with the maximum promise of success? If it is *not* worth doing, then is it the goal or rather the method with which exception needs to be taken? If the goal is at fault, then what alternative goal or goals *should* centrally occupy the attention of local government scholars? If the method is inappropriate, then what alternative method or methods are more likely to contribute toward the achievement of the goal?

A basic premise underlying this proposal is that resources capable of exploitation on behalf of the study of local government are enormously scarce. Tied to this is a second basic premise that some goals are more worth achieving than other goals and some methods more nearly adapted than other methods to the achievement of the goals for which they are devised. It follows that strategies for inquiry are all-important objects for serious consideration and that strategic decisions have to be made lest the few resources which are available be drained away in the pursuit of goals which are scientific or ethical nightmares or in the execution of methods which are empty dreams.
