

# The Bias of Temperament in American Politics

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*To*  
*Mark Whittington*  
*A Great South Carolinian*  
*A Great American*

*At its best, the left foretells the future.  
At its worst, it misunderstands the past.*

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# Introduction

Not long ago, I attended a talk given by the noted author and social critic Barbara Ehrenreich at Chicago's Newberry Library. The bulk of her talk concerned the plight of the poor and the plight of women. It was a good presentation, but I was happily surprised when Ms. Ehrenreich did not conclude with the above themes. Near the close of her talk, she spent a few moments discussing something that I had never heard her speak of or write about before, something I thought was important.

Beyond the myriad of discriminations against the poor and women, she offered, there was a further discrimination in the private sector regarding hiring, pay, promotion, job allocation, and the like. That discrimination was based on personality. It was a discrimination that grew out of many employers' use of the standard Myers-Briggs personality inventory to find if and where a potential employee might fit in. This test, created during World War II, grew out of the Jungian introversion-extroversion dichotomy. Ms. Ehrenreich related how private corporations overwhelmingly discriminate against those who demonstrated introverted personality traits in favor of those who demonstrated extroverted traits. More recently, Susan Cain has written *Quiet*, a compelling work that explores examples of how the extrovertive personality is favored over the introvertive personality in a variety of American occupational, educational, and social venues. I confess I had not thought very much about such biases in the context of the private domain. I have long suspected, and have written about, how this kind of discrimination occurred in the public sector, with attendant consequences in



public policy, as well as in the very design of the structures and processes of the American government.

Let me be clear about what I am doing in this short work. Roughly one third of this piece is unabashedly a summary of writings that can be found in other places, generally in books and articles that I have written over the years. The burden of these writings was to describe an original political philosophy, one based upon psychology rather than economics, or any other objective reality. The theory borrowed, among other places, from a) the sub-atomic intellectual framework of the Danish physicist Niels Bohr and the English Ernest Rutherford, b) the introversion-extroversion personality continuum of Carl Jung, and c) a comparison of the kinds of minds of the two German Idealist thinkers: Immanuel Kant and G. W. F. Hegel.

I have written on this topic over the years because I have become convinced that, outrageous though some of the manifestations of traditional bias continue to be, the greatest bias in American politics is no longer against groups like African-Americans, women, gays and lesbians, or the like. I believe that the greatest bias in American politics is now a bias of temperament. The most discriminated-against group in the body politic is probably no longer an ethnic group, or even an economic group, or something similar. The most discriminated against of American citizens may well be found *within* all of the traditionally spoken of groups that are part of the traditional American political mosaic. This citizenry is made up of the population that is psychologically introspective, as Ms. Ehrenreich, Ms. Cain, and, of course, those like Carl Jung have articulated it. Further, that population has a preference for synthetic cognitive forms, or the apples and oranges kind of knowledge, as Kant and Hegel, although very differently, grappled with such forms.

What an original political theory based upon psychology offers, therefore, is something altogether different from what other political theories offer. If we revere the humane political contributions of figures like Mohandas Gandhi, the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., Nelson Mandela, or even a figure from long ago like Saint Fran-

cis of Assisi, why do we not revere the contributions of far less substantial figures, ordinary people like you and I, who are of the temperament of the above figures, if not of their stature?

Why, in short, do we not recognize the contribution of those whose temperaments contribute in far more humble settings, often in the role of the mediator and/or in the role of cementing the bonds within a group, or in being the reconciler of interests, all accomplished in a balance with those of a more competitive, more individualistic temperament? Finally, why do we not recognize the contributions of the temperament that prefers the kind of political structures and processes which ameliorate conflict and embrace the public good over the splintered, selfish demands of very powerful private interests?

At root, all political theory rests on a standard of equity. Like the rest of any citizenry that is even mildly left of center in its political orientation, I have vigorously endorsed, marched for, and contributed to the movements that supported equity for African-Americans, women, the poor, the underpaid, soldiers in an unnecessary war, and other discriminated against groups all my life. But note that the above list of the aggrieved was invariably discriminated against on the basis of some objective criteria—that is, on some other-than-mind-based, or subjective, quality. Again, I have long supported, and will always support, those so often justified pleas. But I submit, much like Ms. Ehrenreich and Ms. Cain, that something else is also going on. Once again, I think it goes on, and has gone on, every bit as much in the public as it apparently does in the private sector.

In the United States, if not in other places, there is a political bias that has not yet been dealt with, a bias that not only affects those who suffer the discrimination but even more importantly contributes to the building and maintenance of imbalanced political systems and unjust political outcomes that further the discrimination. I think the American political system, from the perspective of a psychologically based political theory, is badly out of balance. The political philosophy that I have written on for many years rests on an intellectual foundation that I hope will expose

and lead to the effective correction of such biases. I broach the costs of not engaging in what I immodestly think of as a Niels Bohr-like sub-atomic revolution in political thought. We who work in politics, and write about politics, are well behind the physicists and their sub-atomic theory, or their notions of quantum mechanics, and, perhaps most importantly, their notions of relativity. Maybe it is time that the social sciences, and the real world of politics, catch up a bit with the hard scientists. I think we can do that in politics with a theory I call the Natural, or Psychological, Left.

This brief work is divided into three parts. The first, made up of seven minimalist chapters, describes the theory. The second, of three longer chapters, places the theory into a deeper intellectual and political context. Part three's five chapters apply the theory to the American political system and, in the final chapter, to a religious schema, all containing what I believe to be original diagnoses of cognitively based political imbalances. The Epilogue discusses some contemporary political imbalances in our country, and makes specific, in some cases constitutional, recommendations.