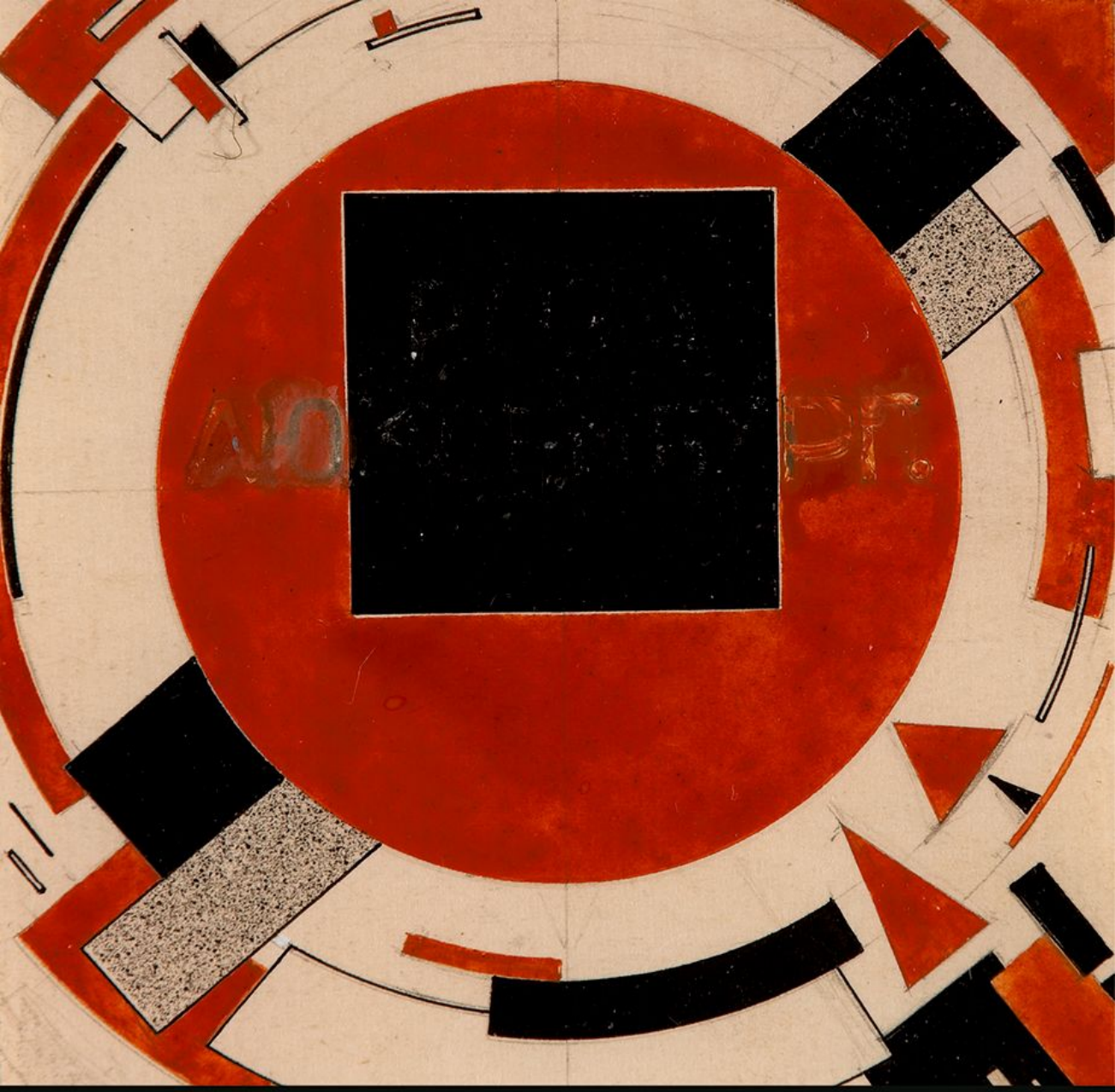

THE MEANING OF PARTISANSHIP

JONATHAN WHITE & LEA YPI

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For Arbien and Rubin

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Couples sometimes adopt pets to see if their relationship is sufficiently mature to cope with parental responsibilities. Our joint papers on partisanship in advance of this longer manuscript seem to have played an equivalent role. Like most children, this text was not an easy one to deliver (though when real children arrived, the project became something of a safe haven). We eventually managed to soften our disagreements, even if not quite resolve them, and what had started as a series of fierce debates on the meaning of partisanship became the book that follows.

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Jonathan White and Lea Ypi
January 2016

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Introduction

Political parties have taken a pounding in recent years. In democracies across the world, organizations that endured for much of the twentieth century find themselves deserted by voters and members alike. For many a party leadership, this is a time of public rejection.[1] But what of the underlying idea they are born of? To what extent are the trials of parties indicative of the declining resonance of partisanship itself, of the more general political outlook in which it makes sense to associate with a party? Exactly how deep does the rot go?

Here the trends of the age are ambiguous. On the one hand there is evidence to suggest the difficulties facing parties are rooted in more profound processes of depoliticization that make commitment to collective action less appealing. Coupled with an analysis of the socio-economic and institutional constraints on what parties in government can achieve, one may easily arrive at a diagnosis of long-term disenchantment with the party as a political form.[2] On this view, parties are a remnant of a different epoch, the residue of the past in the present.

At the same time one sees signs of renewed partisan engagement, often inspired by frustration with alternative modes of political agency. Whether in Latin America in the 2000s or Mediterranean Europe in the 2010s, new parties have developed out of social movements and movement coalitions to achieve significant electoral success. The accounts of activists themselves suggest there are features of the party form, notably its continuity and comprehensiveness of vision, which are prized at least as much as the alternative qualities of spontaneous action.[3] The implication is that where alternatives to the party

[1] Peter Mair, *Ruling The Void: The Hollowing of Western Democracy* (London: Verso, 2013).

[2] Wolfgang Streeck, 'The Politics of Exit', *New Left Review* 88, July/August 2014.

[3] Cf. Donatella Della Porta and Daniela Chironi, 'Movements in Parties: OccupyPD', *Partecipazione e Conflitto* (*PACO*) 8 (1) (2015), p. 89; Claudio Katz, 'Socialist Strategies in Latin America', in *The New Latin American Left: Cracks in the Empire*, ed. Jeffery Webber and Barry Carr (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013), pp. 45–6. Social movement scholars themselves show increasing interest in parties and a wish to reconnect the two research fields: see e.g. Donatella Della Porta, *I Partiti Politici* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2009); Doug McAdam and Sidney Tarrow, 'Ballots

have been tried they have been found wanting, prompting their protagonists to return to the partisan model. Nor is this interest restricted to new parties: the massive expansion of the British Labour Party in summer 2015 during and following the leadership campaign of Jeremy Corbyn shows how even long-established parties, at least in some circumstances, retain the capacity to inspire mass publics.

However divergent these readings of the present, both suggest the need to dissect the partisan experience more closely. For those inclined to see the breakthrough of new parties as anomalous, there is reason to reflect on the nature of partisanship so as to grasp the stakes of its decline. If this mode of political agency is in trouble, what risks being lost, and what can be pursued by other means? What exactly are the roles and responsibilities that contemporary partisans seem prone to default on? Such questions suggest the need for a critical standard against which to assess the significance of party malaise. Conversely, for those who would rather emphasize the model's enduring potential, the relevant questions will centre on how a defence of partisanship might look. What, if anything, is desirable, about the practice, and what normative standards should underpin it?

In these ambiguous circumstances for the future of partisanship, a number of observers have drawn attention to its place in a well-functioning polity. The most intellectually ambitious and accomplished of these efforts have come from the United States, where dissatisfaction with the major parties has an extensive past. Amid contemporary concerns about unmeasured and unprincipled partisanship in the House and the Senate, Nancy Rosenblum and Russell Muirhead in particular have tried to show why parties were ever thought desirable in the first place. Examining the normative foundations of a party system, they have offered powerful accounts of why democracy might need its partisans. These are generally neglected issues in the political science of parties, largely focused as it is on the structural determinants of partisan behaviour. They are matters equally neglected in political philosophy, where normative reasoning has become increasingly detached from analysis of the institutions that might deliver on moral concerns.[4]

The book that follows is of a piece with these efforts to rejuvenate the theoretical study of partisanship. But the arguments it develops are different in focus and substance. Whereas Rosenblum and Muirhead write primarily with the US experience in mind, our account is influenced by partisan politics

and Barricades: On the Reciprocal Relationship between Elections and Social Movements', *Perspectives on Politics* 8 (2) (2010); cf. Stephanie L. Mudge and Anthony S. Chen, 'Political Parties and the Sociological Imagination: Past, Present, and Future Directions', *Annual Review of Sociology* 40 (2014), pp. 315ff.

[4] See Jeremy Waldron, '*Political* Political Theory: An Inaugural Lecture', *Journal of Political Philosophy* 21 (1) (2013).

in the wider global setting. In Europe, for instance, the historical shift from mass parties to parties of looser association has been more dramatic, as has been the remaking of the political ideologies by which they define themselves. It is a context of far-reaching partisan change, even if core features of the practice persist. Further, it is a context of far-reaching change in the institutional setting, as is equally true in Latin America. Whether in view of the changes associated with regional integration or the revolutionary overthrow of regimes, partisanship unfolds in an ever-shifting political framework. This is a world of apparently few constitutional essentials, in which comprehensive change continues to occur.

Our account takes a distinctive theoretical turn too. Emphasizing ideals of public justification as a constitutive element of partisanship, our account is in some ways more demanding. Partisans, we suggest, are defined not just by a commitment to regulated adversarialism—to a struggle that is tempered by rules—but by a commitment to persuade others of their views through the appeal to reasons that can be generally shared. Ours is an account of partisanship as a highly principled mode of activity—one that has real-world expression in the ideals and practices of existing agents, but often alloyed with actions less principled. At the same time, in some ways our account is *less* demanding than the alternatives, for we wish to make few assumptions about the broadly well-functioning character of existing political institutions. Some of the important virtues of partisanship, in our account, can be conceived independently of the institutions that might nurture and regulate it—a significant point given existing arrangements may be deeply flawed. Included in our concept of partisanship is the possibility of transformational political ends.

Furthermore, we wish to go beyond existing accounts by considering, in addition to the contribution of partisanship to a democratic system, the viewpoint of partisans themselves. Independent of what party politics can offer the citizenry as a whole, what is the value of partisanship to those who might embrace it? And what distinctive ethical ties might the practice of partisanship entail? What is the significance of the activity as seen from within? Addressing these questions requires an expanded perspective, one that extends not just from the study of party systems to the study of the party—a move proposed by Panebianco already in the 1980s in a study of party organization—but one that takes us beyond the study of partisan behaviour to the study of the normative outlook that gives meaning to it.

Rational reconstruction is the term sometimes used to describe an exercise of this kind.[5] Its point of departure is an existing social practice—one that may

[5] In the relevant sense, it is developed by Habermas to analyse the legitimacy of the legal order of the modern state (see Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), p. 82; see also Daniel Gaus, 'Rational

display variations, inconsistencies, and degenerate forms, but also a basic coherence from a conceptual point of view. On the basis of theoretical reflection disciplined by empirical observation, one builds an analysis of the normative presuppositions structuring the activities of those who take part in, preserve, extend, reproduce, or contest the practice. This is our intention for the practice of partisanship, augmented with attention to why the practice at its best is one worth defending. In common with interpretative approaches more generally, the aim is to balance an understanding of empirical specifics—how actors engage in the practice, criticize it, make claims for it and make sense of it—with sensitivity to the counterfactual elements on which the meaning of the practice seems predicated or which could plausibly enhance its meaning. Identifying in this way the norms that inspire it, one develops an account of where the value of that practice should be expected to lie, as well as a critical yardstick with which to assess its possible reform.

Conceived in these terms, the book develops an account of the defining features of partisanship as a civic ideal. It lays out the distinctive ideas, orientations, obligations, and actions that combine in this political form, and connects them to some of the core concerns of contemporary democratic theory and practice. The account should speak both to the detached observer, for whom partisanship is something that others do, and to the activist herself, who one hopes will see something of her own outlook in the analysis proposed.

The book can be thought of in three parts. The relation between the partisan and the political community at large is the subject of the first, explored across a series of chapters that analyse the challenging but potentially crucial contribution of partisanship, properly conceived, to political life. The relation between the partisan and their party is the topic of the book's middle section, investigated in terms of the value of political commitment and the ethical ties that underwrite it. The third of our themes concerns the complex relation between partisans and political institutions, as revealed in both ordinary and extraordinary circumstances. In more detail, the book's structure is as follows.

Chapter 1 presents the essentials of our concept of partisanship. We seek to grasp it not only as a set of empirical practices but as a normative idea that describes them in their most defensible form. The chapter examines the tendency in political science towards an encompassing definition of party that includes all political groups that contest elections, and notes how this departs from an older perspective in which what distinguished this political form was a commitment to certain kinds of end. To retrieve the normative

Reconstruction as a Method of Political Theory between Social Critique and Empirical Political Science', *Constellations* 20 (4) (2013); Markus Patberg, 'Supranational Constitutional Politics and the Method of Rational Reconstruction', *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 40 (6) (2014)). Our usage is significantly different however: we apply the concept to a non-state practice (partisanship) and remain open to transformations in the political-institutional context.

core of the concept requires, we suggest, renewed emphasis on what can be called the distinctive partisan claim—to be advancing principles and aims that are *generalizable*, i.e. irreducible to the beliefs or interests of particular social groups. Partisans advance a claim of this kind and take coordinated action in support of it, all the while acknowledging the contestable character of their claim. The chapter further examines how taking this claim seriously invites us to look beyond the party as membership group to a wider field of partisan activity.

Chapter 2 looks at how the partisan claim has persistently met with scepticism in the history of political thought. Whereas the defence of parties has tended to be premised on a contrast with *factions*, those unwelcome doubles that corrupt rather than serve the public good, such a distinction has long been resisted. For centuries, party and faction were assimilated: political divisions of all kinds were despised for undermining the unity of the political community. The chapter examines what is at stake in the distinction between party and faction, revisiting some salient critiques of the partisan idea and acknowledging the force of the concerns that inform them. While the distinction between factions and parties is crucial, we suggest, it is for the purpose of critical evaluation rather than taxonomy. The same political grouping may display features of both, depending on its political choices and its institutional context.

Where the relation between partisan and political community is well configured, this mode of civic involvement promises a major contribution to the democratic principle of collective self-rule. In Chapter 3 we examine this promise more closely by considering how partisanship is constrained by and contributes to standards of political justification. We endorse the norms of reason-giving central to deliberative accounts of democracy, often presented as antithetical to partisanship, and seek to show how partisanship is less remote from such accounts than it first appears—indeed, how it supplies what is otherwise missing in them. Three dimensions of justification are examined in detail: the constituency to which it is offered, the circumstances in which it is developed, and the ways in which it is made persuasive. In each case, the role of partisanship is probed and affirmed. Partisanship, we conclude, is indispensable to the kind of political justification needed to make the exercise of collective authority responsive to normative concerns.

As we move to the middle phase of the book, we look beyond the virtues of partisanship for the political community at large to examine why partisans themselves have reason to come together and what kinds of tie their association implies. To be a partisan is, after all, first and foremost to stand in a certain relation to others who share similar views. Chapter 4 introduces the key notion of *commitment* in this regard. It argues that the ideal of collective self-rule requires political commitment, and that such commitment is sustained and enhanced when politically committed agents form a lasting associative relation—when they form a party, in other words. If the price of

their association is a measure of intransigence, the sacrifice of some independence of thought and action, it is a price often worth paying in view of the merits of political commitment.

By entering into relations of association in this way, partisans acquire a distinct set of mutual obligations—this is the argument of Chapter 5. The point needs careful elaboration, since it is exactly in such notions of in-group loyalty that critics of partisanship see an unwelcome constraint on the independence of individuals. If it is true that partisans are bound by special obligations to their associates, on what moral basis are these grounded? The chapter begins with an analysis of why partisanship without obligations is implausible, examining the deficiencies of a highly fluid conception of association based on ideas of contingent order amongst the like-minded and a process of perpetual reconstitution, in the tradition of anarchist thought. Drawing on analyses of obligation in other contexts, it goes on to argue for a compound perspective based on the moral principles of contract, reliance, and reciprocity. It is shown how various kinds of partisan may be affected by these principles differently—depending, for example, on whether they hold formal party membership or whether theirs is a non-membership-based affiliation.

Chapter 6 shows how the associative obligations of partisans extend in time, based on the cross-generational character of the project to which they commit themselves. The meaningfulness of the party idea depends on partisan efforts to coordinate in time. It follows that, to borrow terminology from discussions of intergenerational justice, partisans may be said to have 'ascending' obligations to their predecessors and 'descending' obligations to successors. Though these obligations need not always be decisive, they are of some significance in an age when many partisans are engaged in an effort to redefine their normative commitments to suit changed historical conditions, sparking concerns amongst their fellows that in the process they risk sacrificing their party's soul.

Partisanship is defined by political commitment and the special obligations that attend it, yet to be a partisan is also to know when to compromise, especially when the prospect of governing is at hand. Chapter 7 examines this challenge. Is it possible to reconcile the principled commitments of partisanship with a larger set of institutional constraints? What burdens of compromise does the task of government introduce, and how are they best negotiated? The chapter explores the nature of partisan compromise, the relationship between compromise and integrity, and the challenge of compromising with one's political adversaries. It further asks whether partisan compromise should be understood as principled or pragmatic, and offers an account of partisan virtue that steers a middle ground between a sectarian approach that deems all compromise unacceptable and an opportunistic one that empties the party of its foundational commitments.

The complex relation of partisans to political institutions is never more visible than in transformative circumstances where the institutional architecture itself is in question. Our next two chapters examine partisanship in politically unsettled contexts, looking first in Chapter 8 at partisanship in revolutionary times. The chapter examines two theories of revolutionary action typically placed in contrast: one emphasizing the centrality of spontaneous action and mass participation (the spontaneist account), and another defending the central role of vanguard parties in preparing the people for revolution (the centralist account). We highlight the virtues and limitations of each at two distinct phases: first, at the point of sparking revolutionary action to fight the injustice of an oppressive regime, and, second, once revolutionaries have been successful and face the challenge of founding a new legal and political order that is legitimate in the eyes of the whole people. The chapter defends a hybrid account that acknowledges the tensions between these two stages and that allows better appreciation of the value of partisanship in revolutionary circumstances.

The transnational sphere is another paradigmatic context in which partisanship contends with unsettled institutions. Chapter 9 addresses partisanship in this increasingly salient domain of political philosophy and practice. That parties might successfully organize transnationally is an idea often met with scepticism. The chapter argues that while certain favourable conditions are indeed absent in this domain, this implies not that partisanship is impossible but that it is likely to be marked by certain traits. Specifically, it will tend to be episodic, socially diffuse, and delocalized in its ideational content. These tendencies affect the normative expectations one can attach to it. Transnational partisanship, the chapter argues, should be valued as a transitional phenomenon, as a pathway to a more acceptable international order, rather than as a desirable thing in itself.

What does our account of the normative structure and value of partisanship suggest for the practical configuration of a party? In Chapter 10, our concluding chapter, we trace out the organizational implications that follow from the arguments previously made. Accepting that organization can be a matter of reasoned design and not just the outcome of functional imperatives, we suggest a number of principles of organization consistent with the meaning of partisanship as previously described, and outline the kinds of practical arrangement that may serve them. Issues of salience in many real-world parties—concerning, for example, the role of material incentives, the burdens of membership, the place of hierarchy, coercion and intra-party deliberation, and the consolidation of commitments in a party constitution—are points given critical discussion. By unpacking the normative stakes bound up in these organizational questions, the chapter reconnects the study of partisan ethics with some of the key challenges facing parties in the contemporary world.

1

The Partisan Claim

One of the intriguing properties of political language is that many of its key terms are used both to express things as they should be and things as they are. To pick just a few examples: citizen, democracy, law, legitimacy, state, constitution, and community—each is commonly used to describe both a political ideal and its approximation in everyday life. Democracy is studied as a set of practices as they exist in a given real-world setting, yet typically with an understanding that the concept is not reducible to those practices. They are democratic to the extent they retain traces of an ideal, however contested and evolving it may be. In like fashion the law is approached positively as a set of practices engaged in by judiciaries, lawyers, legislators, and others, but generally with a clear sense that it is not *just* the sum total of these activities: that the law is something discovered as well as made. An empirical and a normative tendency coexist in these concepts and many others by which politics is organized and lived. This fact reflects, amongst other things, the twin impulses that run through political analysis: to criticize reality and to account for it.

In the case of the political party, the dual character of the concept tends to be overlooked, at least in contemporary study. The party is typically approached as a mainly empirical phenomenon, as a concretely-existing mode of organization to which our concept of party should be adjusted so as best to describe it. Typologies highlight the changing forms of partisan activity—from cadre to mass party, catch-all to cartel party—often with the explicit suggestion that no particular form should be privileged as the superior instantiation of an ideal. The concept evolves, untethered from any notion of what a party *should* be. This empiricization of the idea of party corresponds, one may add, to its centrality in political science and its weak presence in political philosophy.

This chapter aims to show why the party should be recognized as a normative concept as well as an empirical one. In reflecting on the meaning of party and partisanship, one should keep in view both the evolution of an historical set of practices and how those practices in their most defensible form can raise

and respond to normative questions. While its changing organizational features are of singular significance, they should be appraised in the context of the ends that the party might in principle be expected to serve. Only by balancing these two considerations does one arrive at a category with useful critical potential.

In line with this point of departure, the chapter examines what gets lost in a one-sidedly empirical conception of the party, in particular one that reduces partisanship to the activities of those holding membership in an organization contesting elections. It looks at the good reasons for adopting a richer account that includes the kinds of political principles and aims agents seek to advance, and that highlights the interaction not just of those who share formal organizational ties but of those operating at the boundaries of the membership group. As we go on to argue, exploring partisanship's normative dimension is to some degree an act of retrieval, as it was with this aspect to the fore that the concept of party first emerged and was theorized in the modern setting. The chapter examines some of its intellectual origins as a normative as well as empirical category, before outlining the conception to be carried forward in this work.

Appreciation of the two dimensions, empirical and normative, matters especially in a time when many of the actors that go by the name of party in contemporary politics are widely thought, by publics and scholars alike, to have significant and perhaps fatal shortcomings. Scepticism towards the particulars leads to scepticism towards the idea. Under such conditions it is particularly important that theoretical discussion of the value of partisanship not be distorted by the problems that attach to it in specific incarnations—any more than theoretical discussions of citizenship, democracy or the law should be distorted by the limitations of their practical instantiations. To defend partisanship is not to defend it in all its contemporary forms.

The Party as Observed: Tendencies in Empirical Study

Partisanship describes a collective phenomenon: this is the common point of departure for all that has been written on it. At the heart of it is some form of coordination between individuals committed to similar political ideas. There can be no party of one, no partisan without partisan peers. Moreover, this cooperation unfolds under conditions of conflict. Partisans unite to oppose those with whom they are at odds. Their coordination is outward-facing. Yet what the unity of the partisan collective consists of is less certain. One can usefully probe the variety of positions on this question by looking first at the empirical political science of the party as pursued in comparative politics, before going on to recall some older views.

One of the most widely-adopted conceptions in twentieth-century scholarship saw the party as the organized expression of group interest. What unified a set of partisans was their relation to the social structure. In the words of an early exponent of the view, 'each [party] is the representative, the special champion, of a particular group of citizens for whose . . . interests it seeks the recognition and fostering care of the state . . . '.[1] The party is a conduit by which social facts find political expression: each defends the interests associated with a particular segment of society, be it a class, status group, or hybrid formation. The perspective discounts the rhetoric by which parties might claim to be advancing generalizable principles and aims: whatever they say, they represent the part and no more.[2] In North America especially, this broadly sociological perspective would become widely influential in the mid-twentieth century in the context of theories of interest group pluralism.[3] In Europe, in a distinct but related form, it would find early expression in the work of Max Weber,[4] before developing more fully as the 'cleavage theory' of partisanship, in which political constituencies are taken to be a function of underlying societal divisions rooted in interests and sedimented cultural oppositions.[5]

Particularly in the latter twentieth century, it was clear to many observers of Western democracy that not all, perhaps not even most, of the groups contesting elections could easily be grasped in this way as the political expression of social structure. New emphasis came to be put rather on the party as a network of elites, unified by their common desire for the power and prestige of political office.[6] Sometimes known as the economic view of the party, due to its emphasis on utilitarian motivation and adoption of methods from the

[1] Anson Morse, 'What is a Party?', *Political Science Quarterly* 11 (1) (1896), p. 77; cf. p. 80: 'the true end of party—the end, I would repeat, of which it is itself conscious—is, in ordinary times, to promote not the general interest, but the interest of a class, a section or some one of the many groups of citizens which are to be found in every state in which there is political life, an interest which is always something other—and generally, though not always something less—than the national interest'; p. 81: 'In a general sense what the state undertakes to do for the people, a party undertakes to do for a group. To promote the national interest, that is, the interest that is common to all, is the immediate end of the state; to promote the group interest is the immediate end of party.'

[2] Morse ('What is a Party?', p. 77) was keen to present his as an empirical conception: distancing himself from the Burkean conception we shall come to, and any likeminded normative conception of partisanship, he states: 'if true, the definition must hold of every party, both present and past'.

[3] e.g. Robert Dahl, 'Some Explanations', in Dahl (ed.), *Political Oppositions in Western Democracies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966).

[4] Max Weber, 'The Distribution of Power within the Political Community: Class, Status, Party', in *Economy and Society* Vol. 2, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).

[5] See e.g. Seymour Lipset and Stein Rokkan, 'Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments: An Introduction', in *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives*, ed. Lipset and Rokkan (New York: Free Press, 1967); also Seymour Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Basis of Politics* (New York: Doubleday, 1960).

[6] See e.g. Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (Boston, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1957b); Joseph A. Schlesinger, *Political Parties and the Winning of Office* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991).

study of market behaviour, this family of approaches saw partisans first and foremost as interest-maximizers, building support to advance their own personal positions. Their appeal to a wider public took the form of chasing the preferences of the 'median voter': rather than consistently representing a defined social group, they would adopt whatever opinions seemed conducive to majority support. This highly pragmatic orientation, and the programmatic contradictions it might lead to, were evoked by those who saw partisans as engaged in a 'catch-all' effort to assemble an electoral majority through the aggregation of disparate preferences.[7]

That a party might also be organized around a set of principled political commitments, reducible neither to the interests of a social group nor to the self-serving rhetoric of elites, was a possibility few observers of this period would dispute. A distinctive class of 'ideological' parties was acknowledged as a real feature of politics in electoral and non-electoral contexts, and often associated with the European left.[8] A minority strand of thought even articulated this as the essence of the party idea and a necessary foundation of representative democracy.[9] Such a grouping was typically treated as a curiosity however. Ideological parties were rare and hardly able therefore to act as a prototype for empirical analysis in general.

Faced with these differing understandings of what the unity of a party might lie in, the most common response in comparative politics as a whole has been to map these different conceptions onto different kinds of party. A pluralist approach has been taken.[10] Thus the major surveys of the field have tended to distinguish between *parties of group representation* (described variously as 'class parties', 'ethnic parties', and 'cleavage-based parties'); *parties of elite convenience* (including 'clientelist parties', 'brokerage parties', 'electoral-professional parties' and 'personalistic parties'); and *parties of principle* (sometimes termed 'ideological' or 'programmatic').[11] These distinctions are

[7] Otto Kirchheimer, 'The Transformation of the Western European Party Systems', in *Political Parties and Political Development*, ed. Joseph La Palombara and Myron Weiner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966).

[8] See e.g. Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activities in the Modern State* (London: Methuen, 1954).

[9] See e.g. Norberto Bobbio, 'Representative and Direct Democracy', in Bobbio, *The Future of Democracy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), p. 51. The point is well made also by Sartori, albeit in one of the less well heeded sections of his book on parties and party systems (Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 26; see also Chapter 2 in this volume).

[10] Such a move recalls Hume's distinction between parties 'from interest', 'from principle', and 'from affection'—a distinction intended to clarify the *dangers* he associated with partisanship (David Hume, 'Of parties in general' and 'Of the parties of Great Britain', in *Hume: Political Essays*, ed. Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press [1748] 1998).

[11] See e.g. Diamond and Gunther, who identify fifteen kinds of party as part of their contribution to an 'empirically more comprehensive and accurate set of party types that are more truly reflective of real-world variations among parties' (Larry Diamond and Richard Gunther, 'Species of Political Parties: A New Typology', *Party Politics* 9 (2) (2003), p. 171); see also Richard S. Katz and

typically combined with additional ones to do with organizational structure, and used to note the varying preponderance of different types in different national and temporal contexts. The concept of party is thereby applied to a very diverse range of political groupings, whose common denominator is that they contest elections.[12] At the micro level, the unity of the party form has been further weakened by disaggregating it into separate elements. In V. O. Key's influential account, what one actually encountered was a fractured phenomenon: the 'party in the electorate', the 'party as organization', and the 'party in government'.[13] Only sometimes could they be expected to form a meaningful whole.

As an effort to record the empirical variety of actors participating in the political institutions of Western democracy, these approaches have much to be said for them. It is exactly this variety of forms that confronts the observer. That some political groups have a more distinct social base than others, and that some seem little more than the vehicles of a detached political class or a charismatic individual, are reasonable observations for anyone surveying the political landscape of modern democracy.

Furthermore, an even-handed attitude that treats all these different actors as variations of the same (i.e. as different kinds of *party*) has some clear advantages for empirical research. By taking an inclusive approach to the range of motivations that can inspire collective action and the forms that may ensue, one can hope to keep at bay some of the interpretive choices that need to be made whenever deciding what counts as a party. The empiricist goal of replicable data collection is more easily preserved. Aspirations to value neutrality can also be maintained. The scientist can disavow normative claims about what a party *should* be and instead seek to engage with reality in all its sheer variety. A large data set is another welcome consequence. Comparative analysis is facilitated if one treats all political groupings that contest elections as one or another variety of party: there will always then be a sufficient plurality of parties in any given national context that one can speak confidently of a 'party system', and thereby make comparisons with other such systems.[14]

William J. Crotty (eds.), *Handbook of Party Politics* (London: Sage, 2006), esp. Introduction. A valuable recent discussion of party types is Susan Scarrow, *Beyond Party Members: Changing Approaches to Partisan Mobilization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), esp. Chapter 2.

[12] Hence the prominence of elections in political-scientific definitions of party: e.g. Leon Epstein, *Political Parties in Western Democracies* (London: Pall Mall, 1967), p. 9: a political party is 'any group, however loosely organized, seeking to elect government officeholders under a given label'; also John Aldrich, *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Parties in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 283–4: 'Political parties can be seen as coalitions of elites to capture and use political office.'

[13] V. O. Key, *Politics, Parties, and Pressure Groups* (New York: Crowell, 1942).

[14] The classic account of party systems remains Sartori's (1976), *Parties and Party Systems*. An intelligent recent addition in this tradition is Lawrence Ezrow, *Linking Citizens and Parties: How Electoral Systems Matter for Political Representation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

The preference for minimal definitions of the party is also the expression of some underlying intuitions about democracy. Though declaredly empirical, it is not without normative ancestry. It corresponds with a line of thought that holds political conflict to be tolerable to the extent it is *not* primarily about contending principled commitments but a process of mediating between competing interests.[15] By evoking party democracy in its normal form as the interaction of diverse political groupings, only a minority of which are consistently wedded to generalizable principles and aims, such accounts conjure a more stable political order.

The inclusive approach to what constitutes a party comes at a high cost however. Part of that cost may be to empirical analysis itself. Typologies of partisanship that give equal status to ideas- and interest-based parties risk overlooking the reflexive aspect of all forms of collective action. Even groups which speak only the language of interests are in no sense merely a passive medium of representation. Interests have to be *selected*, *defined*, and *articulated* compatibly with a certain idea of advantage, and it seems hardly possible to perform this role without reference, even if implicit, to principles of some kind—in question will rather be the *nature* of those principles. Seeing parties primarily as mechanisms of representation, these sociological accounts tend to assume a largely unidirectional relationship between the forms of subjecthood existing in society and those in the political arena. They are treated already as groups *for themselves* as well as *in themselves*; in other words, the role of the party in developing this self-consciousness, by creatively articulating political subjects, is often under-specified.[16]

The problem is also a normative one however. Though well suited to certain kinds of empirical ambition, a stripped-down conception of the party as any kind of group contesting elections dulls sensitivity to some of the key normative questions at stake. The practices of a given moment, in all their empirical specificity, come to eclipse the ideals behind them.[17] A normatively defensible concept of partisanship must reject this evenhandedness and privilege a certain kind of ideas-based grouping grounded in principled commitment. It must include at the core of the idea of party the pursuit of political visions irreducible to the self-centred aims of sectoral groups or to personal interests.[18]

[15] Classically, see Hume, 'Of parties in general'; see also Hans Kelsen, *The Essence and Value of Democracy*, ed. Nadia Urbinati and Carlo Invernizzi Accetti (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013), pp. 40, 69–70.

[16] For a useful critique from within sociology of the idea that parties merely translate conflicts from the social to the political sphere, see Cedric DeLeon et al. (eds.), *Building Blocs: How Parties Organize Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015).

[17] One is reminded of Marcuse's critique of 'one-dimensional thought': cf. Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (London: Routledge [1964] 2002), Chapter 1.

[18] A well-known twentieth-century precedent for an expressly normative conception of partisanship is the APSA report on 'responsible parties': see APSA, 'Toward a More Responsible

Such criteria are important not just for locating the political worth of partisanship—notably, what it might contribute to ideals of democracy—but for identifying why it is reasonable for individuals to associate with parties in the first place. Relatedly, in place of a predominant focus on party *systems*, where the normative ends of actors inevitably pale beside the concessions that may arise in the course of their interaction, we need to retrain our vision on the standards to which partisans properly aspire. To begin to see why this is so, it is worth considering an older tradition of thinking about partisanship in which its normative significance is more visible.

Normative Roots of the Party Concept

When party as a concept and practice first emerged in the modern world in the late eighteenth century, its defining characteristic was widely thought to lie in the kind of ends it pursued, not the organizational means by which it pursued them.[19] A party was conceived first and foremost as a community of shared principle. Partly this can be explained by the weak organizational structure of the early parties, notably as they emerged in Britain and the US. As groups of individuals located primarily in the legislature, they displayed little in the way of a functional differentiation of roles, so it made little sense to define them by their structural characteristics. But the emphasis on the association's ends corresponded equally to the belief amongst those sympathetic to these emerging entities that their distinctive contribution to public life lay in how they united individuals around shared principles. They divided the realm along lines of freely-chosen opinion, quite in contrast to the divisions of religion associated with the seventeenth century, and equally in contrast to divisions of private interest.[20] Our aim here is not to give an historical account

Two-Party System: A Report of the Committee on Political Parties', *American Political Science Review* 44 (3) (1950).

[19] Cf. Harvey C. Mansfield, *Statesmanship and Party Government: A Study of Burke and Bolingbroke* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965a), p. 17; Terence Ball, 'Party', in *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change*, ed. Ball, James Farr, and Russell L. Hanson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 169ff.; Klaus von Beyme, 'Partei, Faktion', in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, Vol. 4, ed. Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1978), p. 688 (by the early eighteenth-century, in England 'parties' differ from 'factions' because the latter term is reserved for 'small groups . . . that concentrate on the modalities of gaining power and influence without offering a comprehensive vision for the exercise of rule' (author trans.)); see also Nancy Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels: An Appreciation of Parties and Partisanship* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Richard Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System: The Rise of Legitimate Opposition in the United States, 1780–1840* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969); Paolo Pombeni, *Partiti e sistemi politici nella storia contemporanea* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1994).

[20] On the importance of settlement of the religious question to the acceptance and then celebration of party difference, see Mansfield, *Statesmanship and Party Government*, pp. 8–9.

of how these views emerged and the debates in which they were deployed, but rather to indicate the broad outlines of a normative conception of party.

The classic reference point is of course the work of Edmund Burke. He famously defined party as 'a body of men united for promoting by their joint endeavours the national interest, upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed'.[21] This conception puts the ends of the association to the fore. The group is defined by agreement in political ideas: 'principle' is what gives shape to the unity of the party. These ideas are generalizable: the good pursued is one possible to construe as the 'national interest', not an evidently personal or sectoral one.[22] As he goes on to elaborate: 'every honourable connection will avow it is their first purpose, to pursue every just method to put the men who hold their opinions into such a condition as may enable them to carry their common plans into execution, with all the power and authority of the state'.[23] The aim to gain control of political institutions is essential to the partisan method, but it is instrumental to the furthering of 'common plans' grounded in shared opinion. It is these shared, generalizable principles and aims which mark out the party as an 'honourable connection'. Praising the Whigs of Queen Anne's reign, Burke wrote:

> They believed that no men could act with effect, who did not act in concert; that no men could act in concert, who did not act with confidence; and that no men could act with confidence, who were not bound together by common opinions, common affections, and common interests.[24]

Rather than as a way to oil the wheels of organization, shared commitments were cast as the foundation of the partisan endeavour.

Was it plausible to speak of the party in this high-minded fashion? Many doubted the empirical validity of this view, a concern expressed in scepticism about the possibility of distinguishing party and *faction*.[25] A common suspicion was that few political groups could adequately be described as 'party' if this demanding conception was to be applied,[26] and that, echoing the earlier scepticism of Viscount Bolingbroke,[27] those that did fit this description would

[21] Edmund Burke, 'Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents', in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful and Other Pre-revolutionary Writings* (London: Penguin [1770] 1998), p. 271.

[22] Note though that Burke assumes the national frame: a contemporary understanding of 'generalizable', sensitive to the transnational, may have to pose things differently.

[23] Burke, 'Thoughts on the Cause'. As Mansfield notes (*Statesmanship and Party Government*, pp. 181–3), implicit in Burke's conception is that more than one party can advance a plausible claim: it is a defence of *parties* rather than the singular party.

[24] Burke, 'Thoughts on the Cause'.

[25] See Chapter 2; also Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels*.

[26] See Morse, 'What is a Party?'.

[27] See Viscount Bolingbroke, 'A Dissertation on Parties', 'Letter on the Spirit of Patriotism', and 'On the Idea of a Patriot King', in *Political Writings*, ed. David Armitage (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press [1733] 1997), p. 37.

quickly degenerate into something less noble. As the next chapter illustrates, such concerns were hardly misplaced: empirically, such tendencies were real. Yet they did not cancel the *ideal* of party against which existing political associations might be judged.

The reason Burke put such emphasis on this concept of party was because he considered it necessary to the institutionalization of popular sovereignty and liberty. Recent scholarship suggests his thoughts on the theme first developed in the 1750s, in response to the increasing concentration of power in the hands of William Pitt;[28] their mature expression in 1770 was conversely a response to the monarchical ambition of George III.[29] Though the contexts were quite different, the common reasoning was that only strong, principled association could adequately protect the mixed constitution from the overweening and arbitrary power of a dominant individual.[30] Firm party ties grounded in principle would empower the Commons by protecting its members from undue influence by the mighty; this in turn would ensure government was broadly in tune with the opinion of the people.[31] To put one's faith rather in the virtue of individuals—the king, his courtiers and unattached MPs—would be unwise. Party discipline and the rules of association were to be trusted over the good intentions of the few. In this sense his concept of the party, however demanding, was born partly of political realism. To be sure, as a partisan himself, by describing partisanship in these terms Burke was putting the actions of himself and his fellow Whigs in a favourable light, casting them as the defenders of the national interest. His was undoubtedly an argument with a partisan tinge. But it made sense only in the context of a larger preoccupation with averting tyranny and securing the conditions of popular self-rule.

Views not dissimilar to Burke's were expressed in the nineteenth century by a number of continental-European thinkers.[32] The German-based Swiss jurist (and active partisan[33]) Johann Kaspar Bluntschli likewise developed a

[28] See Richard Bourke, 'Party, Parliament, and Conquest in Newly Ascribed Burke Manuscripts', *The Historical Journal* 55 (3) (2012).

[29] Richard Bourke, *Empire and Revolution: The Political Life of Edmund Burke* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), Part III, Chapter 5, section 5.

[30] Bourke, *Empire and Revolution*, Part III, Chapter 5, section 5.

[31] Bourke, *Empire and Revolution*, Part III, Chapter 5, section 5. Burke's biographer proposes convincingly that the argument was ultimately about popular sovereignty, not simply an attempt to defend aristocratic privilege. As Whigs like Burke saw it, 'in their hands, government was a tool of the people as much as it was lever of the king'. He continues: 'The people might be misled in their judgments, but their sentiments were mostly sound: "Whenever the people have a feeling [said Burke], they commonly are in the right." It was the job of a representative assembly to ascertain that feeling . . . . The House of Commons was at once a representative and a deliberative chamber, which had to echo the attitudes of the people without being bound by their proposals.' See also Mansfield, *Statesmanship and Party Government*, esp. pp. 138ff., 157ff.

[32] Johann Kaspar Bluntschli, *Charakter und Geist der politischen Parteien* (Nördlingen: C. H. Beck, 1869). A useful overview is Pombeni, *Partiti*.

[33] He allied himself with the Conservative–Liberal party of Zurich in the 1830s and 1840s.

conception of party in which what marked it out from competing political groups was its associates' common aim to pursue the good of the whole (here understood as the state, society, and the 'fatherland') rather than the good of the party. Parties, he suggested, are 'free social groups' ('freie . . . Gesellschaftsgruppen') which are 'allied for common political action by a shared attitude and aim'.[34] Depending on its orientation either to the good of the state or to special interest,

> the identical association will be either a political party or a faction. It has taken the path of faction as soon as self-aggrandizement or cantankerousness overwhelms love for the fatherland, and the party consciously and deliberately fails to serve the good of the state and society in general, but rather does that which is dictated by its passions.[35]

Again, organization played an important but supporting role: 'if a party wants to fulfil its aims and attain the goals for which it united, it must to some degree organise itself as an active community and act as a close-knit collective in public life, in electoral meetings, and in councils'.[36]

An emphasis on the distinctive goals of partisanship as marking it out from other types of association was shared by many in this period. Another jurist in the German tradition writing on the concept of party, one who influenced Bluntschli and was also himself a partisan, was Robert von Mohl.[37] He too saw the distinctiveness of this political form, in contrast to 'factions' and 'groupings', to lie in the specific kind of principles and aims it defined itself by. As he put it:

> a state party is the sum of all those who want to direct state power in a certain way, or who want to establish certain public institutions and conditions. Depending on the specific circumstances, they want to achieve this either by lawfully taking over the government itself or, at the minimum, by exercising a decisive influence over it. A party is oriented towards a public ideal, and promises that realising this will serve the welfare of all—including, of course, the welfare of its own members; but it is not directly and exclusively a selfish aim. A party is conscious of its goal and openly avows it, and seeks to win as many followers as possible.[38]

[34] Bluntschli, *Charakter und Geist*, p. 9, author trans.
[35] Bluntschli, *Charakter und Geist*, p. 11, author trans.
[36] Bluntschli, *Charakter und Geist*, p. 12, author trans.
[37] Robert von Mohl, 'Die Parteien im Staate', in *Robert von Mohl: Politische Schriften*, ed. Klaus von Beyme (Cologne: Westdeutscher Verlag [1859] 1966). He associated with the liberal Reichspartei as member of the Reichstag in the 1870s.
[38] Von Mohl, 'Die Parteien im Staate', p. 239, author trans. On the irreducibility of the party to the interests of family and estate, see also Karl Rosenkranz, *Über den Begriff der politischen Partei. Rede zum 18. Januar 1843, dem Krönungsfeste Preußens, Gehalten in der Königl. Deutschen Gesellschaft* (Königsberg: Theile, 1843).

For von Mohl, the party as organization was very much a secondary aspect: indeed, his concern was that an excess of organization might undermine the party as normative agent.[39]

To assert that parties by their nature were oriented to generalizable principles and aims was not necessarily to deny that more partial motivations might be joined to this.[40] A sense of the ideal standards of partisanship did not exclude political realism. Alexis de Tocqueville advanced a conception sensitive to both: 'when the citizens entertain different opinions upon subjects which affect the whole country alike, such, for instance, as the principles upon which the government is to be conducted, then distinctions arise which may correctly be styled parties'.[41] Shared political commitments were the essence of such parties: 'The political parties which I style great are those which cling to principles more than to consequences; to general, and not to especial cases; to ideas, and not to men.'[42] Yet partial motivations were never absent: 'in them [great parties], private interest, which always plays the chief part in political passions, is more studiously veiled under the pretext of the public good; and it may even be sometimes concealed from the eyes of the very person whom it excites and impels'.[43] Private interest was, he felt, unquestionably the animating force behind the empirical political groupings he encountered in America. But in the case of the higher form of party, the great party, while it remained a reconciliation of the private and the public, an orientation to the latter was nonetheless a defining feature. It was here, in its capacity to cultivate in citizens a concern for the public good and to protect them from domination by the most powerful, that a party's potential to contribute to popular sovereignty lay.[44]

It would later become a trope of socialist thought that a party might simultaneously advance the good of a social group *and* be the vehicle of a universal good. Marxist theories of political mobilization are typically treated as theories of class action, and there can be no denying that a much stronger link is drawn

[39] In nineteenth-century Germany in particular, the party as community of conviction ('Gesinnungsgemeinschaft') was typically emphasized over the party as organization: cf. von Beyme, 'Partei, Faktion', p. 699.

[40] Discussing von Mohl's thoughts on this, see von Beyme's introduction in von Mohl, 'Die Parteien im Staate', p. xxxv.

[41] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. and trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), Vol. 1, Part 2, Chapter 2, p. 167.

[42] Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Vol. 1, Part 2, Chapter 2, p. 167. Cf. Gerald M. Bonetto, 'Alexis de Tocqueville's Concept of Political Parties', *American Studies* 22 (2) (1981), p. 65.

[43] Bonetto, 'Tocqueville's Concept', p. 65. That Tocqueville's realism here is not intended to dissolve the great/minor party distinction is evident from the sentence that follows: 'Minor parties are, on the other hand, generally deficient in political faith. As they are not sustained or dignified by a lofty purpose, they ostensibly display the egotism of their character in their actions.' Note that Burke too had a place for private interest in the party (for discussion, see Mansfield, *Statesmanship and Party Government*, p. 188).

[44] Bonetto, 'Tocqueville's Concept', pp. 74ff.

by many Marxist thinkers between party and group interest.[45] But for a large number of active socialists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the point was exactly that the greater good of society as a whole, properly understood, was aligned with the interests of the working class. The sense in a party seeking to advance the latter was that it thereby advanced a cause irreducible to proletarian interest. Ramsay MacDonald—co-founder and theoretician of the British Labour Party, and later its first Prime Minister—provides powerful illustration. 'Socialism', he wrote in his 1907 work of the same name, 'is no class movement. Socialism is a movement of opinion, not an organization of status. It is not the rule of the working-class; it is the organization of the community.'[46] His portrayal of the Labour Party in his 1919 piece on *Parliament and Revolution* expands on the same theme:

> it [the Party] believes in the class conflict as a descriptive fact, but it does not regard it as supplying a political method. It strives to transform through education, through raising the standards of mental and moral qualities, through the acceptance of programmes by reason of their justice, rationality and wisdom .... It walks with the map of Socialism in front of it and guides its steps by the compass of democracy.[47]

Eduard Bernstein was equally emphatic that the goal of Germany's Social Democrats was to bring the goods of political citizenship to the masses and thereby *reconfigure* society, not merely defend a section of it.[48] Such partisans,

[45] See e.g. Friedrich Engels, 'The Tactics of Social Democracy', in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert W. Tucker (New York: Norton [1895] 1978), esp. p. 557. Note however that the merging of class interest with the interest of society as a whole is a possibility already present in Marx's early writing on revolution: see Karl Marx, 'From the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right', in *Marx: Early Political Writings*, ed. Joseph O'Malley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press [1843] 1994). Note also that in Gramsci's influential account, parties do not simply express the existing sectoral interests of society but are crucial to the *making* of a socially progressive class. In addition to his key text 'The Modern Prince' (Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks, Vols. I–III*, ed. and trans. Joseph Buttigieg (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011)), see Antonio Gramsci, 'I partiti e la massa', *L'Ordine Nuovo*, 25 September 1921: 'Politically, the great masses do not exist unless they are incorporated into political parties: the changes of opinion to which the former are subject as a result of pressure from dominant economic forces are interpreted by parties; the latter are in turn split, first in different currents (*tendenze*), and then again in a multiplicity of new organic parties.'

[46] MacDonald, in Bernard Barker, *Ramsay MacDonald's Political Writings* (London: Allen Lane, 1972), p. 162.

[47] Barker, *Political Writings*, p. 240.

[48] Eduard Bernstein, *The Preconditions of Socialism*, ed. Henry Tudor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press [1899] 1993), p. 146: 'Social Democracy does not want to break up civil society and make all its members proletarians together; rather, it ceaselessly labours to raise the worker from the social position of a proletarian to that of a citizen (Bürger) and thus to make citizenship universal.' See also, from an earlier generation, the co-founder of the German SDAP August Bebel outlining his party's goals in 1870: 'since it is not a question of oppression of the minority by the majority but rather of the equal treatment and equalisation of all, one cannot speak of a situation of class- or status-group-domination, as the working class supposedly seeks. On the contrary, what is sought is a reasonable democratic society the likes of which the world has never seen .... The state should therefore be transformed from a state based on class rule into a people's state, into a state in which there are no privileges of any kind.... The people's state should be brought about initially by

one may say, were radicalizing the already present connection in political thought between partisanship and the idea of collective self-rule. Bound by its commitment to socialist goals, and with an educative as well as executive purpose, the party in their view was no more a mere interest group than it had been for Burke in the eighteenth century.

What one sees then in these older views on the party, from Burke to MacDonald, is an emphasis on the defining significance of particular normative visions of the purpose of political institutions. Principled commitments were considered essential to this form of political subjecthood: it was in these that the party's claim to normative value was grounded. As we have seen, such a view could be endorsed by liberals, conservatives, and socialists alike. Empirical politics might fall well short of this norm, with other types of motivation coming to the fore. But it was against this standard that empirical groups should be judged and, where necessary, found wanting. Implied by this view was that the institutional expression of partisanship—the party as organization—was secondary to its shared ideas. The unity of the partisan community lay in its shared principled commitments. The coordinated effort to control state institutions (increasingly focused on the contestation of elections) was the means to achieve these ends.

Some may wonder whether there was not a significant risk implicit in these approaches. By locating the defining features of partisanship primarily in the principles and aims advanced, these thinkers seemed to be directing one either to a highly political assessment of whether certain commitments genuinely serve the public good, or—no less problematic—to the study of *intentions*, and thus to something very difficult to ascertain in the particular instance.[49] Were these theorists then not opening an unbridgeable divide between the normative and the empirical, such that a party could only be imagined, never confidently observed? The problem is one we shall return to. Arguably the subsequent empiricization of the party concept in political science was a response to a valid concern, albeit a response overdrawn.

The main conclusion of this section though is the following. What one sees by recalling these older conceptions of the party is that, in the course of empirical study in the twentieth century, the word party came to be applied to groupings from which thinkers of an earlier period would have withheld the term. When contemporary scholars extend typologies of parties to include

the education of the masses regarding social and political conditions, and this education can be advanced by the organization (founding) of party associations, trade unions etc, the creation and dissemination of suitable newspapers and publications etc' (August Bebel, *Unsere Ziele: eine Streitschrift gegen die 'Demokratische Korrespondenz'* (Leipzig: Thiele, 1870), author trans.).

[49] On problems arising from the 'teleological prejudice' in the study of parties, see Angelo Panebianco, *Political Parties: Organization and Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 4ff.

'cleavage representation parties', centred on the interests of a defined sectoral grouping, or 'elite parties' centred on the interests of a narrowly defined network of individuals, or 'personalistic parties' grounded not in shared ideas but the charisma of an individual, they are faithful to what one may encounter in empirical politics, but sacrifice the political ideal that originally lay at the heart of the partisan claim.

Towards a Reconciliation of the Empirical and Normative

This brief overview of conceptions of party suggests the challenge is essentially the following. Though it may be a useful basis for empirical observation and categorization, a view that seeks to reflect the variety of political groupings that present themselves on the electoral scene risks emptying the idea of normative content. By suggesting a basic equivalence between interest groups and communities of principle, it dignifies the former and devalues the latter, equalizing what one has reason to keep separate. A defence of party democracy is then weakened from the outset. Preserving the normative specificity of partisanship means highlighting a certain kind of claim—that to be advancing political commitments of a principled kind. Yet in adopting this more elevated view, clearly one needs to avoid arriving at a conception wholly detached from empirical study. How then may one concretely proceed?

In what follows we propose an understanding of partisanship as an ongoing associative practice formed and sustained by those sharing a particular interpretation of how power should be exercised and with what scope.[50] We refer to the principles and aims that inform these interpretations, along with the specific policies they give rise to, as shared political projects. The partisan claim,[51] always contestable—and acknowledged as such by the partisan—is that their project serves ends irreducible to the interests of a sectoral grouping. Associations are genuinely partisan to the extent that they appeal to principles and aims that are plausibly *generalizable*. As well as direct efforts to promote the project that unites them—typically by seeking control of decision-making institutions—partisan activities involve seeking to convince a wider public of

[50] The latter is especially relevant to the transnational dimension of partisanship to which we turn in Chapter 9.

[51] The term 'claim' has recently been widely adopted as a way to think about *representation* (see Michael Saward, *The Representative Claim* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010)). While it is used there for a quite different set of purposes from our own (not least the aim to conceive representation in *non*-partisan contexts), some of the good reasons to use the term apply in both contexts, notably the emphasis it gives to the contestable character of the arguments actors advance (see also Michael Saward, 'The Representative Claim', *Contemporary Political Theory* 5 (3) (2006), p. 302).

its appeal. Faced with the countervailing projects of rival actors, partisans seek to persuade others that theirs is a cause worth aligning with.

To speak of partisans' orientation to a principled project is not to make application of the concept hang on knowledge of the intentions of those involved. This orientation is a matter of affirmed commitment rather than private motivation. It takes the form of a visible claim, revealed in the kinds of statement a collective produces, the justifications it advances, and how it evokes its addressee. Claims based on the appeal to generalizable principles and aims are discernibly different from those grounded in sectoral interest, even if they may envelop them.[52] They are also distinguishable from other ways of rationalizing political action such as appeals to necessity or to a population's brute preferences.[53] The important question then will be the extent to which a group acts in a way consistent with the claim it advances. Authentic partisans are those who not only speak the language of generalizable principles and aims, but who can account for their commitments in these terms and can demonstrate how the actions they undertake plausibly serve these ends.[54]

To seek to persuade others of the desirability of one's projects is to accept that their appeal may not be self-evident. It is intrinsic to the partisan attitude as we understand it that partisans acknowledge in this way the contestability of their claims. This is not to suggest they need doubt the rightness of their goals: partisans may be convinced of the superior appeal of those ideas to which they are committed. But they acknowledge by their actions that their appeal needs to be argued as part of a public process of debate, persuasion, and contestation, and that the conclusive demonstration of their superiority may fail even then due to differences in first principles and the limits of factual evidence.[55] In empirical terms, this means partisanship finds its home in

[52] On compound motivations that mix altruism with self-interest, and on their consistency with the party idea, see Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*, p. 22; also Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Vol. 1, Part 2, Chapter 2, p. 167.

[53] Some have argued that the effect of a public audience is systematically to lead actors to abandon the language of self-interest, even as it continues to guide their actions (on the 'civilizing force of hypocrisy' see Jon Elster, 'Deliberation and Constitution Making', in Elster (ed.), *Deliberative Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)). The familiarity of appeals of a non-principled kind usefully reminds that the partisan claim is by no means omnipresent.

[54] This applies also to when partisans choose to *compromise* on their commitments (e.g. when entering coalition government). True partisans are those who, when deviating from the letter of their commitments, acknowledge and justify this *in terms of their commitments*. On compromise, see Chapter 8. On partisan self-understanding, see also Herman 2016.

[55] On this point, see Chapter 3. See also Rawls's discussion on the burdens of judgement in John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), pp. 55–8; also Andrew Mason, *Explaining Political Disagreement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). We may contrast this attitude to that of the *technocrat* or the *populist*, neither of whom accepts the contestability of claims (cf. Jan-Werner Müller, '"The People Must Be Extracted from Within the People": Reflections on Populism', *Constellations* 21 (4) (2014), p. 490).

institutions that express the legitimacy of political contestation—where offices are elected, where disagreements are debated. Such democratic institutions are at the core of partisan activity, whether as partisans find them, or as they hope to establish them.[56]

Partisanship, we argue, should be valued both as a vehicle for channelling public justifications (seen from the outside) and as an associative practice required to sustain and enhance political commitment (seen from within). Although the processes of reason-giving that shape partisan commitments will feature concrete proposals for a particular time and place, their anchoring in more abstract normative visions gives them an open-ended quality that resists temporal delimitation. Victories can be achieved in their name, but there is little prospect of their immediate fulfilment, and the gains made will need to be defended.[57] Partisanship is a practice oriented to long-term projects.

Often this associative practice has at its centre a recognized organization, the political party, conventionally understood, which embodies a distinctive collective will and gives it executive expression. In thinking about the relationship between the party organization and partisanship it may be useful to reflect on the analogy with a more familiar set of concepts: the state and the people. The state is what gives institutional expression to the collective will of a (political) people. But a (political) people may also survive the collapse of the state or be only imperfectly reflected in it. Likewise, a party, understood merely as an organization, is desirable to give executive expression to the collective will of partisans, but in reconstructing the meaning of partisanship it would be reductive to focus only on recognized and well-established parties.[58] In some cases, a party with which partisans identify has existed in the past but is no longer politically prominent. In other cases, the formal organization may only be there as an aspiration.

[56] Partisanship as we develop it involves a democratic orientation, even if it need not entail acceptance of a particular institutional settlement. The partisans of a 'one-party state' are partisans only to the extent they do not seek to exclude rival perspectives: history suggests the combination is rare.

[57] On the long-termism of partisanship, see also Russell Muirhead, *The Promise of Party in a Polarized Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), p. 139. A single-issue campaign is qualitatively different from the kind of normative commitments we have in mind (see also below). To be sure, a movement with one precisely-defined goal (e.g. to prevent the building of a nuclear-power reactor in a given locale) may sometimes choose to contest elections, but to the extent it does not subsequently develop a more wide-ranging, open-ended agenda, it does not constitute a partisan association in our sense. On partisanship as a cross-temporal project, see also Chapter 6.

[58] As Hans Kelsen puts it, 'these social organizations usually retain an amorphous character. They take the form of loose associations or, often, lack any legal form at all. Yet, a substantial part of the governmental process occurs within these parties: Like subterranean springs feeding a river, their impulses usually decisively influence the direction of the governmental process before it surfaces and is channeled into a common riverbed in the popular assembly or parliament' (Kelsen, *Essence and Value*, p. 38).

Recognizing partisanship's orientation to principled commitments is important because this is likely to be central to its democratic rationale. It is what invests it with the potential to give expression to the ideal of collective self-rule. If, in the modern setting, this ideal entails that political authority should be engaged in a process of justification, such that the exercise of power is non-arbitrary, and susceptible to popular influence such that it is non-exclusive, then the party as a collective promoting its demands in generalizable terms is arguably critical to its realization.[59] By developing and publicizing normative views on how power should be exercised, parties at their best cultivate practices of justification. Where public discourse is structured in terms of partisan claims, it gives reasons for political consent that are not systematically exclusive. By articulating these views through associative practices that promote and enhance political commitment, partisans provide epistemic and motivational support to the individual. And by making government responsive to these commitments, they bring the demands of political justification to bear on decision-making such that normative ends can be feasibly advanced. In this way, consistent with the expectation of early pioneers of the concept, the party may contribute to realizing the democratic ideal of collective self-rule. A society wholly sceptical of the partisan claim is either one that is sceptical of the very prospect of political justification, or one that can define politics only in negative terms as a balance struck between competing interests.[60]

To conceive party in the terms suggested is to combine elements of the empirical and the normative. It bears the imprint of historical experience: it is a conception that draws inspiration from the claims political agents have made for themselves, the ways they have acted in pursuit of their ends, and their self-understanding as partisans. A variety of agents are plausible candidates for description in these terms: this conception does not limit itself to those of just one persuasion. Groups as diverse as socialists, liberals, and environmentalists may credibly be included, along with others we shall discuss. Yet as an ideal type, our idea of party is intended not merely to describe reality but to regulate the observations and evaluations one makes of it—to draw attention to what partisans properly aspire to, and to highlight those

[59] These points are elaborated more fully in the following chapters; see also Jonathan White and Lea Ypi, 'Rethinking the Modern Prince: Partisanship and the Democratic Ethos', *Political Studies* 58 (4) (2010); Robert E. Goodin, 'The Place of Parties', in Goodin, *Innovating Democracy: Democratic Theory and Practice after the Deliberative Turn* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008b); Muirhead, *The Promise of Party*.

[60] Cf. Harvey Mansfield, 'Whether Party Government is Inevitable', *Political Science Quarterly* 80 (4) (1965b), esp. p. 529.

cases where their actions fall short.[61] Perhaps no existing political group fits the model precisely: how far a collective lives up to the partisan ideal will depend on its actions and discourse in context. Indeed, any empirical application of this conception will have a debatable aspect to it. In designating a particular group as a 'party', one is necessarily making a judgement about how credible its claim to ideas-based unity really is, and how far the ends it pursues can genuinely be said to be informed by generalizable principles and aims. Such choices will be complicated by the way groupings that might more appropriately be described under a different name may have strategic reasons to present themselves as 'parties'. Sometimes one may need to question whether agents commonly referred to as parties are genuinely partisan in make-up. But these challenges notwithstanding, it is an understanding of party that can be used both interpretatively and evaluatively, and thus as a bridge between theoretical and empirical study.[62]

To illustrate this balance of the empirical and normative, consider the following. History tells us that many a party has compromised its long-standing normative commitments, often in response to some change in its political environment. Partisans have been moved to renege on their commitments so as to take immediate advantage of opportunities for institutional power, or to take advantage of the policy shifts made by their rivals.[63] Not only have partisans opportunistically set their commitments aside, but sometimes they have allowed them to become incoherent, such that what the party stands for is unclear. Actions of this kind highlight a gap between practice and ideal. They indicate how partisans, as a matter of empirical fact, may be swayed by system-level developments that tug against their programmatic commitments. At the same time, our intuitions tell us such moves must carry a burden of justification: they typically strike us as problematic, and we know that, taken to an extreme, they are denounced by peers as compromising what partisanship is about.[64] Such actions provoke because they are held to an ideal. Rather than adapt the ideal to better fit the practice, our aim should be to improve our understanding of the ideal: to put some order in the intuitions that inform it, so that it can better act as a critical yardstick.

[61] Cf. Pombeni, *Partiti*; also Muirhead, *The Promise of Party* (pp. 202ff.) on 'high partisanship', as distinct from the 'low partisanship' of ambition, strategizing etc. that is never far from it in practical settings.

[62] On the dislocation between the two in party scholarship: Ingrid van Biezen and Michael Saward, 'Democratic Theorists and Party Scholars: Why They Don't Talk to Each Other, and Why They Should', *Perspectives on Politics* 6 (1) (2008).

[63] For an empirical test of theses about system-led party repositioning, see James Adams and Zeynep Somer-Topcu, 'Policy Adjustment by Parties in Response to Rival Parties' Policy Shifts: Spatial Theory and the Dynamics of Party Competition in Twenty-Five Post-War Democracies', *British Journal of Political Science* 39 (4) (2009).

[64] See Chapter 6.

To approach party in the way described is to maintain, at a conceptual level, a clear distinction between parties and interest groups. Unlike the latter, the former define their activities in relation to a good irreducible to that of a sectional grouping. They elaborate explicitly *political* identities, which citizens do not passively inherit as part of their social experiences and position within society, but towards which they orientate themselves reflexively based on an evaluation of the associated political objectives.[65] Parties, in this view, are not primarily about interest representation—they are distinct from corporatist actors.[66] What distinguishes them is not that they 'aggregate' interests, but that they offer principled justification for the particular combination of ends they promote.

The conceptual distinction between party and social movement is less stark, but is also to be underlined. Unlike the movement, the party seeks to harness directly the power of institutions. While usually this means efforts to *enter* institutions (by taking seats in parliament, by sitting on the executive), it may also mean efforts to *create* them, as evidenced for instance in some forms of transnational partisanship. In both cases, partisans differ from those who wish to influence governmental policies *without* giving explicit support to a particular party.[67] This distinction concerning institutions must be understood in conjunction with parallel distinctions. With its orientation to the public good, as something that involves weighing competing values, the party has reason to seek the legitimation that shared institutions can provide. The partisan claim is unmistakably contestable, as it touches on a wide range of political questions, and thus demands institutional validation. A social movement, by contrast, may hope to bypass this requirement by advancing a more closely delimited, issue-specific set of demands.[68] The concern to harness institutional power also means the party must be a long-term project. Durability is required if one is to engage with the spaced-out rhythms of the democratic cycle. To advance a political cause in this way, and to defend its achievements, requires patient efforts over a sustained period of time. The social movement, by contrast, can choose spontaneity over durability.

In this brief account of the specificity of partisanship, we have said nothing about the institutional and ethical *constraints* on it. It might be wondered whether these are not a necessary component of any normatively-aware

[65] Nadia Urbinati, *Representative Democracy: Principles and Genealogies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), pp. 36ff.

[66] On the latter, see Philippe C. Schmitter, 'Still the Century of Corporatism?', *Review of Politics* 36 (1) (1974).

[67] This holds true not just of social-movement activists (insofar as they are not also partisans) but also of independent intellectuals and scientific experts.

[68] Claus Offe, 'Reflections on the Institutional Self-Transformation of Movement Politics: A Tentative Stage Model', in *Challenging the Political Order: New Social and Political Movements in Western Democracies*, ed. Russell J. Dalton and Manfred Kuechler (Cambridge: Polity, 1990).

conception of what partisanship is. It is sometimes observed, for instance, that the growing acceptance of party-based division in nineteenth-century societies, and thus the consolidation of party as a legitimate phenomenon, was closely linked to the emerging idea of loyal opposition.[69] One of the ways a party was said to express its commitment to the ideals of political justification was by respecting its political adversaries, above all (though not only) by agreeing to be bound by common procedures. Generalized consent to the existing institutional system amongst parties of government and opposition is widely regarded today as a necessary foundation of party democracy. Following this line of thought, might one not regard it as definitional of the party, at least as a political ideal, that it is a group that 'plays by the rules'?[70]

While the concerns that suggest such a move are well grounded, one must resist evoking partisanship in this domesticated fashion. It is not just that, empirically, solid agreement on the so-called constitutional essentials is rarely manifest in party politics, that procedures are invariably politicized. More to the point is that playing by the rules is ultimately a situational virtue, dependent on the existence of structures that are relatively fair and stable over time. The concept of party cannot be limited to such situations: on the contrary, their absence may be one of its inspirations. Honouring the partisan claim to be acting on behalf of generalizable principles and aims will occasionally require *departing* from institutional arrangements as they are.[71] Protecting party-political pluralism itself will sometimes be one of the ends appropriately served by contesting existing structures.[72] The concept of partisanship must retain space for the extraordinary and the disruptive—for the logic of revolutionary action and for action aimed at creating new institutions. What properly tempers partisanship is not the willingness to accept existing procedures, but the acceptance of the contestable character of the partisan claim, which any new institutional settlement should reflect.[73] It is this ethos, rather than a certain relation to existing institutions, that we wish to

[69] Hofstadter, *Idea of a Party System*.

[70] The possibility is suggested in Muirhead and Rosenblum's discussion of Rawls and the idea of 'quasi-great parties' (Russell Muirhead and Nancy Rosenblum, 'Political Liberalism vs. "The Great Game of Politics": The Politics of Political Liberalism', *Perspectives on Politics* 4 (1) (2006), pp. 101–2); cf. Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels*, Chapters 8 and 9.

[71] On some of the unexpected possibilities inherent in the concept of 'loyal opposition', see Jeremy Waldron, 'The Principle of Loyal Opposition', *NYU Public Law and Legal Theory Research Paper Series* (2011).

[72] Consider in this regard efforts in the UK to reform or abolish the House of Lords: amongst reformers' rationales is the aim to make government more responsive to the public and to revitalize Westminster as a site of meaningful partisan debate.

[73] i.e. while the contestation of institutional procedures may sometimes be appropriate, the aim to produce new institutions insensitive to political contestation (e.g. authoritarian ones) is not. We return to this point in the discussion of transnational partisanship.

underline. The obvious risks that attend the politicization of procedures are not sufficient to make consent to them a defining characteristic of partisanship.

Who is a Partisan?

Notwithstanding the important distinctions between party, interest group and social movement, it follows from our description that one can be a partisan even if one is not formally a member of a party organization. At the core of the efforts of partisans is an organization within which partisan practices find a peculiarly dense and coordinated form. Yet, as we have emphasized, partisanship as a practice need not always follow closely the contours of party membership: it may extend beyond the face-to-face contacts of membership to a broader network of political activists seeking to advance largely the same goals, even in the absence of formal attachments.[74] Partisanship, we suggest, is more than what party members do.

There are several reasons why it is important to understand partisanship in this larger sense. One is because the wider circle of partisans who lack formal ties to the group may still contribute much to its cause. This is most obviously true at the very beginning of its life: a party can only be founded by those who are not yet formally associated with one another and whose ties consist only in their commonality of purpose. Partisanship prefigures the party. The importance of non-members holds true also over the course of a party's development. Those thereby aligned with the partisan association are an important source of members-to-be. Not only may these sympathizers replenish the party at critical moments with those committed to its principles and aims, but the prospect of their joining in future gives members reason to maintain the party's ideational focus. As scholars of social movements have come to emphasize, these liminal relations between party members and partisan sympathizers are highly significant for preserving the political identity of both.[75]

Those beyond a party who consistently align with it may also help mediate between the party and the wider society. They influence the extent to which its projects are heard and sympathetically received. Indeed, the strength of their contribution may derive precisely from the fact they are *not* formally associated with the party. For much of the modern period, media organizations have had informal ties with parties whose cause they have helped advance exactly by being organizationally independent of them, and thus

[74] See Jonathan White and Lea Ypi, 'On Partisan Political Justification', *American Political Science Review* 105 (2) (2011); also Scarrow, *Beyond Party Members*. This less structured constellation resembles what von Mohl described as a 'grouping', i.e. a politically-focused collection of individuals that 'lacks defined organisation or boundaries' (von Mohl, 'Die Parteien im Staate').

[75] See McAdam and Tarrow, 'Ballots and Barricades'.

able to claim impartiality for their opinions. In the present period, a similar status is cultivated by think-tanks, blogs, and other online forums.[76] Especially in an age of scepticism towards parties, these non-member partisans may carry a level of public authority that significantly augments a party's prospects of success and capacity to justify its cause.[77] Their interventions help shape the commonsense ideas that determine how far a party's proposals are socially resonant.[78]

The benefits and sacrifices associated with partisanship do not, in other words, map neatly onto the membership group. Individuals and groups may be the locus of partisanship, even without formal links to the party organization.[79] This raises the possibility of relations of obligation between partisan members and non-members. By virtue of their shared commitments and coordinated efforts to advance them, partisans may be said to develop ethical ties, additional to whatever ties are associated with their background identity as citizens, nationals, and so forth. The party, one may say, is an *ethical* unity before it is an organizational one—though the two interrelate—and it is by appeal to such obligations that partisans may hope to remedy some of the empirical problems that come with organization and the distribution of roles.[80] Ethical ties across the membership boundary also raise questions concerning partisanship's norms of publicity—the extent to which, for example, members and non-members have an obligation to the wider political community to declare their mutual allegiances. An adequate conception of partisanship must recognize, in other words, the full force, ethical and power-political, of the ties that link party members and their sympathizers in view of their shared commitments. An exclusive focus on that part of the partisan association that is organized and legally recognized will miss much of what is politically consequential.

To insist on the significance of non-member partisans is not to suggest organization and membership are inessential components of partisanship.

[76] On the relation between party organizations and think-tanks, see Hartwig Pautz, *Think-Tanks, Social Democracy and Social Policy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); on partisanship and blogs, see Eric Lawrence et al., 'Self-Segregation or Deliberation? Blog Readership, Participation, and Polarization in American Politics', *Perspectives on Politics* 8 (1) (2010).

[77] On the importance of conservative media outlets in the US for the success of the Tea Party, see Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[78] On the use of a television persona to achieve this effect, see the reflections of the leader of Podemos (Pablo Iglesias, 'Understanding Podemos', *New Left Review* 93 (May/June 2015)).

[79] The converse is also true: party membership is not sufficient to make a partisan. Members who cease to promote generalizable principles and aims, who are largely passive, or who act persistently at odds with the commitments of their party, fail to meet the description of a partisan.

[80] Jonathan White, 'The Party in Time', *British Journal of Political Science* (2015), doi: 10.1017/S0007123415000265; also Chapters 5 and 6 in this volume. On the challenges of organization, see Robert Michels, *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy* (New York: Dover [1915] 1959); Panebianco, *Political Parties*.

A party, in contrast to a movement, is not well seen as a spontaneous order. The acts of coordination that produce it predictably require regulation by decision-making rules, coupled with boundaries to demarcate who is included and excluded. Although empirical researchers correctly identify the increasingly fuzzy and permeable boundaries of many contemporary political groups, and the rise of intermediary and less demanding forms of affiliation,[81] a normative conception of the party cannot embrace such tendencies indiscriminately. Ease of affiliation can dilute the commitments around which the party claims to unite, as well as the investment expected of members. Likewise, a party lacking regularized procedures is likely to be one more easily dominated by the few (this being one reason why parties in some jurisdictions are legally required to have a constitution). Partisan associative practices cannot be decoupled from the party as member-based organization.

The point is rather that the two must be seen in conjunction. Partisanship needs an organized party at the centre of it, to give it shape, continuity, and executive capacity, but at the same time the organization draws strength from those who are more loosely aligned, yet who are considerably more engaged than mere 'supporters'. Just as activists need the enduring organization of the party to be successful, members benefit from the *non*-membership of others allied to their cause, and each may develop obligations to the other. At the transnational level especially, as well as in extraordinary political moments, we may be interested in the interactions of those who do not share party membership, yet whose cooperation seems qualitatively different from a pact of expedience. Rather than question the value of membership and organization, the point of an enlarged perspective is to appreciate the potency and indispensability of what non-members do, and how a party prospers when thus embedded in a more loosely structured community of partisans.

Conclusion

As this chapter has sought to show, something important is lost if the concept of party is approached in purely empirical fashion. Rather than building one's understanding solely by observing the kinds of political group that contest elections, one should approach it—as so many political concepts are approached—as a point of intersection between real-world practices and normative ideals. Concretely, this means renewing an emphasis on what is arguably the distinctive partisan stance: the claim to endorse principles and aims that are irreducible to the interest of a sectoral grouping, that are to be

[81] Cf. Scarrow, *Beyond Party Members*, p. 3, on 'multi-speed membership parties'; cf. Anika Gauja, 'The Construction of Party Membership', *European Journal of Political Research* 54 (2) (2015).

pursued in coordination with like-minded peers, and that depend on persuasion of others if they are to be successfully advanced.

One reason it matters to approach partisanship in this way is so that the failings of political groups as we encounter them are properly assessed. A conception of party that is normatively undemanding will lead either to an uncritical attitude towards parties as they exist, or to an unnuanced critique that tars some by association with others. In contemporary scholarship the latter especially is visible in the work of deliberative theorists who, certainly until recently, have tended to dismiss parties as the intrusion of private interest on public reason. Where no distinction is made between party and interest group, the former will tend to be dismissed for the failings of the latter. Only if one reaffirms the distinctiveness of the partisan claim, even in circumstances where perhaps just a minority of existing political groups credibly advance it, will one have a feel for why parties were ever thought crucial to democracy.

There are also good empirical grounds for wanting a normatively demanding conception of party. It helps sensitize one to some of the less obvious reasons for which individuals may choose to associate with a party—reasons connected to the epistemic value of shared political commitments, and the motivational appeal of contributing to a long-lasting political project alongside a community of the like-minded.[82] It draws attention to the kinds of obligation that partisans may be said to incur, how they negotiate them, and the practical challenges they face in fulfilling them. It also puts focus on how choices concerning the structure of a party may give rise to particular kinds of grievance or disaffection. A normatively-aware conception of partisanship opens up further lines of empirical research in other words, and therefore holds relevance for the political science in this area.

The chapters that follow seek to flesh out further the points we have sketched. We look more closely at the ideas, orientations, obligations, and practices constitutive of partisanship properly understood, and how these intersect with some core features of democratic life. Such an account should highlight in distinctive fashion why democracy needs its partisans, as well as put in relief some of the key trends of contemporary politics.

[82] See Chapters 4 and 6.

2

Partisans and their Doubles

'Le terme de parti par lui-même n'a rien d'odieux; celui de faction l'est toujours'.[1] With these words, the entry on 'faction' that Voltaire contributed to the *Encyclopédie* of Diderot and d'Alembert crystallized a distinction between party and faction that all subsequent attempts to defend the modern idea of partisanship have unfailingly endorsed.[2] Its salience is unsurprising. Although the analysis of partisanship as a precondition for the exercise of collective self-rule is essentially a modern phenomenon, the critique of faction as something that corrupts public spirit has been with us for much longer.

Defenders of partisanship have always been conscious of the need to address the critique. In what is now considered a pioneering argument in favour of the modern party, Edmund Burke suggested it was necessary to distinguish between the 'generous contention for power' based on 'honourable maxims' characteristic of principled partisans and 'the mean and interested struggle for place and emolument' displayed in practices 'below the level of vulgar rectitude'.[3] Almost exactly one hundred years later, the classic defence of parties offered by Johann Kaspar Bluntschli, tackled the distinction in unambiguous terms. 'We distinguish the party from the faction', he argued. 'The faction is the distorted image of the party; the degenerated party.' Parties are 'necessary and useful at the higher levels of the conscious and free life of the state'; factions are 'unnecessary and pernicious'.[4] Yet another hundred years later, an important book which contained only sparse remarks on parties but which

[1] 'The term party has nothing despicable in it, that of faction always is', see François-Marie Arouet Voltaire, 'Faction' in *The Encyclopedia of Diderot & d'Alembert Collaborative Translation Project*, trans. Patrick Day (Ann Arbor: Michigan [1756] 2013).

[2] Voltaire, however, also emphasized that 'a head of a party is always a head of faction' and that the main meaning of faction is that of 'a seditious party in a government', Voltaire, 'Faction'.

[3] Burke, 'Thoughts on the Cause', p. 272.

[4] 'Wir unterscheiden die Partei von der Faktion. Die Faktion ist das Zerrbild der Partei, die entartete Partei. So nötig und nützlich die Parteien sind auf der höheren Stufe des bewußten und freien Staatslebens, so unnötig und verderblich sind die Faktionen.' Bluntschli, *Charakter und Geist*, p. 9.

continues to shape debates on the relation between justice and institutions echoed these thoughts. John Rawls argued in *A Theory of Justice* that a well-ordered constitutional regime is one where parties are not 'mere interest groups petitioning the government on their own behalf'. It is one where instead they 'advance some conception of the public good'.[5]

While defenders of partisanship insist on the distinction between factions and parties, detractors tend to highlight its fragility. For the former, parties contribute to the public good and factions undermine it. For the latter, both represent *partial* associations which, insofar as they advance particularistic commitments, are incompatible with the development of a general will. Both lines of argument have a venerable history. For defenders of partisanship, parties 'focus on an ideal of the state' which promises to 'bring welfare to all'; factions seek 'an improper, selfish, goal'.[6] For their critics, 'factions are the most terrible poison of the social order'; 'they replace freedom with the fury of party'.[7] Some celebrate how 'parties complete the state' and lament how 'factions tear it apart'.[8] Others warn 'in the most solemn manner against the baneful effect of the spirit of party' and the 'alternate domination of one faction over another'.[9] For those who abhor partisanship, the difference from factions is at most one of degree. For those who appreciate its virtues, it is a difference in kind.

In this chapter, we introduce the origin of the terms *faction* and *party*, examine their development, and focus on some salient moments in the history of political thought to retrieve two lines of critique: one concerned with how partisanship risks undermining order (or stability) and the other with its detrimental effects on justice. While neither of these critiques, as traditionally framed, applies to the analysis of modern parties, advocates of partisanship have consistently sought to articulate a concept of party responsive to their concerns. Such an attempt is natural enough. If parties can be defended as distinct from factions and essential to realizing the ideal of collective self-rule, their contribution to political life need not be seen in tension with either order or justice but as potentially conducive to both.

Before proceeding, two clarifications are necessary. Firstly, in appealing to classical authors and to concepts (like 'party') which essentially refer to

[5] John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 195.

[6] Von Mohl, 'Die Parteien im Staate', p. 239, author trans.

[7] '[. . .] les factions sont le poison le plus terrible de l'ordre social', 'Les factions mettent la fureur de parti à la place de la liberté': Louis Antoine de Saint Just, *Discours commencé par St. Just, en la séance du 9 thermidor, dont le dépôt sur le bureau a été décrété par la Convention nationale, & dont elle a ordonné l'impression par décret du 30 du même mois* (Brussels: Meline, Cans & Co., 1794), p. 10.

[8] 'Die Parteien vervollkommnen den Staat, die Faktionen zerreißen ihn', Bluntschli, *Charakter und Geist*, p. 9.

[9] George Washington, 'Farewell Address to Congress', in *American Presidents: Farewell Messages to the Nation, 1796–2001*, ed. Gleaves Whitney (Oxford: Lexington [1796] 2002), p. 21.

modern phenomena, one must proceed with great caution. The history of the concept must not be confused with the history of the word. Even though terms like 'pars/partes' and 'factio' have long been translated in the same way in multiple languages, the concepts to which they refer have undergone fundamental transformations. One must be careful not to reify the concepts or project the modern analysis into historical contexts and traditions in which it does not belong. In the case of the concept of 'party', the difference between the pre-modern and the modern use of the term is crucial. As we shall see, in the first case, the idea of party appears in the context of a political order essentially understood to consist of parts, and where those parts that seek to accumulate power and exercise it in the name of the whole are criticized for undermining the pluralistic basis of political authority (be it the *polis*, *civitas*, *regnum*, *imperium*, and so on). Modern parties, on the contrary, arise and operate in a context where the basis for political power is collective authority that takes unitary rather than pluralistic form.[10] The very ideal of collective self-rule implies that power is considered legitimate to the extent that it is justified to the *whole* people. Parties are seen as essential agents in the process of organizing political representation, and their function consists in mediating between the plurality of individual claims and interests and a unitary ideal of collective self-rule. But to discharge this mediating function, parties must transcend the language of particularity and re-articulate the claims they represent in such a way that their demand for a share in political power is justified to the entire people and not only to that particular group of individuals that chooses to associate with them.

The second clarification relates to how we refer to the concepts of party and faction in the present. While the distinction between the two is important, its purpose is not to provide a typology for classifying the political agents we observe as either of the party or the faction type. It is very likely that the empirical analysis of existing practices will show how parties and factions are often entangled, with different political agents exhibiting features of both, to a greater or lesser extent. The point of the distinction is therefore not taxonomic but evaluative and critical: it should help us assess different properties of modern partisanship, illustrate where specific claims fall short of the ideal of a party as essential to collective self-rule, and indicate where parties contribute to promoting such an ideal. The distinction also allows us to see how, to avoid the spectre of faction, certain constraints highlighted by critics of

[10] For similar reflections concerning both the methodological caution with which we must proceed in exploring the conceptual history of the terms 'party' and 'faction', as well as a distinction between the pre-modern and modern use of the term, see Giuseppe Duso, 'Parti O Partiti? Sul Partito Politico Nella Democrazia Rappresentativa', *Filosofia Politica* 26 (1) (2015), esp. pp. 12–15. For a related discussion, see also Stefano Petrucciani, *Democrazia* (Torino: Einaudi, 2014), Chapter 9.

partisanship should be in place. The nature of these constraints, how they can be established, and the extent to which they are reflected in the activity of parties as they are (rather than as they could be), is an issue we begin to sketch in the last part of the chapter and which we continue in the next.

The Spectre of Faction

The term 'party', which began to circulate in the early Middle Ages in French, Italian, and German, comes from the Latin 'pars' and 'partire', meaning 'to divide' or 'to set apart'. Before its use in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to denote the key political agents of the representative system, it was deployed in political contexts to refer to groups of people consolidated around leaders and following aims that were distinct and often in conflict with each other (e.g. the parties of Caesar and Pompey, or the parties of the Guelphs and Ghibellines).[11] The term 'faction', on the other hand, derives from the Latin verb 'facere', meaning 'to do' or to 'act'. 'Factio' can be translated as 'way of acting'.[12] As Voltaire's entry for the *Encyclopédie* clarifies, the term circulated with reference to a certain posture or a way of being active, denoting the place occupied by a soldier in his post (*en faction*), but also with reference to the seditious activity of a politically motivated group within a community.[13]

Both terms are often regarded as synonymous with the Greek term στάσις (*stasis*), whose use is wider but which in its root sense means 'placing', 'setting', 'standing' and thus, similarly to faction, both occupying a specific position and acting in a certain way.[14] Like the term faction, *stasis* was deployed (from roughly 600 BC) in distinctively political contexts to refer to adopting a position, as well as to disagreement, dispute, conflict, struggle for power, revolution, civil strife, and civil war.[15] It is interesting to see how, for the Greeks, a term which initially had neutral connotations of staticity, settlement, and the permanent occupation of a place or station, lost such neutrality when applied to political contexts.[16] Taking sides, maintaining a position,

[11] See von Beyme, 'Partei, Faktion', pp. 677–8, which also has an excellent sketch of some salient moments in the conceptual history of both terms.

[12] See the useful discussion in Robin Seager, '*Factio*: Some Observations', *Journal of Roman Studies* 62 (1972).

[13] Voltaire, 'Faction'.

[14] Von Beyme, 'Partei, Faktion', p. 678. For a definition of *stasis* see Werner Riess, 'Stasis', in *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History*, ed. Roger S. Bagnall et al. (Oxford: Wiley, 2013).

[15] See Andrew Lintott, *Violence, Civil Strife and Revolution in the Classical City 750–330 BC* (Oxford: Routledge, 2014), p. 34.

[16] For a discussion of this issue, see M. I. Finley, 'Athenian Demagogues', *Past & Present* 21 (1) (1962), pp. 6–7 and Moshe Berent, 'Stasis, or the Greek Invention of Politics', *History of Political Thought* 19 (3) (1998).

adopting a stance—all attitudes we tend to link to the spirit of partisanship—seem to have been immediately associated with the threat of division, the disruption of political community, a conflict for power and the worst excesses of sedition.

Nowhere is this critique captured better than in Thucydides's chilling rendition of the conflict between pro-Athenian and pro-Spartan groups that tore apart the small island of Corcyra at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War. Opposing partisans all claiming to act in the name of the common good engaged in a destructive struggle for power which, as Thucydides says, resulted in the most appalling atrocities and the most severe punishments 'beyond anything required by justice or civic interest'. The public whose interests the parties professed to serve, Thucydides emphasized, was in fact 'their ultimate prize', and citizens who had remained neutral were destroyed either 'for failing to join the cause or out of resentment at their survival'.[17] Factionalism undermined familial trust, destroyed the civic bond, and showed human nature for what it really was: a 'slave of passions' and 'a stronger force than justice'.[18] Peace and civic order could in the end be restored only after 'nothing worth reckoning was left of the other party'.[19]

While occasionally more cautious in distinguishing 'part' (*pars*/*partes*) and 'faction' (*factio*), Roman historiography also abounded with warnings of the potential for civic discord fuelled by partisan disputes. Here, the terms 'part' and 'party' were mostly invoked in a descriptive fashion, to denote different parts in court or, in political contexts, groups gathered around different leaders with distinctive goals and aims. Thus when Cicero wrote in *De Republica* that the tribunate of Tiberius Gracchus had 'divided one people into two parts' (*duas partes*),[20] or when Sallust explained the difference between patricians and plebeians as a difference between two parts (*duas partes*) of the political community,[21] the term had a neutral meaning.[22] It did however acquire a positive connotation when used in relation to (or as synonymous with) the term '*amicitia*', conveying a form of political friendship characterized by affinities of outlook as well as bonds of mutual sympathy and trust, which

[17] Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, trans. Martin Hammond (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), Book III, pp. 82ff.

[18] Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War*, Book IV, p. 84.

[19] Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War*, Book IV, p. 48.

[20] Marcus Tullius Cicero, *On the Commonwealth and on the Laws*, trans. James E. G. Zetzel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press [54 BC] 1999), pp. 1, 31.

[21] Sallust 'Letters to Caesar', in *Fragments of the Histories. Letters to Caesar*, ed. and trans. John T. Ramsey (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), pp. 2ff.

[22] As already emphasized above, the Romans meant by 'parties' something very different from what we have in mind when we think of them as collective agents with a representative function; indeed some authors have even objected to the use of the term in the Roman context. For a defence of the terminology which also highlights the limitations, see Lily Ross Taylor, *Party Politics in the Age of Caesar* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949) and for a critique see Seager, '*Factio*', and Andrew Lintott, *The Constitution of the Roman Republic* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999), pp. 173–6.

brought people to support each other in court, to help campaign for office or to lobby for votes during elections.[23]

Faction, on the other hand, almost always circulated as a pejorative. Although this too had not always been the case, the transition from the neutral to the derogatory use of the term is easier to explain. *Factio* was deployed in Roman comedies (e.g. in Plautus) to indicate a certain 'way of doing things', 'capacity to get things done' or, even more accurately, 'influence' displayed by agents who were more powerful than others by virtue of their birth rank, wealth, or social status.[24] Thus when the term was made popular by Sallust in his *Jugurthine War* to contrast an aristocratic faction that concentrated wealth and influence with the power of a dispersed mass of people, it was not surprising that he referred to partisanship and factionalism as 'vicious practices'. Factionalism destroyed the initial balance of 'mutual consideration and restraint' that had characterized the previous years of the republic during which 'among the citizens, there was no struggle for glory and domination'.[25] The emergence of factions brought with it 'greed without moderation' and 'devastated everything, considered nothing valuable or sacred, until it brought about its own collapse'. Indeed, Sallust emphasized, as soon as there were people who 'put true glory above unjust power, the state began to tremble and civil strife began to rise up like an earthquake'.[26]

It is interesting to see how the term 'factio' was not used by Sallust to denote a particular political agent but the more abstract tendency to concentrate influence in a narrow group with self-serving aims.[27] Indeed, in an earlier passage of the *Jugurthine War*, partisanship and faction are contrasted: commonality of purpose is described as political friendship (*amicitia*) in the case of good men, and faction in the case of others.[28] Following the same path, in a revealing section of *De Republica*, Cicero gave the term an even more specific and enduring political connotation. Here the term faction (*factio*) was used to refer to a group formed 'when certain individuals because of their wealth or family or other resources control the commonwealth' although they may also happen to call themselves '"the best people" (*optimates*)'.[29]

[23] See Rachel Feig Vishnia, *Roman Elections in the Age of Cicero: Society, Government and Voting* (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 116. For the significance of the distinction between political friendship and friendship in general in the Roman context, see Craig A. Williams, *Reading Roman Friendship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 47–54.

[24] See Seager, '*Factio*', p. 53; Lintott, *Constitution of the Roman Republic*, pp. 165–6.

[25] See Sallust, 'Jugurthine War' in Sallust, *Catiline's Conspiracy, the Jugurthine War, Histories*, trans. William Wendell Batstone (Oxford: Oxford University Press [42–40 BC] 2010), § 41, p. 79.

[26] Sallust, 'Jugurthine War', § 41, p. 80.

[27] Lintott, *Constitution of the Roman Republic*, p. 165 and Taylor, *Party Politics in the Age of Caesar*, p. 9.

[28] See Sallust, 'Jugurthine War', § 31, p. 73. Note however that in this edition *factio* is translated as *cabal*.

[29] Cicero, *On the Commonwealth and on the Laws*, pp. 3, 23.

The link between factionalism and a degenerate form of aristocratic rule persisted. We find it, for example, in Augustine's *City of God*, when he argues, paraphrasing Cicero, that a faction is nothing more than the unjust form in which rule by the best tends to degenerate ('*injusti optimates quorum consensum dixit esse factionem*'). Again here, when such unjust rule takes hold of the city, Augustine emphasized, the commonwealth is not merely flawed but 'ceases altogether to be'.[30]

We already find in these early definitions some important themes on which subsequent critiques of partisanship would concentrate: the destructive tendencies contained in factional divides, the detrimental effects of partisan selfishness, or the potential for domination contained in the unilateral exercise of power. What is even more interesting is the idea that factions are to be equated with depraved political groups, groups supposed to embody the best people charged with ruling the city, but who have instead concentrated wealth and power and use it only to advance their own purposes. To put it differently, factional activity appears here as just another name for the kind of oligarchical rule that emerges in Book VIII of Plato's *Republic* and Book V of Aristotle's *Politics* following the decay of aristocratic regimes. Factions represent a corrupt display of passions, triggered by arrogance, envy, and the desire to accumulate wealth, and lead to the explosion of destructive conflicts between opposing parts of society. The difference between partisanship and factionalism is of degree rather than kind. Indeed, the dramatic transformation of one into the other is well captured in a famous passage from Machiavelli's *Discourses* sketching the phenomenology of civil strife: conflicts between individuals generate offence, 'which offense generates fear; fear seeks for defence; for defence they procure partisans; from partisans arise the parties in cities; from parties their ruin'.[31]

Despite the use of the term 'party' in the eighteenth century to refer to a different kind of political agent, one with aspirations to represent the united will of the people, anxiety over the undue effects of partisan influence on the rest of the political community has been one of the most enduring aspects of its critique. The tendency to equate partisanship with oligarchy is echoed in Alexander Pope's definition of party spirit as, 'at best', 'the madness of the many for the gain of the few',[32] or in Moisey Ostrogorski's admonition that as soon as a party is formed, 'even if created for the noblest object, it tends to

[30] Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press [426 BC] 1998), Book 2, Chapter 21, p. 78.

[31] Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, trans. Harvey Mansfield and Nathan Tarcov (Chicago: Chicago University Press [1517] 1996), Book I, Chapter 7, p. 1.

[32] Alexander Pope, 'Letter to Edward Blount', in *Selected Letters*, ed. Howard Erskine-Hill (Oxford: Oxford University Press [1714] 2000), p. 86.

degeneration',[33] or in Robert Michels's stark reminder that the tendency to oligarchy is 'inherent in all party organizations'.[34] As already noted, those who sought to resist the critique did so by defending the irreducibility of partisanship to partial interest:

> If a party is not a part capable of governing for the sake of the whole, that is, in view of a general interest, then it does not differ from a faction. Although a party only represents a part, this part must take a *non-partial* approach to the whole.[35]

But do such defences of partisanship succeed? What exactly does it mean for a *part* to take a *non-partial* approach to the whole? Under what conditions is it possible for it to do so? And how can parties themselves contribute to the process that establishes these conditions?

That parties should exhibit a non-partial commitment to the whole might sound like an oxymoron. Detractors of partisanship have long pointed out the apparent inconsistency. Their arguments stem from two longstanding critiques in the history of political thought: one which applies to a political order where the source of authority is plural and where partisanship is seen to undermine it, and another, more modern critique, which casts parts against the whole, and raises doubts concerning their compatibility with the ideal of sovereignty (and later popular sovereignty).[36] On the first line of argument, parties represent a threat to order and stability; on the second they represent a threat to justice. The distinction is, of course, slightly artificial: these criticisms are often entwined. However, both, as we shall see, draw attention to an important aspect of the relation between partisanship and factionalism, and invite us both to rethink what a party is and to consider under what conditions it promotes the ideal of collective self-rule.

Order Between Parts

The critique of partisanship as a threat to the stability of the political community tends to assimilate factions and parties. It emphasizes the detrimental effects of both on the relation between different political groups within a

[33] Moisey Ostrogorski, *Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties* (London: Macmillan, 1922), Vol. 2, p. 444.
[34] Michels, *Political Parties*, p. 50.
[35] Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*, p. 26.
[36] For further analysis of the distinction, see also Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels*, Chapters 1 and 2. Rosenblum calls these two critiques 'holist' and 'pluralist' and explores their persistence throughout the history of political thought. Here we have resisted the labels, partly for the methodological reasons outlined in the first section, and partly for fear of representing as discrete units reflections that are often mixed in the thought of one author and not easily distinguished.

political order consisting of a plurality of associations pursuing different interests and aims. At its core we find a concern with how particular groups ought to interact with one another so that no single one of them succeeds in monopolizing power and exercising it to the detriment of others. One of the earliest and most forceful defences of pluralistic representation in this framework is Aristotle's account of regime types and his justification of the mixed constitution in Book V of *Politics*. The assimilation of parties to factions occurs in the context of an argument seeking to explore the causes of revolutions, the effects of partisan conflict on political *stasis*, and how best to guarantee the stability of a political system. Aristotle begins by targeting a certain idea of justice—justice as proportional equality—to illustrate the unavoidability of conflict between social classes when each interprets this idea to favour their own perspective. As he emphasizes, 'many forms of constitution have come into existence with everybody agreeing as to what is just, that is proportionate equality, but failing to attain it'.[37]

Aristotle's critique here is not so much that justice is an inappropriate value on which to focus in seeking to regulate social conflict but rather that the different interpretations of what it entails end up fuelling conflict rather than providing a remedy. For example, democrats maintain all people should be free, and hold that if people 'are equal in one respect they are equal absolutely'; oligarchs, on the other hand, assume that if people are unequal in one dimension (e.g. their access to property) they are therefore 'unequal wholly'.[38] These different beliefs lead to parties advocating different claims to rule, and 'when each of the two parties has not got the share in the constitution which accords with the fundamental assumption that they happen to entertain, class war ensues'.[39] Order and stability in the political community can therefore be guaranteed only when the constitution mixes the representation of different groups and avoids making collective political decisions dependent on only one of them.

Aristotle's analysis of political institutions is rooted in an account of order that emphasizes the functional differentiation of citizens (determined by the type of social role they perform), combined with an attempt to identify the type of constitution that best balances class interests. Different forms of government—democracy, oligarchy, aristocracy, monarchy—correspond to different understandings of the ideal of equality, which in turn conform to the wishes of different social classes, and can only be tempered if all find the right balance in a mixed constitution. The assimilation of parties to factions confirms the preoccupation with class conflict resulting from the

[37] Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), Book V, I, pp. 2–3.
[38] Aristotle, *Politics*, Book V, I, pp. 2–3. [39] Aristotle, *Politics*, Book V, I, pp. 2–3.

accumulation of power and wealth on the side of 'the few', who run the risk of oppressing 'the many'. To regulate political conflict means to pluralize the sources of power in such a way that order and stability can be preserved whilst avoiding domination.

The concern with civic order, and the idea that partisan divides risk fuelling destructive conflict unless they find a place in a political system that accommodates the differentiated parts of the citizenry, is also central to Machiavelli's account of republican freedom[40] (as it is to Vico after him[41]). Admittedly, Machiavelli also argued that the conflict between the 'humours' of different classes (the people and the great) and the tumults resulting from them were one of the main guarantors of the freedom of Rome; defenders of modern partisanship have often interpreted the argument as a proto-defence of partisanship without parties.[42] But this might be too quick: it seems to project into the political relations of Renaissance Italy a modern way of conceptualizing the relation between order and conflict that does not sit comfortably with it. What matters to Machiavelli is neither partisan conflict per se nor its containment through collective political arrangements accommodating a plurality of perspectives by appeal to shared general principles. What matters instead is the defence of a plurality of class-specific forms of decision-making, able to limit abuses of influence by the wealthy (*i grandi*) and empower the people to oppose the tendency of political elites to dominate them.[43]

Machiavelli's response to civic corruption results in a defence of institutions with veto or legislative authority that exclude the wealthiest citizens from eligibility, the combination of lottery and election in the appointment of magistrates, and a preference for trials which make political elites accountable to the entire citizenry.[44] His remarks on the value of partisan conflict are generally sparse and heavily qualified. They do not even begin to contribute to a meaningful distinction between factions and parties; indeed both are seen as continuous with each other, being associative practices dedicated exclusively to the accumulation of private benefits. Although, as we shall see, Machiavelli's distinction between divisions that harm republics and divisions that benefit them leads to warnings about the destructive impact of partisan associations that will be incorporated by authors preoccupied with the nature

[40] The famous discussion appears in Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, I, 4, 1.

[41] See also Giambattista Vico, *La Scienza Nuova Seconda* (Bari: Laterza, 1953), Vol. 1, p. 288.

[42] Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, I, 4, 1. For an analysis of the relevance of Machiavelli's account of partisanship, see Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*, p. 5; see also Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels*, pp. 64–7.

[43] For a further discussion of Machiavelli's model, see John P. McCormick, *Machiavellian Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[44] For further analysis and defence of each of these proposals in contrast to representative institutions and for a critique of the republican assimilation of Machiavellian democracy, see McCormick, *Machiavellian Democracy*, esp. Chapters 3, 4, and 5.

of modern political rule, the context is a very different one. As Machiavelli puts it: 'it is true that one acquires reputation in two ways: either by public ways or by private modes'. The latter entails

> benefitting this or that private citizen, defending him from the magistrates, helping him with money, getting him unmerited honours, and ingratiating oneself with the plebs with games and public gifts. From this latter mode of proceeding, sects and partisans arise, and the reputation thus earned offends as much as reputation helps when it is not mixed with sects, because that reputation is founded on a common good, not on a private good.[45]

It is obvious that, like many critics of partisanship before and after, Machiavelli is concerned with the corrupting effects of inequalities of honours, titles, wealth, and influence, with the ability of the rich to manipulate public officials, and the use of bribery and clientelism as a way of obtaining private favours. But it is difficult to find in his pluralist account of political community an appeal to parties that speaks on behalf of general principles in advancing their claims to rule. Of course, his analysis of civic order and the emphasis on republican freedom as a way of protecting the many from domination by the few express a concern with the problem of inequality of influence and with the corrupting power of unconstrained wealth and titles, which is still widely shared. But a party here stands for just one part of the political community; it has no claim to rule on behalf of the entire people and no obligation to represent the whole in a non-partial way. To see the problems arising when the question of ruling in the name of the whole people is at stake, we need to turn to a second, more modern critique of partisanship.

Justice, Partisanship, and Factionalism

Nowhere is the modern critique of parties captured better than in Rousseau's famous discussion of partial associations as an obstacle to the development of the general will. The discussion takes shape in the context of a famous section of *The Social Contract* entitled '*Whether the General Will can err*'. Here, as is well-known, Rousseau develops the much discussed distinction between the general will and the will of all: the former organic and committed to the good of the whole, the latter aggregative, only focused on private interests and merely replicating the sum of these. In the context of his analysis, Rousseau

[45] Niccolò Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), Book VII, Chapter 2. This distinction between private and public good is also central to Vico's reconstruction of republican conflicts: 'Nelle repubbliche libere tutti guardano a' loro privati interessi, a' quali fanno servire le loro pubbliche armi in eccidio delle loro nazioni'. See Vico, *Scienza Nuova*, Vol. II, p. 108.

emphasizes how partial associations exacerbate the will of all and undermine the general will. When these partial associations arise, he argues, small associations emerge 'at the expense of the large association' and 'the will of each one of these associations becomes general in relation to its members and particular in relation to the State'.[46] And, when one of these grows to the extent that it prevails over the others 'there is no longer a general will, and the opinion that prevails is nothing but a private opinion'.[47] If partial associations undermine the general will, the latter can only be expressed if the former are abolished. Therefore, as Rousseau famously notes, it is crucial that 'in order to have the general will expressed well, there be no partial society in the State, and every Citizen state only his own opinion'.[48]

Rousseau's analysis represents the culmination of a series of lamentations about the difficulties in promoting generalizable principles (which require commitment to reason) and the disruption caused by partial associations (which are in turn influenced by passions).[49] His remarks are close to those of Spinoza's in *Ethics*, where it is emphasized, in the context of a similar distinction between reason and passion, that 'Things which are of assistance to the common society of men, or which bring it about that men live harmoniously, are useful; those, on the other hand, are evil which bring discord to the state'.[50] Not long before, Hobbes had warned of the incompatibility of partisan associations with the exercise of sovereign power: 'all uniting of strength by private men, is, if for evill intent, unjust; if for intent unknown, dangerous to the Publique, and unjustly concealed'. Factions, for Hobbes, are 'unjust' because they undermine 'the peace and safety of the people' and take 'the Sword out of the hand of the Soveraign'.[51] Even Locke, who was more pluralistic than Hobbes, and thought that there was occasionally nothing wrong with taking the sword out of the hands of the sovereign, especially if the latter were an unjust tyrant, was careful to point out that the right to resist belonged to the people as a whole and could hardly be exercised 'as often as it shall please a busy head, or turbulent spirit, to desire the alteration of the

[46] Jean Jacques Rousseau, 'Of the Social Contract', in *The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings*, ed. Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press [1762] 1997b), Chapter 3, pp. 2–3.

[47] Rousseau, 'Of the Social Contract', Chapter 3, pp. 2–3.

[48] Rousseau, 'Of the Social Contract', Chapter 3, pp. 2–3.

[49] For an excellent overview on the idea of party in the eighteenth century, see Sergio Cotta, 'La nascita dell'idea di partito nel secolo XVIII', *Il Mulino* 59 (3) (1959); Mario Cattaneo, *Il partito politico nel pensiero dell'illuminismo e della rivoluzione francese* (Milan: Giuffrè, 1964); Luigi Compagna, *L'idea dei partiti da Hobbes a Burke* (Naples: Città Nuova, 2008); and Damiano Palano, *Partito* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2013), Chapter 4.

[50] Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics* (London: Penguin [1677] 1996), p. 138.

[51] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. R. Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), Chapter XXII, pp. 121–2.

government'.[52] Indeed, in granting that 'the pride, ambition, and turbulency of private men have sometimes caused great disorders in commonwealths', Locke pointed out that 'factions have been fatal to states and kingdoms' and that such divisive attempts only contributed to partisans' 'own just ruin and perdition'.[53]

It is tempting to dismiss Rousseau's critique of partisanship as an instance of dogmatic commitment to a unitary view of the political world that is averse to conflict and rejects pluralism and change as undesirable features of human interaction.[54] Longing for perfection and guided by a utopian belief in the possibility of realizing the just society once and for all, so the argument goes, Rousseau treats all parties as dangerous and obnoxious, issues constant warnings about the factional disruption of civic unity, and promises a peace that can be delivered only by a divine legislator or mythical founder. Indeed, critics emphasize, insofar as pluralism about conceptions of the good is taken for granted, conflict and change constitute unavoidable features of human life and as such are simply ignored by those early critics of partisanship.[55] The argument from justice is anti-political, and its anti-political stance stems from the belief in the possibility of finding a general will without granting that partisan rivalry might contribute to the process through which the general will takes shape.[56] Hence all parties are thought of as factions and all factional conflict rejected as divisive.

But the temptation to dismiss this critique of parties and factions as anti-political must be resisted. The fact that some authors in this tradition did not distinguish between factions and a more honourable form of political division

[52] John Locke, *Two Treatises on Government*, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press [1690] 1988), Chapter XIX, section 229.

[53] Locke, *Two Treatises*, Chapter XIX, section 229. The disruption such factions caused, Locke warned, could only have had a chance of succeeding in bringing about a political change if the mischief they caused would 'be grown general, and the ill designs of the rulers become visible, or their attempts sensible to the greater part, the people'. Locke's observations in the passage just cited might be read as an early attempt to distinguish between a kind of partisanship detrimental to civic peace and which only serves the narrow interests of particular 'turbulent heads', and a kind of oppositional activity that claims to relate to the concerns of the whole people. But his observations here are much more continuous with a line of argument that condemned partisanship precisely in the context of acknowledging the right to resistance of a whole people. Thomas Aquinas had made a similar case in much the same context. Although he granted that it was not only a right but also a duty of citizens to remove an unjust tyrant, one also had to be careful about the potential for deterioration into an even worse form of tyranny. For, as Aquinas put it, 'should one be able to prevail against the tyrant, from this fact itself very grave dissensions among the people frequently ensue: the multitude may be broken up into factions either during their revolt against the tyrant, or in process of the organization of the government, after the tyrant has been overthrown'. See Thomas Aquinas, 'De Regno', in *Aquinas: Political Writings*, ed. R. W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 18.

[54] For a discussion of this critique, see Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels*, pp. 28ff.

[55] Cf. Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels*; Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*.

[56] For a similar critique of holism in the context of a defence of partisanship, see Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels*, p. 28; see also the realism vs. moralism debate in political philosophy.

is revealing. But what their arguments demonstrate is not so much hostility to partisanship as a symptom of their difficulties in grappling with *the political*, as the limitations of a certain conception of *the political* in guaranteeing an appropriate relation between conflicting parts. Indeed, one may go further and suggest that when defenders of partisanship distinguish parties from factions, it is because they themselves are implicitly acknowledging the force of an important part of this critique. That implicit recognition however needs to be brought out more clearly, and where necessary defended. Let us explain.

Although ultimately motivated by the concern with *stasis* and the disruptive threat that factional strife poses to the political community, scepticism toward the value to partisanship has less to do with fear of political conflict as such and more to do with a concern for how it should be channelled so that no group suffers from injustice. Therefore, rather than eliminate conflict altogether, such critics seek to regulate it in such a way that different groups can interact in the right way. This does not mean that the sources of conflict are abolished: if they were, one would not need justice at all. But if justice is needed to allow different people to pursue their ends without one prevailing over the others, justice itself cannot be conceived as whatever results from any kind of conflict. If what is required to regulate conflict were the arbitrary outcome of that conflict, justice would simply reflect the interest of whoever prevails in the conflict. Or, to put it differently, justice would simply end up being defined as the interest of the strongest.

That justice should not be so defined is of course the position of Socrates as he sets out to defeat Thrasymachus's definition of justice in the course of Plato's *Republic*. Only by appreciating what is at stake in the contrast between two different understandings of justice—justice as a way of conceiving how conflict should be regulated to prevent ongoing domination, and justice as that which emerges from political conflict—do we actually see what is at stake in a critique of partisanship that tends to identify all political groups as obnoxious factions. Factionalism—and partisanship when not distinguished from it—runs the risk of turning justice into a mere instrument of power politics, and power politics helps no one, not even those who might initially benefit from it.[57] But notice that in articulating this view, critics of partisanship do not ignore political conflict or express an anti-political stance, as many interpreters would have it.[58] On the contrary, it is because conflict is taken so seriously that the problem of justice, as that required to prevent conflict

[57] Indeed, this is the surprising claim Plato makes in *The Republic* when he argues that justice is more advantageous than injustice for everyone.

[58] See on this issue Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels*, but also the many realist critiques of political moralism that take a similar form.

leading to the ongoing domination of one part by another, becomes such a pressing one.

As we saw in the previous pages, the term 'faction' circulated in the ancient world always in connection with the abuse of power by a particular group of citizens charged with ruling in the name of the whole people but tending instead to exploit its advantage to advance its own self-interest. Plato's account of the degeneration of what is supposed to be rule by the best (aristocracy) into rule by the few (oligarchy) in Book VIII of *The Republic* is here the paradigmatic example of a factional accumulation of power to which many other authors, from Cicero to Augustine, from Aristotle to Machiavelli, continued to refer. Those with more money and titles end up occupying advantageous offices and positions and make laws that exclude the many, who are seen as the mere means to promote their self-interest.

In Rousseau and other modern critics of partisanship, this problem becomes pressing in a new way because of the link between justice and the ideal of collective self-rule. In a political community where different groups have distinctive and often conflicting interests, the accumulation of offices and wealth, the growth of private property, and the envy and mutual hostility between citizens that may result, risk driving animosities between groups in a destructive direction. Public decisions are then corrupted by those special interests that enter the political sphere, and the general will no longer tracks what is right. As Rousseau puts it in a passage of the *Discourse on Political Economy*, public deliberation and the general will always coincide, except 'if the people is seduced by private interests that some few skilful men succeed by their reputation and eloquence to substitute for the people's own interest'.[59] If justice is reduced to whatever results from adversarial encounters, it ends up serving the interest of the strongest, and can only exacerbate conflict rather than temper it.

The justice-based critique of partisanship is therefore not the result of a simplistic failure to appreciate its value in political circumstances characterized by disagreement. On the contrary, such a concern with justice seems plausible if we keep in mind the destructive form partisan conflict can take if different interests confront each other in a political sphere supposed to represent everyone equally but without means to distinguish between more or less reasonable instances of disagreement. Justice, in other words, is necessary for an impartial adjudication of the relation between different interests; it is necessary to contain the destructive form that conflict between the parts of society can take if interests enter the political sphere unmediated by

[59] Jean Jacques Rousseau, 'Discourse on Political Economy', in *The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings*, ed. Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press [1762] 1997a), p. 8.

generalizable principles. Without efforts to articulate the interests of particular groups by appeal to such principles, the political sphere ends up becoming a realm of domination of the weaker by the stronger, and partisan disputes are indistinguishable from factional strife. It is for this reason that Rousseau (and later Kant) are often taken as sources of inspiration for the ideal of political justification based on public reason that will occupy us at length in the next chapter.

We may bring this section to a close by revisiting Rousseau's famous critique of partial associations to see if we can now reinterpret it. Although Rousseau's account is often dismissed as the quasi-totalitarian mocking of political pluralism, his thoughts are in fact more nuanced. In the very section of *The Social Contract* where his apparent hostility to parties is expressed, the anti-partisan argument is qualified in a little-noticed footnote that refers to Machiavelli's distinction between different kinds of political division.[60] The truth, Machiavelli had argued in the *Florentine Histories*, is that 'some divisions harm Republics, and some benefit them; harmful are those that are accompanied by factions and parties; beneficial are those that do not give rise to factions and parties'.[61] But since the legislator knows that conflicts and enmities are unavoidable, he must make 'the best provision possible against factions'.[62]

In citing these passages, Rousseau comments further on Machiavelli's suggestion by recommending that 'if there are partial societies, their number must be multiplied and inequality among them prevented, as was done by Solon, Numa and Servius'.[63] The real problem for Rousseau, one sees, is not partisanship per se but the conditions under which a *just* interaction of partisans is possible. And interestingly, the answer consists not in establishing laws that suppress these differences, but in correcting inequalities of standing between parts such that no partisan group can prevail over the rest.[64] Indeed, the examples of successful legislators that Rousseau mentions (Solon, Numa, etc.) are far from indicating his approval of reforms that seek to abolish partisanship: quite the opposite. Solon's famous anti-partisanship law condemned to loss of citizenship all those citizens who, in times of civil strife, refused to join one of the struggling parties: it was a law intended to pluralize political opposition, not to eliminate it. One of Numa's most admired initiatives, as Plutarch reports, was to divide the city into smaller parts, allow

[60] Rousseau, 'Of the Social Contract', Chapters 3 and 4; also p. 60.
[61] Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*, Book VII, Chapter 1.
[62] Rousseau, 'Of the Social Contract', Chapters 3 and 4; also p. 60.
[63] Rousseau, 'Of the Social Contract', Chapters 3 and 4; also p. 60.
[64] 'That if there are partial societies, their number must be multiplied and inequality among them prevented, as was done by Solon, Numa and Servius' (Rousseau, 'Of the Social Contract', Chapter 3, p. 60).

different associations of citizens distinguished by trade to flourish and multiply, but then make sure that none had overweening power.[65]

The way to prevent the general will erring, once conflict is acknowledged as unavoidable, is to correct inequalities between parts and ensure a plurality of associations can flourish under conditions that prevent relations of domination. For that one needs principles of justice. Yet those principles cannot be formulated either in the abstract or through unconstrained partisanship: they require the contribution of parties able to motivate their standing and goals with reference to generalizable principles and aims. Where unrestricted asymmetries of position, wealth, and opportunity structure the claims of particular groups, they become a source of inequality and potential domination, threatening the integrity of the general will. *Justice* is required to regulate conflict rather than suppress it, but for this reason the partisan contribution to articulating what justice is has to appeal to principles irreducible to particular interests.

None of this is to exclude that disagreements of principle may persist where efforts are made to advance generalizable views. Indeed, this is exactly what is at stake in the apparently paradoxical idea that *parties* should seek to articulate a *non-partial* view of the public good. That idea acknowledges pluralism and disagreements may be unavoidable, but does not thereby accept that all disagreements should be applauded without constraints. If they can be channelled by appeal to reasons that can be generally shared—if partisanship becomes a vehicle for generating public justifications rather than a mechanism for representing group interests—disagreements become productive rather than destructive. They contribute to identifying the general interest rather than undermining it. This is also the heart of the distinction between partisanship and factionalism that many defenders of partisanship advocate, and it is why the critique of partial associations (even in the extreme form that Rousseau is usually taken to offer) is not as implausible as it might initially seem.

More than the Sum of Its Parts?

The critique of partisanship examined so far is useful to clarify the roots and relevance of the distinction between parties and factions to which defenders of the modern party system have referred when seeking to explain partisanship's importance to the ideal of collective self-rule. Crucial to this ideal is the

[65] On Solon's law, see Plutarch, 'The Life of Solon', in *The Parallel Lives*, Vol. 1 (Harvard: Loeb, 1914), p. 20; on Numa, see Plutarch, 'The Life of Numa', in *Parallel Lives*, p. 17. For further discussion of the Solonian law, see Joseph A. Almeida, *Justice as an Aspect of the Polis Idea in Solon's Political Poems* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 13–15.

relationship between power and its justification. The state, where popular sovereignty is realized, reflects in its laws more than the sum of its parts. It expresses the collective will of the whole people, serves as the basis for distinguishing between justified authority and the imposition of brute force, and requires institutions able to channel that collective will. Popular sovereignty is irreducible to the power contest between functionally diverse groups or to the balance of forces between different natural orders or pre-political rankings and hierarchies: each part now seeks legitimacy by claiming to represent the collective will, and in doing so each part has a higher burden of justification vis-à-vis the others.

The relation to the ideal of collective self-rule is crucial for understanding the apparently paradoxical idea of a *partisan* but *non-partial* relation to the whole that is at stake in the distinction between factions and parties. The transition from an understanding of the well-ordered political community as an aggregate of functionally differentiated social segments to an account of political authority that sees it needing to be justified to the entire people paved the way for a notion of parties as agents able to mediate between the plurality of individual principles and projects and the institutions of a unitary state. Justifying the power of the state and legitimizing the institutions through which that power was exercised required mediating forces able to represent the will of the people in a way that both spoke to their particular concerns and connected them to a civic project irreducible to any one set of them.[66] Karl Rosenkranz, the well-known disciple of Hegel who sought to apply his teacher's philosophy of right to the analysis of political parties, put it as follows:

> the real political party, in its explicitly political meaning, emerges when the personal interests of families and the objective interests of classes are merged with the very principle of the state, with the law [. . .]. The conflict between parties in the contemporary sense of the term begins only when awareness of principles is merged with awareness of interests, with the former providing the latter with an ideal pull and the latter providing the former with an embodiment in reality.[67]

All this is of course compatible with fundamental conflicts even on matters of principle. Indeed it was precisely the conflict between different world views expressed by the religious wars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that shaped the first debates about the nature of legitimate political rule. Later, the ideal of collective self-rule could admit of conflicts on matters of principle, but such conflicts had to go beyond a mere confrontation of private interests and the attempt of particular groups to use the state to their advantage. Once the fundamental freedom and equality of all human beings was recognized,

[66] As shown in Chapter 1.
[67] Rosenkranz, *Über den Begriff der politischen Partei*, p. 18, author trans.

without restrictions to birth, rank, religious affiliation, or social status, the order of the whole required a mechanism for aligning a plurality of positions of principle and guaranteeing them universal representation while also tolerating difference. Only thanks to such a mechanism grounded in associative practices, through which individual views could be organized in conformity with a plurality of interpretations of how power should be exercised, could the promise of popular sovereignty be effectively discharged. It is precisely from the necessity of this link between the universal and the particular, a link essential to rendering meaningful the idea of the people as sovereign, that the modern concept of partisanship became inextricably linked to the preservation of both justice and stability.

This interpretation also explains why conservative thinkers and apologists of the *ancien régime* later criticized modern conceptions of the party as vehicles for the expression of principled disagreement. It was because they longed for a return to a society based on an equilibrium of natural orders and unthreatened by a diversity of opinion grounded on norms of reason. They saw exactly what was at stake in the acceptance of the modern idea of partisanship, and they abhorred it for the way it undermined natural hierarchies based on authority and tradition. So the conservative German jurist and politician Friedrich Julius Stahl, for example, criticized parties by distinguishing between two versions of a constitutional order: a traditional one based on historical political divisions emerging from functional divisions of the social organism (e.g. nobility, military, religious order), and a radical one based on natural rights, inspired by Rousseauian ideas linking the political order to norms of reason.[68] Pluralism and partisan conflict based on principles, he thought, contained the seeds of permanent revolution. They signalled a failure to understand society for what it was in its natural condition, and disrupted its organic equilibrium by making the legitimacy of its institutions dependent on individual opinions allegedly based on reason.

Conversely, when liberal defenders of the modern party system responded to this critique, they insisted that the conservative ideal of society based on functionally differentiated groups and a traditional account of political legitimacy (one that was independent of principled views and involved the exchange of different reasons and opinions) had pernicious implications. Bluntschli, whose stark distinction between factions and parties we examined above, argued that Stahl's doctrine 'divides the government from the governed and provokes each to consider and fight the other as its natural adversary'.[69] The state was different from society: it could represent the latter

[68] See Friedrich Julius Stahl, *Die gegenwärtigen Parteien in Staat und Kirche* (Berlin: Hertz, 1868).
[69] Bluntschli, *Charakter und Geist*, p. 77. For further analysis of the controversy between Bluntschli and Stahl, see Pombeni, *Partiti*, pp. 108–12.

but it stood above it, and it was precisely the acknowledgement of this superiority that allowed a plurality of parts to coexist and contribute to overall justice and order. If parties were essential to the life of a free state, it is because they accepted the contestability of their claims and did not seek to destroy their adversaries. If they distinguished themselves from factions, it is because they agreed that the perspectives they helped shape, articulate, and channel were not reducible to the private interests of their associates but were in accordance with principled visions of what society should look like for the benefit of all.

That the state was abstract from society and superior to it, that it succeeded in realizing the promise of popular sovereignty, that its system of rules could be shaped by reformulating in general terms the particular interests and needs of the different social groups from whose conflicts the state had emerged (e.g. the nobility, the clergy, regionalist groups, different economic classes, etc.)—all these were propositions that many of course continued to doubt. Indeed, far from becoming obsolete, the party–faction distinction, and the assimilation of one to the other, continued to be invoked each time it was questioned whether partisans might contribute to collective self-rule. The spectre of factionalism would haunt partisanship anytime the state was accused of being no more than a committee for managing the affairs of a single group (as with many socialists after Marx and Engels[70]), anytime the purpose of government was declared to be the avoidance of permanent majorities (as in the Federalists' account), and anytime the ideal of popular sovereignty was mocked for being just another idle aspiration.

One might have responded—as many liberals in fact did—that the ideal of collective self-rule was safe as long as representation of the people's will followed partisan conflicts of principle rather than factional disputes of interests. But the assertion that parties stood for the public good was of little help, since to make that claim implied taking a position on who the public was and what the good was (as Sieyès and the French revolutionaries soon discovered), thereby renewing the problem of how to render political conflict harmonious rather than destructive. As Madison emphasized in his reflections on the problem,

> as long as the reason of man continues fallible, and he is at liberty to exercise it, different opinions will be formed. As long as the connection subsists between his reason and his self-love, his opinions and his passions will have a reciprocal influence on each other; and the former will be objects to which the latter will attach themselves.[71]

[70] This awareness is perhaps what explains why the withering away of the state had to be the work of a party, a belief that remained unshaken for many authors from Marx to Engels to Lenin and Trotsky, and which only began to change with Eduard Bernstein.

[71] See James Madison, 'Federalist 10', in Alexander Hamilton et al., *The Federalist Papers*, ed. Lawrence Goldman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

And as long as this diversity of faculties gives rise to different claims to property, which in turn results in 'different degrees and kinds of property', 'a division of the society into different interests and parties' will ensue.[72] And once parties are formed in accordance with different views and concentrated around different leaders and groups, the animosities that accompany them render people 'much more disposed to vex and oppress each other than to co-operate for their common good'.[73]

In the end Madison agreed with Rousseau on the diagnosis of the problem: 'the most common and durable source of factions has been the various and unequal distribution of property'. He disagreed however on the remedy, believing it was both 'impracticable and unwise' to seek to remove the cause of factional divides that were 'sown in the nature of men'.[74] He argued that 'relief is only to be sought in the means of controlling its *effects*' and the more detailed prescriptions he provided are a familiar part of a pluralist institutional response to conflict between parts: separation of powers, due process, respect for fundamental rights, and the rule of law. And yet many remained suspicious that without procedural justice, without efforts to change the system of rules at the source of widespread inequality, the general will would remain likely to err. Rousseau might have been right to insist that if those who make up a political community fail to articulate their concerns in the name of the general will, efforts to render conflict between partisans harmonious rather than destructive are bound to fail.

Indeed, it is worth emphasizing that despite the institutional remedies proposed, a significant proportion of contemporary anti-party scepticism apparently stems from the sense that such institutional remedies limited to correcting the effect (rather than the cause) of inequalities are not enough, and that without attending to the system of production of such inequalities, private influence will continue to corrupt political institutions. When this occurs, parties, like old factions, act in collusion with a political system that is dominated by modern oligarchies and end up sacrificing 'the many' to the interests of 'the few'. In the US, such anti-party scepticism often takes the form of critiques of campaign finance, suggestions for improvement in electoral advertising, or accusations of undue influence by corporate lobbyists on political elites.[75] In Western Europe, recent analyses of the constraints that neoliberal financial institutions place on democratic governments highlight the obstacles that parties face in standing by anything other than the politics

[72] Madison, 'Federalist 10'. [73] Madison, 'Federalist 10'. [74] Madison, 'Federalist 10'.
[75] For some critiques and further analysis, see Dennis F. Thompson, *Just Elections: Creating a Fair Electoral Process in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Samuel Issacharoff and Pamela S. Karlan, 'Hydraulics of Campaign Finance Reform', *Texas Law Review* 77 (1998); Spencer Overton, 'The Donor Class: Campaign Finance, Democracy, and Participation', *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 153 (2004).

of austerity required of their states.[76] As one author puts it, 'more than ever, economic power seems today to have become political power, while citizens appear to be almost entirely stripped of their democratic defences and their capacity to impress upon the political economy interests and demands that are incommensurable with those of capital owners'.[77] Factionalism, understood in the classical sense as the unequal influence that those with more power and wealth exercise over the rest of the political community, continues to haunt principled partisan politics. The defence of parties as agents responsible for channelling principled commitments appears more than ever vulnerable to being distorted by the pressure of external (in particular market-driven) forces, while the state is unable to incorporate these in a way that maintains the promise of collective self-rule. The difficulties with coping with modern *stasis*, and the crisis of contemporary liberal democracy, remind us once again of the persistent challenge of promoting partisan claims that are irreducible to sectoral interests.

Conclusion

The distinction between parties and factions is as important to assert the value of partisanship as the assimilation of the two concepts is to detract from it. In this chapter we have tried to examine the roots of the distinction and the reasons for the assimilation, offering a brief excursus through some important statements concerning the relation between part and whole in key stages of both classical and modern political thought. Our overview was necessarily coarse and selective: rather than aiming to present a comprehensive analysis of the theories and profiles of different authors, we have tried to focus on some key moments and texts through which to form a more concrete impression of the issues at stake in emphasizing or disputing the distinction between partisanship and factionalism.

Advocates of partisanship, we saw, tend to highlight the importance of principled exchange, arguing that partisanship requires taking a non-partial approach to the public good and acknowledging its contribution to the ideal of collective self-rule. Sceptics, on the other hand, stress that the difference between factions and partisanship depends on the background circumstances under which different groups operate. Their hostility to partisanship stems from a critique of the accumulation of power, including wealth and office, by

[76] See Mair, *Ruling the Void*; Colin Crouch, *The Strange Non-Death of Neoliberalism* (Cambridge: Polity, 2011).

[77] Wolfgang Streeck, 'The Crises of Democratic Capitalism', *New Left Review* 71, September/October 2011, p. 29.

self-interested agents that undermine a healthy relation between the whole and its parts. Coupled with this critique is an important emphasis on background constraints (prime among them the reduction of such inequalities of power) required for partisanship to become a vehicle for channelling the general will and to be effectively distinguished from factionalism.

While the distinction between parties and factions is important to understand the function of parties as promoters of the ideal of collective self-rule, the reality of partisanship often fails to live up to this ideal. That is of course no reason to abandon it, but nor should our attachment to the ideal render us blind to the importance of Machiavelli's distinction between divisions that harm political communities and divisions beneficial to them. As we have tried to show, some critics of partisanship may be right that, in the absence of background constraints, collective self-rule is undermined by political conflict rather than nurtured by it. To establish these constraints, one needs the help of particular justification procedures as well as a different conception of the relation between civil society and the state, as critics of partisanship were right to point out. Showing how parties themselves contribute to shaping such procedures, whilst also being constrained by them, is the task of the following chapter.

3

Partisan Justification

We concluded the previous chapter by emphasizing the relevance of partisanship to an ideal of collective self-rule that shapes modern understandings of justified power. That relevance, we underlined, is bound up with an interpretation of partisanship that distinguishes it from factionalism by identifying certain constraints on the partisan claim. In this chapter, we explore further these constraints by situating our account of partisanship in a tradition of democratic theory committed to the importance of political justification. Partisanship, we argue, is an associative political practice both constrained by standards of justification and conducive to giving them political expression.

Political justification has normative and empirical aspects. As a normative ideal it is linked to a model of discursive exchange based on public reasons, i.e. reasons conforming to principles of generality and reciprocity.[1] Political justification is the means by which decision-making acquires an identifiable rationale, one that can be scrutinized and evaluated by those whom decisions will affect despite the presence of disagreements among them. As a practice, justification is attempted each time political agents confront one another in the public sphere and put forward certain kinds of argument supportive or critical of a given course of action.

Political justification has received sustained attention in the context of debates concerning the nature of public reasons and the institutional sites appropriate to them. In this book, we take for granted the importance of public reason for legitimate political rule, and commit to a particular interpretation (democratic rather than liberal) of how public reason is best

[1] Reciprocity, as Rainer Forst explains, means that 'in making a claim or presenting an argument, no one may claim a right or resource he denies to others whereby the formulation of the claim must itself be open to questioning and not determined by one party only'. Generality, on the other hand, means 'that all those subject to the norms in question must have equal chances to advance their claims and arguments'; see Rainer Forst, *The Right to Justification* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), pp. 173–4.

understood.[2] What makes the democratic interpretation particularly attractive for our purposes is the emphasis on political justification as a process through which the constraints of public reason are recursively scrutinized in *procedural* processes of democratic will formation without resting on a prior set of substantive commitments (say to particular principles of justice) or on controversial value judgements that may or may not be shared.

Despite the growing interest shown by democratic theorists in identifying empirical sites of public justification—emphasizing, for example, the role of deliberative polls, citizen juries, discursive chambers, or mini-publics[3]—partisanship itself has largely been neglected. The persistence of principled disagreement has been emphasized by many,[4] yet qualified acceptance of the relevance of adversarialism for political justification has rarely led to candid appreciation of one of its paradigmatic forms.[5] Partisanship is typically associated with negotiating and bargaining from a self-interested perspective, recognized at best as a concession to political realism, and often contrasted with public-spirited efforts at political justification.

Our contention in contrast is that the ideals of justification to which democratic theorists adhere are far less remote from partisanship than is commonly supposed, at least if we understand partisanship as suggested in this book. The present chapter elaborates on the compatibility of the two by showing how the claims of partisans are both subject to the constraints of

[2] Liberal interpretations of public reason can be found in the work of Charles Larmore, Jonathan Quong, and John Rawls; for democratic interpretations one may turn to the work of Seyla Benhabib, James Bohmann, Rainer Forst, and Jürgen Habermas, to mention but the most relevant representatives. Internal disagreements between these families of theories are not important for our purposes.

[3] For an excellent summary of the different contributions to that literature, see John Parkinson and Jane Mansbridge (eds.), *Deliberative Systems: Deliberative Democracy at the Large Scale* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[4] Jane Mansbridge, 'Conflict and Self-Interest in Deliberation', in *Deliberative Democracy and its Discontents*, ed. Samantha Besson and José Luis Martí (London, Ashgate, 2006); John Dryzek, *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond: Liberals, Critics, Contestations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[5] As van Biezen and Saward ('Democratic Theorists and Party Scholars', pp. 24–5) emphasize, 'the more recent theories of deliberative democracy, while not necessarily unsympathetic to the notion of representation, define few, if any, of the linkages between "representatives" and "constituents" in terms of party, with parties typically regarded as belonging to the wrong side of the aggregation-deliberation dichotomy'. See also James Johnson, 'Political Parties and Deliberative Democracy', in *Handbook of Party Politics*, ed. Richard S. Katz and William J. Crotty (London: Sage, 2006), pp. 48–9. One of the few texts to explore the positive relationship between partisanship and deliberation (Carolyn M. Hendriks et al., 'Turning Up the Heat: Partisanship in Deliberative Innovation', *Political Studies* 55 (2) (2007)) conceives the former as the inclusion of 'relevant stakeholders': as we shall argue, this ascription of sectoral intent problematically conflates partisanship with factionalism, and thus severely circumscribes what the former can be seen as contributing to political justification. A similarly narrow view of partisanship is to be found in a landmark article by Mansbridge and other prominent deliberative theorists (Jane Mansbridge et al., 'The Place of Self-Interest and the Role of Power in Deliberative Democracy', *Journal of Political Philosophy* 18 (1) (2010), p. 93).

public reason and conducive to the provision of justification. Recalling the argument of Chapter 1, we note that, consistent with standards of democratic political justification, and in contrast to prevalent definitions in empirical study, partisanship correctly understood appeals to a non-particularist constituency. Indeed, as we emphasized in Chapter 2, the point of distinguishing between partisanship and factionalism is to understand how the first involves efforts to harness political power not for the benefit of one social group amongst several but in the name of the people as a whole. If the implications of this point are absorbed, a foundation emerges on which to think more systematically about the relationship between partisanship and political justification.

Having established their essential compatibility, we proceed to chart their interdependence. Focusing on what we call the *circumstances* of political justification, we illustrate how these are characterized by three important features: a comparative perspective, an adversarial posture, and a basic level of public visibility. We explore how the normative account of partisanship proposed in this book is related to each of these dimensions. Our suggestion is that there is a deep structural affinity between the practices of partisanship and political justification, such that the former act as systematic stimuli to the latter. Partisanship is a catalyst to justification.

In the third part of the chapter we examine the role of partisanship in shaping how political justifications are received. We explore the elements of which justification is composed, expanding the discussion to include a dimension often neglected—the tacit understandings with which justification must resonate or challenge. We discuss the contribution of partisan practices to the critique or development of background views informing the premises and conclusions of particular justifications. By considering how partisanship shapes and challenges these schemes of understanding and evaluation, we highlight their influence in framing political judgement and their essential role in the normative assessment of proposed courses of action.

Finally, we ask whether the account of partisan political justification proposed retains space for a progressive model of political agency, one able to come to terms with the pathologies of actually existing parties and to avoid a politics of incomprehension and relativism. We examine two important objections to our argument: that it neglects the real-world failures of contemporary parties, and that it overlooks how partisanship undermines the very purpose of political justification—the achievement of agreement on the principles orienting collective decision-making. Recognizing these difficulties, we nonetheless show that neither is fatal to the argument. Rather than undermining a defence of partisan political justification, they provide reminders of why the partisan mode of engagement is one to be endorsed and fostered.

In sum, the aims of the chapter are twofold. On the one hand we seek to alert normative scholars to the significance of an existing channel of political

justification—the party in dynamic interaction with its adversaries. Due to the ethos informing it and the procedural constraints upon it, partisanship, we suggest, is a salient source of—and a crucial influence on the success of—practices of political justification. On the other hand, we aim to remind empirical scholars how decisions concerning the conceptualization of party bear directly on the normative standards to which party democracy can be held. In line with our initial remarks in Chapter 1, we caution against adopting a concept of party that excludes the important and widely-shared ideal of political justification.

The Constituency of Political Justification

Rather than as mutually supporting elements in processes of democratic will formation, some may see a *tension* between political justification and partisanship. Let us begin by exploring this tension, for we need to soften it before a more positive argument can emerge. One way to sketch it, and then to reduce it, is by considering the question of to whom political justification is given. Justifications, political or otherwise, always imply an addressee. To justify is to justify *to*, whether to an individual or a group, and whether the receiver be sympathetic and cognizant of the act or not. In the political context, one can refer to this addressee as the *constituency*.[6]

The initial inclination in standard treatments of partisanship is to regard the constituency for justification in partisan practices as incompatible with the public use of reason. Justification through the public use of reason, so the argument goes, is directed at the political body in its entirety. While deliberative theorists have recently acknowledged that disagreements may persist, it is axiomatic that justification involves the provision of reasons accessible to all citizens.[7] In contrast, in party scholarship as well as everyday usage, justification as it emerges from the voices of partisans is often seen as aimed at units much smaller than the people as a whole. The constituency tends to be regarded as a sub-grouping, defined by reference to a group identity, a distinctive set of

[6] Note that, in this reading, constituencies are not understood in the purely electoral sense as the circle of registered voters in a given territorial unit, nor as a social group constituted by clearly defined interests: they are regarded as evoked politically rather than pre-defined legally or materially. A discussion of different conceptions of constituency can be found in Rehfeld's book on the topic (Andrew Rehfeld, *The Concept of Constituency* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), Chapter 2), but the conceptions he focuses on treat constituencies as self-standing entities to which political actors (e.g. parties) make appeal. By contrast, we treat them as entities evoked, more or less successfully, by partisans as they advance arguments in public. They are categories of political discourse first and of social reality second.

[7] Joshua Cohen, 'Procedure and Substance in Deliberative Democracy', in *Democracy and Difference*, ed. Seyla Benhabib (Princeton: Princeton University Press), pp. 99–100; Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, pp. 463–90; James Bohman, 'Survey Article: The Coming Age of Deliberative Democracy', *Journal of Political Philosophy* 6 (4) (1998), pp. 401–3.

pre-political values, or an aggregation of interests. As we noted in Chapter 1, perspectives such as cleavage theory or interest-group pluralism evoke partisans as speaking not to citizens taken as one large constituency, offering to them generalizable principles and aims, but as addressing sub-units of the population, whether they be socio-cultural groupings (religious or ethnic groups) or interest-based groupings (classes, professional associations, and so on).[8] Equally partial is the constituency for justification sometimes referred to as the 'median voter', whose preferences parties attempt to represent with diminished regard for those at the political 'extremes'.[9] Still more remote from a public-reason perspective is of course the elitist account of partisanship, in which ideals of justification barely play a role, being substituted instead by a focus on party-branding, advertising, and the appeal to emotions.[10]

Democratic theorists rightly criticize such approaches for their detachment from the ideal of collective self-rule.[11] At best, collective decision-making on this account comes to be regarded as what naturally *emerges* from partisan clashes—a bargain struck between the positions they represent. It is not something to which partisans themselves can reasonably appeal, since the interests, identities, and preferences to which they orient themselves are necessarily but fractions of the whole. If the partisan model necessarily entailed this conception of justification, scepticism would be in order, for it seems the kind of rationale invoked precisely to cope with the *absence* of political justification in day-to-day politics.

Yet the idea that partisan justification needs to aim at something less than the whole is unfounded. One of the points to our discussion of the party–faction distinction in Chapter 2 was exactly to indicate how partisanship should not be reduced to a mode of politics which addresses a partial constituency and exhibits no concern to justify its commitments more widely. A political grouping which, for example, seeks to promote only agrarian interests, though it may call itself a 'farmers' party', is more properly seen as a faction—unless it integrates these interests into a wider normative vision involving claims that can be generalized. This, as we have argued, is a matter of stated aims rather than the success with which these are met: at stake is not whether, in the eyes of the observer, a political grouping reliably *does* make claims in the name of generalizable principles (this will be a matter for political debate), but whether it *seeks* to do so given the kinds of argumentation it pursues.

[8] Lipset and Rokkan, 'Cleavage Structures'; Dahl, 'Some Explanations'.
[9] Downs, *Economic Theory of Democracy*.
[10] Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1943).
[11] Cass Sunstein, 'Preferences and Politics', *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 20 (1) (1991); Joshua Cohen, 'Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy', in *The Good Polity*, ed. Alan Hamlin and Phillip Petit (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989); Mansbridge et al., 'The Place of Self-Interest'.

It is important to be clear on why a great deal hinges on this point. It is not that the pursuit of sectoral interest is automatically at odds with the advancement of a wider good. The two may sometimes be aligned (this, after all, is the basis of the partisan claim), and even where no single sectoral interest serves a larger interest in this way, it is possible that the interplay of sectoral interests leads to outcomes of public benefit, including political stability, popular legitimacy, and government that does not systematically favour one group. (There are traces of this type of invisible-hand argument in Kelsen's defence of party.[12]) But what is excluded if one equates partisanship purely with the pursuit of sectoral gain is the possibility of partisans persuading others of the desirability of their cause. If their project is presumed to serve sectoral ends, its appeal is limited to those with whom they are already aligned by reason of social structure. Not only may this be at odds with the self-understanding of partisans, who may take seriously the principled ends they espouse in the name of the whole people and who draw from them their motivation to act, it also risks reducing political decision-making to little more than the rule of the strongest interests in society. Only if one makes conceptual space for the party as something oriented to *generalizable* principles and aims does one preserve the ideal of justified and collective self-rule.

An understanding of partisanship of the kind we propose returns to the foreground practices of justification as one would find them in models of democracy committed to public reason. In this reading, political justification regains a substantial degree of autonomy from the social world, and may take on a transformative character, evoking new groupings rather than appealing to pre-political ones. To be sure, narrower forms of subjecthood may support such categories, helping to mobilize people to a certain set of normative goals.[13] But those goals are partisan rather than factional only to the extent they are proposed in the name of the whole people and with reference to principles and aims that could in principle be endorsed by everyone.[14] A workers' party, for instance, is only truly a *party* insofar as it makes the claim that empowering workers serves a wider sense of justice and the public interest, and not just the sectarian good of workers themselves. This point comes through clearly in Marx's definition of proletarian claims as those

[12] Kelsen, *Essence and Value*, esp. pp. 39ff., 63ff.

[13] White and Ypi, 'Rethinking the Modern Prince'.

[14] It may be objected that this conception of partisanship does not apply in so-called 'divided societies', where political groupings seek only to appeal to an (often ethnically defined) sub-community, resulting in a form of consociational politics of the kind described by Lijphart. However, this seems tautological reasoning: divided societies exactly *are* those in which partisanship as described is, at a given moment, lacking. Unless one sees politics as determined by pre-political social facts, one need not suppose that a divided society must always be such, that political claims must inevitably be addressed to just some sections of the political community; it is rather a contingent and temporally limited condition.

coming from 'a sphere which has a universal character by its universal suffering and claims no *particular right* because no *particular wrong*, but *wrong generally*, is perpetuated against it; which can invoke no *historical*, but only *human*, title'.[15] Partisan commitments are in this case expressive of universal concerns, and the interests of one particular category of agent are taken seriously insofar as the claims they make can be shared by others.

Why then is partisanship so often seen as narrower in its intended constituency and thus anathema to political justification? Probably in large part this results from the tendency of partisans themselves to portray *opposing* partisans as sectarian factions, as 'parties *of*' a particular grouping (e.g. of business, or of the public-sector middle class) rather than as 'parties *for*' a certain normative view.[16] In some cases the charge may be accurate—modern democracies certainly contain such factions—but its usage may also be no more than a strategy of de-legitimization. The effects may be unwelcome—presenting dissenting views as disingenuous can have a corrosive impact on public debate—but again this is a separate matter. What is important is that one does not mistake certain aspects of partisan rhetoric for an appropriate interpretation of the meaning of partisanship.

Partisan justification, in our analysis, is constrained by standards of political justification. The demands partisans put forward need to be widely accessible, involving an attempt to move beyond a particularist viewpoint with the aim of demonstrating public appeal. Of course, a partisan model of politics is not an image of a politics without adversaries: partisanship is pursued exactly in the knowledge that partisan claims may be contested by others who interpret the public interest differently, or wish to make collective authority serve factional ends. Some such opponents may be cajoled out of their views; others will persist in their opposition. Yet if political conflict is assumed to be enduring, the partisan nonetheless addresses a constituency which is not a priori defined as narrow and limited in scope.

[15] This, Marx continues, is 'a sphere, finally, which cannot emancipate itself without emancipating itself from all other spheres of society and thereby emancipating all other spheres of society, which, in a word [...] can win itself only through the *complete re-winning of the human being*' (all emphases in original) (Marx, 'From the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right', p. 69).

[16] Bolingbroke ('Dissertation on Parties') was perhaps an early proponent of this tactic, casting opponents as seeking 'personal power' and the narrow interest of the Court, 'under the pretence and umbrage of principle' (p. 71), while speaking favourably of the 'Country party', 'authorised by the voice of the country' and 'formed on principles of common interests. It cannot be united and maintained on the particular prejudices, any more than it can, or ought to be, directed to the particular interests of any set of men whatsoever. A party, thus constituted, is improperly called party. It is the nation, speaking and acting in the discourse and conduct of particular men' (p. 37).

The Circumstances of Political Justification and the Partisan Catalyst

To consider more closely the positive relationship between partisanship and political justification, let us examine the *circumstances* in which political justification takes place. The first thing to note here is that justification is inherently *comparative*. To justify something is to indicate how it compares favourably with alternatives, all relevant factors considered. To justify a political principle, an act of public policy, or a political programme is to show what makes it preferable to alternatives, with reference explicitly or implicitly to a certain set of normative commitments. Likewise, to *criticize* is to reverse this relationship so as to indicate the superiority of the comparator (the alternative evoked), even if this alternative is counterfactual. Central to processes of justification is the systematic generation of principled alternatives. We shall return to some implications of this view in the section that follows.

The second thing to note is that political justification is likely to be enriched when part of an *adversarial* process, involving the interaction of political agents in disagreement with each other. This is so because rather than arising naturally as part of an introspective process of contemplation, justifications imply a relational dimension. They are invoked in situations where agents are aware of the contestability of their claims and, in interaction with their adversaries, are moved to give reasons for adopting certain viewpoints or courses of action rather than others. If just one political agent is responsible for generating proposals and the comparators by which they are evaluated, there will be little incentive to engage in the challenging scrutiny of those proposals. Insofar as offering plausible alternatives is burdensome, since it forces stronger arguments to be advanced for the desired option, where adversarialism is absent there will be a downward pressure on the quality of alternatives offered, and therefore on the stringency of political justification. Only in the presence of a conflictual dimension, where at least one other agent seeks actively to assess the validity of a political proposal and where disputing arguments are in turn tested, will the conditions for meaningful political justification be present. The point was well recognized by John Stuart Mill, who grounded his defence of free speech in part on the idea that letting dissent emerge through the open contestation of political views serves to improve public argument, weeding out weaker opinions and consolidating the good. He was emphatic that counter-arguments carry most force when voiced by someone committed to them, not when they are the product of disinterested speculation.[17] One should be

[17] John S. Mill, 'Of the Liberty of Thought and Discussion', in *On Liberty and Other Essays*, ed. John Gray (Oxford: Oxford University Press [1861] 1991), p. 42. For in-depth discussions of Mill's treatment of dissent and the implications of his work for a theory of partisanship, see Russell

sceptical of any notion that justification can be a consensual process pursued by an undivided whole.

Thirdly, if these processes of political justification are to be accessible to all, as they must if their democratic role is to be served, it is furthermore important that they have public *visibility*. Arguments need to be amplified so as to be hearable by the constituency to which they are addressed, and they need to be cognitively accessible to that constituency so as to be acknowledged when heard. Acts of justification restricted to just a small circle of elites are ultimately little different from those aimed at a partial constituency, which as we have argued above make little contribution to the democratic idea of collective self-rule.

Acknowledging the comparative and adversarial features of political justification and the need of public visibility for the arguments put forward, highlights the centrality of partisanship in the process. We wish to argue that the efforts of partisans to promote the normative perspectives to which they are committed act as systematic stimuli to the circumstances of political justification.

Partisanship is, first of all, a form of engagement implying a public comparative exercise. Political views are developed and perfected in the process of confrontation with other available alternatives. Since the days of England's Whigs and Tories, and on into the age of mass mobilization, partisanship has involved political groupings of a certain level of cohesion forming around different interpretations of the public interest, arising from distinctive political histories, experiences, and traditions of political argument. Under conditions of mass enfranchisement, these political alternatives are then promoted to the public at large and modified in the course of popular engagement. Most obviously in the context of elections, but also more generally in the course of public debate, people are invited to compare the various alternatives produced, be they at the level of entire programmes or specific issues. To be sure, this comparative dimension may be negated in the case of *factions*, since to the extent the political scene consists only of groups making appeal to partial, pre-defined collectivities, individual citizens may be in no position to make comparisons grounded in generalizable claims. They may perceive their identities as so tightly linked to certain political groupings that they are unable or unwilling to consider others. But where the normative visions available are those one can associate with *parties*, making claims in the name of a whole which is not reducible to parts, this comparative dimension is well served.

Muirhead, 'A Defence of Party Spirit', *Perspectives on Politics* 4 (4) (2006); also Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels*. As the latter correctly notes (p. 159), acknowledging the persuasiveness of Mill's views on contestation does not require one to endorse further arguments he makes concerning how the 'fractional truths' advanced by different sides cumulate with one another to form more comprehensive wholes.

Moreover, these distinctive normative perspectives have generally matured in circumstances of conflict with other partisan agents. Partisanship breeds the conditions of adversarialism necessary to the generation and testing of acts of justification. Attempts to disseminate justifications—and to provoke them from others—are most likely to emerge in the context of political conflict, as one agent seeks public recognition and attempts to apply pressure on an opponent.[18] The presence of different partisan groupings in framing the terms of political justification allows us to understand more clearly why it is difficult for certain political conflicts to be discursively solved in advance of practical confrontation. Even if the process of political justification starts from premises accessible to all, the task of articulating these, criticizing them, rendering them part of a more complete political argument and linking them to day-to-day concerns is completed through partisan discourse.[19]

Partisanship also contributes a clearer understanding of the terms of political justification. To the extent that partisans coordinate around a relatively well-defined profile, this acts as a signpost to the kind of criticisms they are vulnerable to and those they are well placed to levy at others.[20] Such acts of political signposting are what define the contribution of partisanship to the *visibility* of political justification. The normative orientations by which partisans identify themselves make clearer the premises of each justificatory move: a known sensitivity to this or that moral and political principle (say individual liberty or group rights) helps elucidate some of the larger ideas behind a particular line of political argumentation. Furthermore, because their goal is to cultivate public support, partisans have reason to render these organizing principles in a way which is meaningful and intelligible to a wider public. Quite different is the discourse of non-partisan authorities which do not compete for public approval—technocratic institutions, for instance, or constitutional courts—which may be content, insofar as they offer public justifications at all, to couch them in terms impenetrable to most citizens. Rendering justification *visible* is something likely to require a collaborative effort by groups of individuals acting in concert. And because partisans ultimately seek control over political institutions, they establish an especially close link between political justification and the making of policy. The fact that it is the *same* political agent which elaborates a normative programme, seeks to mobilize citizens in its name, and to shape executive

[18] This point applies both to the intellectual activities of programmatic innovation and to the day-to-day 'scut work' required to facilitate the wider public adoption of these ideas (cf. Michael Walzer, 'Deliberation, and What Else?', in *Thinking Politically: Essays in Political Theory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 141).

[19] On the relevance of parties to these processes, see also Thomas Christiano, *The Rule of the Many: Fundamental Issues in Democratic Theory* (Boulder: Westview, 1996).

[20] Johnson, 'Political Parties and Deliberative Democracy'.

power accordingly, means that moments of political justification across different sites of civic activity are linked together in a distinctively close way.[21]

To be sure, not all partisans consistently adhere to the standards of justification. Sometimes they may be tempted to compromise their principles for strategic purposes, turning them temporarily into a source of confusion. Sometimes they may downplay their principled commitments so as to present themselves primarily as a collection of personalities. We shall return to such 'pathologies' of partisanship shortly. For now though, let us simply note how the circumstances of political justification are closely connected to the motives at the heart of partisanship, at least if one accepts an account of it that highlights the constraints of public reason.

The Challenges of Persuasion and the Place of Partisan Framing

At one level, the elements of political justification are fairly easily conceived. They concern the provision of arguments supporting a given course of collective decision-making. The agents involved face the task of drawing from the ideational resources current in society (notions of public interest, or interpretations of the basic terms of democratic discourse such as 'freedom' and 'equality'), deliberating on these, using them to interpret, categorize or challenge the social and political world, rearticulating them as political programmes, and justifying these to a constituency in opposition to those who would promote different perspectives.

Dissecting further the elements of political justification requires focusing on the premises on which arguments are grounded. One needs to look at what is endorsed and what is excluded in any given line of reasoning, what principles and viewpoints are considered *in need of* justification rather than tacitly assumed, which issues are prioritized and which neglected. Justification depends on certain premises being shared by the agent and the constituency: some degree of common ground, or 'frame resonance' as scholars of contentious politics term it, is required if justifications are (a) to be recognized and understood as such, and (b) to be received as convincing. The outcome of justificatory initiatives is heavily informed not just by the force of the reasons offered, but by their level of correspondence with pre-existing schemes of understanding. It is this ideational background which influences the extent to which reasons are received as meaningful and persuasive, and the practices of partisanship include efforts to shape or challenge it. Political justification

[21] White and Ypi, 'Rethinking the Modern Prince'.

has 'ideological underpinnings'—not in the sense that it necessarily involves dissimulation (the conception of ideology as distortion seems in any case problematic[22])—but in the sense that it is inseparable from the historically-formed intuitions it plays off.

When asked how one should conceive of the starting premises of political justification, political theorists usually insist these should involve claims that cannot be reasonably rejected. What does this mean exactly? It could mean one should be able to trace lines of reasoning back to general commitments of the type 'freedom matters', or 'people should be considered equal', or other such axioms. But these are undeniably abstract and ostensibly similar formulations can lead to quite different, even opposing, lines of argument. How then is initial plausibility conferred, and why do certain broadly shared starting assumptions take an argument in one direction rather than another?

To answer this we need to focus on the often neglected tacit dimension—on 'common sense', and on how it is shaped and challenged. Is common sense external to politics? We would argue not: the trap would be to see shared premises of this kind as naturally occurring, pre-political structures—a kind of cultural inheritance drawn upon by political actors in the moment of formulating an argument. Common premises are themselves partly the outcome of partisan action, require partisan agents to develop, consolidate, and systematize them, and are susceptible to some degree of revision by those who adhere to them. The site of political conflict is then the discursive field as a whole, including its vocabulary, its sedimented meanings, and indeed its silences, as much as consciously articulated views.[23] It extends to the common-sense ideas invoked to express and lend plausibility to political principles, and to the connotations of the terms used to signify the political struggle, even where these present themselves as part of a neutral 'middle ground'. The language of politics does much to determine which propositions carry intuitive plausibility, which carry a burden of justification, which alternatives will prove acceptable as the basis for compromise, and which need to be revised or replaced with alternatives.[24] Those who would be politically effective must both engage with this terrain as they find it—else they will be unable to articulate themselves and their political claims, and render these meaningful to a wider audience—and also, exercising their creativity as interpreters, seek to criticize and reshape it so as to increase the resonance of the positions they take up and to challenge unpalatable views. Successful partisan agents are those who project their meanings onto the outcome of collective

[22] Michael Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).
[23] Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory*.
[24] Iris Marion Young, 'Activist Challenges to Deliberative Democracy', *Political Theory* 29 (5) (2001).

political decision-making, onto voters and the wider society, and indeed onto opposing parties. In this way they help shape the premises of political justification and the persuasiveness of specific appeals.

These efforts may take a variety of forms. Terminological innovation and the popularization of concepts is one: think for instance of the recent success of partisans in the Green movement in planting concepts such as 'sustainability' in the public consciousness, or metaphors such as the 'carbon footprint'. These terms provide the necessary groundwork to allow subsequent justification of policies aimed at reducing environmental pollution. In themselves they do not point to specific policies; rather they open a space for political initiative. Without discursive preparation of this kind, the force of such justifications will be weaker, and they may easily founder against critiques appealing to established ideas of economic growth.

Consider likewise how the meanings attached to common terms of political discourse influence how certain problems are understood, and thus the extent to which policies designed to remedy them can be successfully advocated. Programmes on behalf of 'the poor' have been shown to attract thirty to forty per cent more support in US opinion polls than those framed as on behalf of 'people on welfare'.[25] Though the proposals may be considered equivalent, 'welfare' can be understood as carrying additional negative connotations of dependency, bureaucracy, and waste—connotations which can be considered the legacy of partisan efforts to load the term negatively. In this case, an important stage of political justification involves not merely advancing ideal arguments on behalf of one particular normative conception as opposed to another, nor simply deploying the skills of rhetoric to state these arguments in their most pleasing form, but confronting the reasons for which common sense suggests certain views to be more acceptable than others, and examining how these background assumptions might be challenged.[26]

Common sense, as one famous author puts it, 'can be questioned, disputed, affirmed, developed, formalized, contemplated, even taught, and it can vary dramatically from one people to the next'.[27] The prevalent ways in which people identify social and political problems, and the narratives of agency or powerlessness they draw on, do much to determine the kinds of arguments which make sense to them: if for example inter-ethnic tensions tend to be normalized, or if economic problems such as unemployment are deemed to be

[25] Tom W. Smith, 'That Which We Call Welfare by any Other Name Would Smell Sweeter: An Analysis of the Impact of Question Wording on Response Patterns', *Public Opinion Quarterly* 51 (1) (1987).

[26] For a similar critique to normative justifications, see Charles W. Mills, 'Ideal Theory as Ideology', *Hypatia* 20 (3) (2005).

[27] Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York: Basic, 1983), pp. 73–93.

global in origin and unsusceptible to remedy, political proposals to address them are likely to fall on deaf ears.[28] All these elements of the ideational background shape the commonsense intuitions to which justifications make appeal and influence the level of their popular resonance. In a partisan perspective they are recognized as central to political justification, no less than the more familiar dimensions involving the promotion of normative views directly responsive to public concerns.[29] Any politics of justification which is inattentive to the tacit dimension risks finding itself forever on the back foot, seeking to advance arguments on a discursive terrain shaped largely by its opponents. Over the longer term, partisans contribute to shaping the political culture around them, prioritizing certain principled commitments and aims and reducing the visibility of others. That different partisan groupings draw on these differently need not entail cultural relativism, the impossibility of political agreement, or the need to privatize most major concerns: precisely because these metrics may be regarded as widely available across societies, and *not* each the preserve of particular subgroups within them, there exists the possibility of discursive exchange which in turn contributes to the refinement of the different views advanced.

Pathologies of Partisanship

How closely, it may be asked, does 'really existing partisanship' mirror the practices we have described in this chapter? While attentive to the imperfections of the political world in general, our argument may be thought to rest on an image of partisanship which manifests itself rarely. We have presented partisanship in largely ideal-typical terms, informed by historical examples but centred on what partisans at their best can achieve. Like theorists of partisanship in many ages, perhaps we risk condemning ourselves to matching a defence of the party idea with an inevitable lament concerning parties as they actually exist. Partisan political justification would then seem a rather precious suggestion. Let us examine the concern more closely.

There are several 'pathologies' of partisanship one might highlight. They combine tendencies that seem unavoidable in partisanship in general with those ostensibly bound up in certain historical conditions. First, as a challenge

[28] Jonathan White, *Political Allegiance after European Integration* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011a).

[29] White and Ypi, 'Rethinking the Modern Prince', discusses at length the role of partisanship in harnessing normative ideas to political agency. For more historical and empirical examples of the contribution of partisan forums to progressive political change, and a lengthy discussion of the dynamic by which normative interpretations of the public good are integrated with strategic concerns, see also Lea Ypi, *Global Justice and Avant-Garde Political Agency* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), esp. Chapters 2 and 7.

to the notion that partisans make political conflict intelligible to a wider public, it may be said that often they have quite the opposite tendency to make things more obscure, for example by avoiding clear pronouncements about where they stand on key issues. Notwithstanding the advantages of a distinct programmatic profile, short-term considerations—say the desire to minimize electoral losses, to enter a coalition, to pass an unpopular piece of legislation, or to avoid responsibility for a past decision—may encourage a policy of obfuscation. Aware of the need to keep their options open, party elites may have little desire to inform and educate either the public at large or their own supporters—an empowered party membership in particular being a potential obstacle to the compromises needed to achieve power. Second, even where clarity and consistency of message are present, it may be said that this message tends to be constructed in a capricious, less-than-reasonable way. For instance, partisans may avoid articulating views on certain issues simply for fear that they might divide the party—as many European parties are said to do on the question of support or opposition for the European Union—or conversely they may talk up certain issues not because they are intrinsically important but because they can generate an effective emotional response in the electorate or can usefully divide competing parties. The consequence may be a public debate in which key concerns fail to be aired while others are exaggerated and clustered arbitrarily.

Perhaps a third objection is the most critical: that partisanship furthermore lacks a self-correcting mechanism for dealing with dysfunctions exactly such as these. Partisans, it may be said, are ultimately conformists: they put loyalty to their fellows above loyalty to reason and to their consciences. In this view, rather than spontaneously forming allegiances and a common identity with those with whom they share similar opinions, they pick up the sense of common identity first and work backwards to the opinions they believe they should therefore hold. They engage in a perverse logic which prevents the individual partisan thinking rationally and independently. As a result, when the partisan collective deviates from the commitments one might wish it to hold to, the individual partisan may be thought unlikely to speak out in opposition.

In all these concerns is the suspicion that the defining principle of partisanship is liable to slip from political *justification* to political *strategy*. However much partisans may present themselves as groupings united in pursuit of shared principles or in defence of threatened values, the sceptic will say that, amongst those who matter—the leadership in particular—the bond of principled commitments plays second fiddle to hard-headed calculation, be it to maximize party support or to cause difficulty for an opponent. Whatever contribution partisanship can make to political justification is then too precarious to be the object of acclaim.

There can be no doubt that the evolution of many political parties in the twentieth century and beyond offers evidence in support of these concerns. Political scientists have charted the widespread decline of the mass-party model and a shift towards parties dominated by professionalized elites whose prime concern is not so much realizing a set of ideas as holding onto office and minimizing the costs of losing it.[30] Changing relations of power have led to relative autonomy for precisely those most prone to cynical tactics and blind loyalty—the party elites who stand immediately to gain. Here lies a major challenge to partisan political justification. Scholars of intra-party democracy have highlighted how the maintenance of a distinct partisan profile can be undermined when party elites decouple themselves from the demands and orientations of the partisan base and from self-organized groups in society.[31]

Some of these pathologies may be considered intrinsic to partisan practices while others seem to result from larger institutional developments and trends in society. The former present a specific challenge to our defence of partisanship and deserve to be taken seriously even by those interested in arguments of a primarily normative rather than descriptive kind. The key question, of course, is how political justification would look were we to dismiss partisanship altogether rather than support efforts to counter some of the noted pathologies. One needs to think about how political justification would feature in a 'no-party democracy'[32] in the absence of the adversarial conditions by virtue of which partisans at least try (though they may frequently fail) to signal alternatives, scrutinize presuppositions, and critically engage with each other's reasoning. Politics in such a scenario would no longer be driven by a collective exchange of reasons but by individuals and groups acting in an uncoordinated fashion and lacking a principled mechanism for articulating and expressing the claims motivating their actions in the public sphere.[33] Arguably the probable outcome would be the justification of power in terms even more personalistic, conformist, and prone to manipulation. As the next chapter goes on to show, in the absence of partisan practices one would need to rest one's hopes on morally committed individuals or ad-hoc groups—neither of whom can offer the epistemic, motivational, and feasibility potential needed to promote and sustain political commitment. Under such conditions, political pathologies become even harder to avoid; the focus on strategy at the expense of justification is liable to become the norm. In short, political justification in a no-party democracy is yet more difficult to sustain than in a democracy where citizens act together, aware of the potential pathologies of

[30] Richard Katz and Peter Mair, 'The Cartel Party Thesis: A Restatement', *Perspectives on Politics* 7 (4) (2009).
[31] Alan Ware, *Political Parties and Party Systems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).
[32] Goodin, 'The Place of Parties', pp. 205ff.
[33] Goodin, 'The Place of Parties', p. 213.

partisanship, yet still committed to the forms of reciprocal engagement it makes available.

To the extent that the pathologies of partisanship are a function of larger trends in contemporary politics, they equally threaten other forms of civic engagement and sites of justification, be they social movements, standard deliberative forums, or courts of justice. This holds true for instance of the narrowing of the space for political initiative which processes of globalization may entail. While such developments undoubtedly raise challenges for partisanship, the burden of argument falls on those who would claim alternative modes of engagement are *less* afflicted than parties. In other words, if at the root of the pathologies identified are empirical phenomena such as the tendency for decision-making power to escape mass control and to shift to technocratic and elite-driven institutions, this represents a major problem for the defence of any mechanism of political participation that aspires to be minimally accountable. A defence of partisanship should then be seen as contributing to a collective effort to rescue contemporary democracies from these problematic trends, rather than as an independent, 'stand-or-fall' alternative to be assessed in isolation.

Moreover, if real-world tendencies must not be overlooked, it is worth noting some of the more promising trends also to be found in the partisan world. In the hierarchical organizational models of the twentieth century, the negative trajectories we have described were a consistent possibility.[34] But the contemporary political scene, as we shall discuss in Chapter 10, is rapidly evolving in ways which reopen these questions. The emergence in recent years of new media of communication and alternative forums of political participation offer important possibilities for restraining centralist tendencies. Partisans beyond the confines of elite party structures, even those without formal party links, have new opportunities for holding leaders to account by identifying and publicizing deviations from their stated goals. Commentators in the print media, talk-show hosts, pressure groups, and political bloggers have new power to shape the political climate within which organized partisans act.[35] As well as being channels of political justification themselves, they are a further stimulus to its organized expression at the level of party elites. Partisan websites and organizations of the kind already mentioned offer new possibilities for reviving parties as a source of enrichment of political justification, while virtual social networks offer the necessary access points for the hitherto uninvolved. That these sites are fairly immune to top-down efforts to discipline them, and that they are at one remove from wider public

[34] Michels, *Political Parties*.

[35] For discussion of the growing symbiosis of partisanship and political blogging, see Lawrence et al., 'Self-Segregation or Deliberation?'.

attention, makes them feasible places of unconstrained intra- and para-party debate. They open the space for new levels of deliberation under the partisan sign.[36] Clearly, party elites can choose to ignore these developments, or seek to utilize them to further their control and surveillance of the party:[37] the longer-term implications remain unclear. But the scale of these changes makes it unwise simply to extrapolate the future of partisanship from past trends. For those who would seek to counter the dysfunctional tendencies in existing parties and foster their contribution to political justification, contemporary social change offers some important new resources.

Furthermore, where the pathologies of partisanship cannot be remedied by intra-party efforts at reform, they generate exactly the motivation for new partisan groupings to emerge. Denouncing those who have 'sold out', or who have ossified into a 'political class', is the favourite activity of new actors announcing their arrival on the political scene—and is itself conducive to the circumstances of political justification as described. The fact that, in a democratic political community, parties are not fixed in number, and that established ones must reckon with the emergence of newcomers—made easier by the new communication technologies—is in principle a powerful check on whatever tendencies exist amongst the partisan elite towards recoil into a self-referential world. Activating this dynamic to the full requires lowering the institutional barriers to the emergence of new partisans, notably thresholds for representation.[38] Correcting the pathologies of partisanship in other words involves creating more opportunities for partisanship, not fewer.

The pathologies we have mentioned are internal to an adversarial model of politics. What if one goes deeper and questions whether the conditions on which partisanship rests are not themselves pathological—even pathological for democracy itself? Specifically, if the reasons that people cannot plausibly reject are so vulnerable to ongoing political interpretation, how can we be sure of the acceptability of what citizens achieve by means of political justification? And what does the persistence of disagreement tell us about the success of the entire justificatory enterprise?

This question has long troubled deliberative accounts of political justification, with the various attempts to address it contributing to what some authors call the 'coming of age' of the deliberative approach as a complete theory of democracy rather than a mere ideal of legitimacy.[39] Most democratic theorists now acknowledge that even though political justification as an ideal ultimately entails an attempt to develop a normative political agenda that

[36] Jan Teorell, 'A Deliberative Defence of Intra-Party Democracy', *Party Politics* 5 (3) (1999).
[37] Andrea Römmele, 'Political Parties, Party Communication and New Information and Communication Technologies', *Party Politics* 9 (1) (2003).
[38] Katz and Mair, 'Cartel Party Thesis', pp. 759ff.
[39] Bohman, 'Coming Age', p. 401.

citizens can reasonably share, the persistence of disagreement need not defeat the very aim of political justification.[40] Given this shift, the adversarial conditions underpinning the partisan model we have described are no longer considered so threatening. Some deliberative theorists are even prepared to reject the notion of 'reasons that all can accept' as offering no solution in settling disagreements: despite the fact that the premises of political argument may have been reconciled in advance, the different exercise of political judgement may still produce irreconcilable outcomes.[41] Disagreements due to intersubjective differences in the combination of these premises, or due to the interference of different kinds of comparative metric, are unavoidable. And unlike judicial judgement, political judgement is always open to revision: the process is ongoing, and no decision or agreement may be considered definitive.[42]

Once attention is shifted from the outcome of justificatory practices to the normative significance of the process that underpins these, the question of what forms of civic engagement are most likely to foster that process becomes pressing. As many democratic theorists acknowledge, the remaining normative challenge concerns the identification of forms of institutional involvement that neither sacrifice democratic ideals in the face of empirical obstacles nor adopt an overly critical attitude towards the existing components of democratic life.[43] It has been our argument that partisanship offers a significant response to this challenge. In its absence, citizens will be but patchily exposed to political justification, weakly receptive to its claims and to their own opportunities to shape these, and worryingly susceptible to the sway of uncontested assumptions which narrow the range of persuasive arguments and privilege the status quo. Partisan engagement allows citizens to have greater control over the conditions of political justification and facilitates the emergence of critical political views. The persistence of partisan disagreement need not indicate that the principles emerging at the end of the process are wrong simply because they have not been unanimously endorsed. There may remain a plurality of partisan groupings, each adhering to different interpretations of what power is and how it can be justified, with differences that are difficult to reconcile. This however does not undermine the ideal of

[40] Of course, important contrasts remain between those who insist on strong criteria of acceptability of reasons along the lines of earlier Rawlsian and Habermasian discussions and the many who endorse the idea of political justification but express scepticism about the possibility of final agreement. For an overview, see Simone Chambers, 'Theories of Political Justification', *Philosophy Compass* 5 (11) (2010).

[41] James Bohman and Henry S. Richardson, 'Liberalism, Deliberative Democracy, and "Reasons that All Can Accept"', *Journal of Political Philosophy* 17 (3) (2009), pp. 257ff.

[42] Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, *Democracy and Disagreement* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), pp. 11–51; Nadia Urbinati, 'Unpolitical Democracy', *Political Theory* 38 (1) (2010), pp. 74–5.

[43] Bohmann, 'Coming Age', p. 401; Mansbridge et al., 'The Place of Self-Interest'.

political justification, provided that justifications arise from a process to which a variety of partisans contribute their views.

Perhaps one final objection may be made: that even though the normative theory of democracy is now able not only to reconcile itself with the presence of adversarialism but even to appreciate its positive contribution, such a manoeuvre comes at too heavy a price. For might such a position not encourage moral scepticism, an attitude that, when applied to matters of public concern, defeats the very aim of political justification? The implications of this objection are far-reaching, not only for adversarialism in general but also for our specific defence of partisan political justification, since one possible inference is that a party that is allowed to speak on behalf of the whole people ultimately affords no generally acceptable public standards of good and bad. If the good of the polity is discernible only from a partisan perspective which is itself contested, what remains of its moral potency?

Here though one must be careful not to confuse moral indeterminacy and the possibility of open-ended decision-making with moral scepticism and the removal of all standards from public life. Indeterminacy in this sense is linked to the idea that, within a frame of settled commitments, a number of contrasting and competing responses to the question of how best to interpret the demands of public reason are possible and welcome. That the best response to such a question may be contested is not to say one cannot speak of superior or inferior responses. In the model we have been outlining, partisanship is an indispensable part of the process that searches for such responses and seeks to adjudicate between them. It neither sanctions radical scepticism nor promises unanimous agreement. It contributes important elements that many theorists (including those who accept adversarialism) do not always and openly acknowledge. Ultimately, it may not render each individual an author of every law, but it brings persons as a *collective* much closer to the ideal of democratic self-rule rooted in political justification.

Conclusion

It has been the argument of this chapter that partisanship is both constrained by standards of political justification and conducive to its emergence in democratic politics. We have examined several dimensions of justification in detail, concerning the constituency to which it is offered, the circumstances in which it is developed, and the ways it is received. In each case, we have sought to show the centrality of partisan practices. Partisan political justification emerges not as an oxymoron but as a valid account of how norms of democratic government may be achieved.

If partisanship plays the crucial role described, any lapse in its vigour will evidently be detrimental to the democratic polity. Insofar as partisans cease to be partisans, one need not suppose the outcome will be a consensual public sphere. Rather it is likely to be the emaciation of political justification itself, with a quite different mode of politics following. One can expect political proposals to be grounded not so much in reason-giving as in appeals to brute interest and identity, i.e. those attributes regarded as beyond justification, and a general suspicion of normative argumentation to emerge. Political activism is likely to come to be seen as governed by motives of self-interest and the search for power—as factionalism, in other words—and political confrontations to be seen as clashes between individuals and personal agendas rather than larger sets of ideas. In such a world, attention to reason-giving and the impulse to evaluate normative arguments is likely to give way to a concern to explain and unmask them, to construe them as mere tools in the pursuit of material power. If such assumptions become widely disseminated, partisans themselves have every reason to conform to them, eschewing what then seem doomed efforts at reasoned justification in favour of the superficial concerns of image and personality.

No doubt this is a vision that has some resonance with the trajectory of contemporary democracy. Many are the media interviewers and editorialists who prefer to focus on matters of political strategy rather than justification, whose first questions when public policy is proposed concern not the merits of the proposal but the motives of its advocates and its place in the 'political game'. If the arguments of this chapter are endorsed, moves towards the displacement of partisan practices of justification can only be a matter for concern, for they can then no longer play their basic role in linking decision-making to the democratic ideal of collective self-rule. Such developments are to be followed with misgiving, for partisanship and political justification seem essentially intertwined.

4

Partisanship and Political Commitment

'If you want to commit yourself [...] what are you waiting for? Join the Communist party.' This sentence is found in the opening paragraph of one of the most famous attempts to defend the idea of political commitment, Jean Paul Sartre's essay, *What is Literature?* Sartre, himself an icon of the committed intellectual, attributes these words to a character about whom nothing more is said than that he or she is 'a young imbecile', similar to many others who 'read quickly, badly, and pass judgment before they have understood'.[1]

Yet Sartre was not always as dismissive of the relation between partisanship and political commitment. Although he never officially joined the Communist party, more than once he intervened in its defence, explaining that 'the party is a force of mediation between men'.[2] Its role was to break the isolation between people, to unite hopes and efforts, and to maintain solidarity.[3] *Today*, Sartre emphatically argued, 'the masses need the party'.[4]

Perhaps then, that young individual was not such an imbecile after all. Perhaps, as Sartre later discovered, there is more to be said about the link between political commitment and the practices by which it may be expressed, sustained, and enhanced. Exploring *what* more could be said is our topic in the following pages.

We ended the previous chapter by emphasizing the contribution of partisanship to the idea and practice of political justification. Partisanship, we suggested, is both constrained by standards of public reason and helps to shape them. It is a practice that contributes to the articulation and channelling of principled disagreements by rendering political projects visible and susceptible to comparison. Through their participation in adversarial practices

[1] Indeed, the aim of the rest of his essay is to correct their misperceptions, something that, Sartre says, 'doesn't amuse anyone' but that needs to be done in order to 'hit the nail on the head': Jean-Paul Sartre, *What is Literature?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press [1949] 1994), p. 23.

[2] Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Communists and Peace, with a reply to Claude Lefort* (New York: George Braziller [1953] 1968), p. 236.

[3] Sartre, *Communists and Peace*, p. 236.

[4] Sartre, *Communists and Peace*, p. 237.

and political decision-making, principled partisans, we suggested, contribute to a process of 'trial by discussion' which is in turn vital to advancing the democratic ideal of collective self-rule.[5]

And yet, as some critics have noted, the defence of partisanship offered in the previous chapter is vulnerable to a number of critiques. Firstly, it risks leaving us with only an account of why a *system* of partisanship, understood as the regulated rivalry of different parties within a pluralist system, matters. It does not seem to say much on why partisanship matters per se, over and above its role in an institutional setting where political antagonism is organized.[6] Secondly, it may seem to idealize the role of political justification without considering its feasibility in the real world, and risks neglecting how justificatory processes may be fatally undermined by conditions of profoundly unequal access to epistemic and motivational resources (e.g. inequalities of education and power) which render it inaccessible to all but an elite few. Political justification, so the objection goes, is undermined when economically or politically powerful groups are able decisively to shape the terms and style of public debate, in particular what counts as a legitimate intervention, rendering an unfair advantage to certain perspectives and certain modes of justification.[7]

These are serious objections. But they are only likely to become paralysing in a political sphere characterized by the absence of strong political commitment. To be committed in this way means to care about political principles and aims and actively seek to promote them, making one's efforts at social change part of a joint project shared with others. A society without political commitment is a society of perpetually disengaged, excluded, or disaffected citizens. When important decisions end up being taken by a handful of elites and the collective will of the people is never clearly articulated, the perils of exclusion and depoliticization stand little chance of finding democratic remedy. Only if the opposite is the case—if a society promotes the active exercise of political rights and people are not only subjected to political norms but also effectively contribute to their making—do we come close to the democratic ideal of collective self-rule.

The purpose of this chapter is to respond to the critiques outlined above by emphasizing what partisanship offers for consolidating political commitment and promoting an active democratic ethos. Specifically, we argue that it contributes to the feasibility of principled projects and brings with it

[5] The expression 'trial by discussion' comes from John Stuart Mill, whose appreciation of the social function of antagonism is invoked in both Nancy Rosenblum's and Russell Muirhead's excellent defences of parties (see especially Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels*, pp. 148–62, and Muirhead, *The Promise of Party*, pp. 99–110).

[6] For the critique and distinction see Aldrich, *Why Parties?*, p. 625.

[7] Lynn Sanders, 'Against Deliberation', *Political Theory* 25 (3) (1997); Young, 'Activist Challenges'.

important motivational and epistemic resources. It serves as a vehicle of intellectual and political empowerment, refining political views, lending a voice to potentially marginalized citizens, and raising their critical awareness vis-à-vis the justificatory discourses in circulation. Partisanship, on this view, matters both for a system of vigorous democratic contestation and for political agents themselves. If they have reason to care about political commitment, partisan associative practices will turn out to be essential to sustaining and nurturing it.

Partisanship, as Hans Kelsen nicely put it, is essential therefore to linking the *ideal* and the *real* conception of the people.[8] The exercise of political rights, he argued, seems to presuppose a distinction between 'the mindless masses who follow the lead of others' and 'those who—in accordance with the idea of democracy—decisively influence the governmental process'.[9] This is also why partisanship, an associative practice that 'brings like minded individuals together in order to secure them actual influence in shaping public affairs' is one of 'real democracy's most important elements'.[10] Since the ongoing pursuit of particular projects is essential to active popular rule, a form of association that supports and promotes political commitment is essential to democratic decision-making *as such*, over and above its virtues in a system of organized political contestation.

Before moving to a closer examination of the relation between partisanship and political commitment, two clarifications are in order. Firstly, although our discussion of political commitment begins with the collective endorsement of shared projects, this chapter has little to say about *which* projects deserve that endorsement. In the previous chapter we sought to explain how partisanship can contribute to a process illuminating the merits and deficiencies of principled alternatives, and here we shall assume the plausibility of those arguments as well as the constraints on partisanship they entail. We shall assume, therefore, that we already have a sense of what is worth committing to politically, or at the very least that we know what is worth fighting against. And we shall limit our defence of partisanship to illustrating why, once we know this, a certain form of associative practice is desirable to further that commitment from the point of view of partisans themselves.

Secondly, political commitment is only one form of commitment. In defending the centrality of partisanship to political commitment, we do not mean to undermine other associations that might be just as important for sustaining other worthwhile projects (e.g. families, churches, states, or an imagined cosmopolitan community). Often the fact that agents have multiple commitments, relate to each other in different social roles, and belong to

[8] Kelsen, *Essence and Value*, p. 38.
[9] Kelsen, *Essence and Value*, p. 38.
[10] Kelsen, *Essence and Value*, p. 38.

multiple associations, serves as a corrective to the beliefs and projects associated with particular commitments, and protects any one set of them from becoming a source of bias and extreme polarization. They should therefore be supported and cherished. Likewise, if democratic institutions function as they should, respect for one's adversaries, an appreciation of the basic norms essential to sustaining political decision-making, and a sensitivity for compromise in relevant institutional settings (including compromise with those one sharply disagrees with) are indispensable to the political enterprise.[11] They are especially important to channel contestation, establish a frame for toleration, draw the institutional limits of disagreement, and contain undesirable commitments that weaken the democratic ethos. Although trade-offs may be necessary, as we point out in what follows, nothing we say should detract from the value of these civic commitments. And although political commitment can—and not uncommonly does—stand in the way of such civic commitments, it is important to understand what the tensions are and what we are sacrificing when the partisan spirit is sacrificed.

The Nature of Commitment

We are familiar with many different forms of commitment. Parents are generally committed to their children. Friends are committed to each other. Professionals are often committed to their workplace. Religious people are committed to their church. But what do all these different forms of commitment have in common?

Commitments can be understood as a species of intention.[12] They differ from self-interested preferences, impulses, and inclinations because of the way in which the agents endorsing them view their contribution to their life-plans: as projects that define who those agents are, in what relation they stand to others, and what social roles they occupy. Commitments are species of intention that give agents reasons to act in particular ways, typically ways that allow them to create or remain involved in projects they have chosen (or in which they find themselves), even in the face of contingent inclinations or interests to abandon them.[13]

One straightforward reason why commitments matter is instrumental. Commitments contribute to the creation and maintenance of order in one's life, supporting the organization and coordination of activities over time. Human beings are reflexive, planning agents. Reflexivity allows them to step

[11] We shall return to a more specific discussion of these issues in Chapter 7.

[12] Cf. Cheshire Calhoun, 'What Good is Commitment?', *Ethics* 119 (4) (2009), p. 615; Harry Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 16.

[13] Margaret Gilbert, 'Obligation and Joint Commitment', *Utilitas* 11 (2) (1999b), p. 145.

back from their immediate desires and inclinations and critically assess their contribution to the overall structure of deliberation and action.[14] The ability to plan is what gives actions coherence and consistency, ensuring agents do not deliberate on an ad hoc basis but do so against a certain background of stability.[15] Commitments are temporally extended intentions that support continuous connections between prior plans, ongoing activities, and future states of affairs.[16] They form part of those 'conduct-controlling pro-attitudes' which 'we are disposed to retain without reconsideration' because they help us make choices and deliberate concerning the future without having to revisit everything we have done in the past.[17] In circumstances where agents face obstacles to clear-sighted decision-making or have limited time at their disposal, commitments allow them to better coordinate action across time and with other agents central to the execution of valuable projects.

Commitments are often valued also for their contribution to a life worth living.[18] Failure to uphold one's commitments, or a susceptibility to easily revise or substitute them, is the subject of much social apprehension and literary drama. In Alexander Pushkin's epic poem *Eugene Onegin*, the main character, Onegin, is criticized for being driven to a life of 'aimless wandering', 'pursued by a vexatious restlessness', and 'an urge for change'. This attitude only lasts until later in life 'travel, with its tedious motion' becomes, Pushkin says, an 'unending' bore, making Onegin regret his failure to commit to Tatyana and to a settled life with her. Conversely, the ability to sustain one's commitments is typically associated with finding reasons to remind oneself of the worth of a decision and why it should be upheld, despite contingent inclinations to the contrary. Indeed, to go back to Pushkin's example, when Tatyana rejects Onegin's offer of a life with her, she appeals to the value of her ongoing commitments in motivating her decision, despite the temptation to abandon them.[19]

The reason commitment is thought to contribute to a life worth living is the centrality of long-lasting plans to authorship over one's life. One's projects are vindicated if decisions and actions fit into an ongoing narrative of oneself, connecting the ideas and aspirations that currently guide one's life to those

[14] Harry Frankfurt, *The Importance of What We Care About* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), Chapters 1 and 2.

[15] Michael Bratman, *Intentions, Plans, and Practical Reason* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987).

[16] Michael Bratman, *Structures of Agency* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), Chapter 1.

[17] Bratman, *Intentions*, p. 20.

[18] But see Calhoun, 'What Good is Commitment?', for a critique.

[19] Here is what she says: 'I love you (why should I pretend?) And yet, I am another's now, and should be faithful to my vow' (Alexander Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin*, trans. Charles Johnston (London: Penguin, 2003), Chapter 8). For a philosophical discussion of the relation between commitment and the value of settling, see Robert E. Goodin, *On Settling* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

endorsed at a different point in time. This continuity may not always be straightforward or unchallenged. As circumstances change, new encounters and events may interfere with agents' priorities and lead them to question the temporally-extended steps they have taken to organize and coordinate their life. In some cases this will be desirable, in others perhaps not. If the latter is the case, to be committed implies a preparedness to endure epistemic or motivational changes that might (provisionally) undermine the initial intention to pursue a particular project.[20] This, as we shall see, is more effective in the presence of associative practices whose function is to sustain and enhance agents' commitments and contribute to the preservation of order and authorship in their lives.

Political Commitment

The idea of political commitment should also be intuitively familiar. Think of the biographies of activists like Mahatma Gandhi, Vaclav Havel, Martin Luther King Jr., or Nelson Mandela. The kinds of projects they committed to are distinct from those mentioned in the previous section. Political commitment is public rather than private, collective rather than individual. It involves a unique kind of activity, one where agents seek to shape and design political institutions in accordance with particular principles and aims. Political commitment is driven by a critical scrutiny of the exercise of power, and either the endorsement or the rejection of the reasons and institutional rules on the basis of which that power is exercised and reproduced. In the cases of Gandhi, Havel, Luther King Jr., or Mandela, political commitment stems from a critique of the inadequacy of the status quo and an identification of alternative visions that aim to render the exercise of power justified. What characterizes their attitudes is the centrality to their lives of an enduring political project, inspired by a vision of how institutions should operate. What makes that commitment radical is the fact that such agents are prepared to go through serious epistemic or motivational adversities to ensure their projects endure and are realized. They are disposed to act in concert with others and to sacrifice their short-term interests on behalf of ideals of social change, even when the outcome of collective action does not immediately benefit them personally.

It is important to clarify that although we tend to applaud these radical cases of political commitment as exemplars of heroic sacrifice, in the eyes of many activists the degree of sacrifice that commitment entails is not its most

[20] Calhoun, 'What Good is Commitment?', pp. 618–22.

important aspect. Sacrifices are perceived as a necessary, often unpleasant, implication of what matters in the first place: believing in a political project and sticking to what one believes in. As Emmeline Pankhurst, one of the pioneers of the suffragette movement, puts it in her autobiography,

> Those well-meaning friends who say that we have suffered these horrors of prison, of hunger strikes and forcible feeding, because we desired to martyrize ourselves for the cause, are absolutely and entirely mistaken. We never went to prison to be martyrs. [...] We went there in order that we might obtain the rights of citizenship. We were willing to break laws that we might force men to give us the right to make laws.[21]

The point of commitment is not to force committed agents to make sacrifices; rather, being committed renders one more willing to accept such sacrifices in the name of the projects one pursues. The readiness to endure circumstantial and psychological adversities provides an illustration of what it means to be committed to a project; it is not what makes that commitment worthy of celebration in the first place. What matters are the reasons that guide it and, as Pankhurst's quote illustrates, the authorship over one's life it affords.

As we emphasized in the previous chapter, political rule can be considered legitimate only if those who are subjected to the coercive power of laws and institutions can also be considered their authors. This relation of power to collectively authorized rules is central to the ideal of democratic political justification, as Chapter 3 sought to show. Political commitment enhances such authorship. Committed agents do not simply put up with rules and institutions that fail to live up to their ideals. They do not simply follow the lead of others. They practise active citizenship by seeking to reform or change institutions so as to see such ideals reflected in practice. This is how the urge for authorship is captured in the words of a young activist in Saul Alinsky's famous *Rules for Radicals*, where the attitude of passive acceptance of the existing system of rules is contrasted with a more earnest desire to reflect critically on that system and try to change it to conform to one's ideals of justice:

> I want to do something, to create, to be me, to 'do my own' thing, to live. [...] I don't want to be just a piece of data to be fed into a computer or a statistic in a public opinion poll, just a voter carrying a credit card.[22]

And yet, as many political activists also know, such efforts to shape a community's political life are more likely to be successful if militants join likeminded others and pursue their political projects as part of a collective enterprise. Association helps ensure their intentions persist over time, contributing to

[21] Emmeline Pankhurst, *My Own Story* (London: Eveleigh Hash, 1914), p. 92.
[22] Saul D. Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals* (New York: Vintage, 1971), pp. xv–xvi.

the feasibility of their projects and helping agents endure epistemic and motivational obstacles to their realization. To see why, we need to examine the relation between commitment and the practices of partisanship.

Partisanship and Political Commitment

That commitment in general is sustained through different associative practices will become clearer if we consider various examples of associations we are familiar with: families, churches, or clubs. Some of these are voluntary; they are created by agents to uphold particular commitments, say, of love in the case of marriage, or a shared interest in literature in the case of a reading club. Others are involuntary; agents do not choose to be part of such associative practices but still find in them a source of identification which leads to the continued endorsement of the projects they embody (e.g. the associative relation of children to their parents). Such associations persist over time and sustain complex projects across a range of conditions and circumstances. They also tend to have a unique identity, one that emerges from the properties of agents who are part of them and the properties of their shared activity.

One way to think about partisanship is as a form of political friendship, an associative practice whose purpose is to sustain and advance political commitment, pursued with others who, like friends, support each other in their pursuit. Participation in shared practices may come in degrees, ranging from those who simply identify with a particular political project and only loosely but continuously support the party seen as best furthering it, to those long-term members who discharge more stringent associative obligations.[23] Yet the good of partisan friendship is not exhausted by the instrumental role it plays in the promotion of independently endorsed political projects. Partisan associations grounded on political friendship do not simply enable partisans to promote their commitment but also to further and enhance it.

To see why, recall the importance of protecting agents from epistemic and motivational obstacles that stand in the way of their continuous advancement of desired projects. When it comes to *political* commitment, partisan associations play a crucial role in allowing agents to create or maintain relationships whose purpose is to further develop their shared projects. Firstly, partisanship is, like all other forms of political friendship, an associative practice characterized by the shared and mutually known commitment to a set of political

[23] It should be clear that, given the long-term nature of political projects and the degree of commitment required to sustain them, independents with fluctuating political sympathies are excluded. For more analysis of partisan associative obligations and the question of degrees of affiliation, see Chapter 5.

principles and goals constitutive of the activity shared. Secondly, partisans are aware not only of the part they themselves play in sustaining such projects but also of the existence of similarly committed others, each with a specific role to play in their development. Finally, the associative practice to which partisans belong is, has been, or aspires to be, a collective agent expressive of their shared commitment and collective will.

In virtue of their participation in collective associative practices, partisans promote joint projects in a coordinated and continuous way. The formal and informal rules that shape their association give further unity to their ends and allow agents' beliefs and intentions to connect to those of similarly committed others. The associative structure to which partisans belong therefore reinforces individuals' understanding of their projects as worthy ones, even in the face of epistemic and motivational obstacles to their realization. Through shared partisan activities, awareness of the worthiness of a political project is confirmed in day-to-day engagement with concrete others who contribute to that shared project with their knowledge and efforts.[24] As one well-known civil rights activist put it in explaining her own need for partisan involvement:

> I needed an anchor, a base, a mooring. I needed comrades with whom I could share a common ideology. I was tired of ephemeral ad-hoc groups that fell apart when faced with the slightest difficulty [...]. It wasn't that I was fearless, but I knew that to win, we had to fight [...]. I knew that this fight would have to be led by a group, a party with more permanence in its membership and structure and more substance in its ideology. And I needed to know and respect what I was doing.[25]

All this of course is compatible with even very sharp disagreements among fellow partisans. Indeed, precisely because such disagreements occur against the background of a similarity of conviction, arguments with fellow partisans are often more sincere and frank than arguments with those who do not share broadly the same political views (one experiences something similar with arguments within a family). Partisan associations tend to be notoriously confrontational for this reason. Yet so long as disagreements take place within a known commitment to shared projects, the overall result is likely to encourage rather than stifle participation. A number of empirical studies reveal that when people are in the company of others with whom they know that very little is shared, disagreement is suppressed and expressions of dissent with the current state of affairs struggle to emerge.[26] Insofar as one values political

[24] The analysis here is indebted to an excellent defence of political friendship in Aristotle in John Cooper, 'Friendship and the Good in Aristotle', *The Philosophical Review* 86 (3) (1977).

[25] Angela Davis, *An Autobiography* (London: Hutchinson, 1975), pp. 187–8.

[26] Experiments with voluntary groups where diverse people are brought together to interact tend to show a systematic preference for more practical tasks as opposed to principled discussion

commitment, the kind of apathy and indifference that may result from overly heterogeneous political encounters will be a greater cause for concern than sharp arguments within partisan families.

This is not to say that the extreme opposite, the lack of tolerance and disposition to 'hear the other side' that might result from people identifying too strongly with a particular political project, is not also worrying. We shall return to this point at the end of the chapter.[27] Before that, it is important to consider in more detail the relation between partisanship and political commitment by focusing on three features: (i) the feasibility of desired political projects; (ii) the motivational benefits of partisanship; and (iii) partisanship's epistemic role.

The Value of Feasibility

One straightforward reason why partisanship promotes political commitment is implicit in the analysis of the function of parties in the relevant empirical literature. To borrow some familiar categories: the 'party as organization' coordinates the beliefs and intentions of activists, articulates a collective will, and gives shape to an ongoing cross-temporal association with which they identify and in which they invest their efforts and energies. The 'party in the electorate' mediates between that collective structure and the public at large, acting for example as a signalling device that provides information to help individuals orient themselves with respect to different political programmes (beyond the short-term profiles of individual politicians or contingent parliamentary groups). The 'party in government' connects voters to elected representatives, organizes the legislature and coordinates action across different local, national, or federal institutions.[28] All these are important empirical dimensions of party activity. Their contribution to sustaining political commitment consists in supplying the institutional infrastructure that connects political projects to day-to-day decision-making, enabling changes in legislation responsive to citizens' will.

However, for a project to be considered feasible, it matters not only that agents have the ability to change a specific state of affairs but also that they

on controversial issues: for detailed discussion, see Diana Mutz, *Hearing the Other Side*: *Deliberative versus Participatory Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), Chapter 4; also John H. Hibbing and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse, *Stealth Democracy: Americans' Beliefs About How Government Should Work* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

[27] See Mutz, *Hearing the Other Side*, Chapter 3, for an empirical discussion.

[28] Key, *Politics, Parties, and Pressure Groups*.

can motivate themselves and others to want that change to happen.[29] The contribution of partisanship in the latter case is crucial. The projects an individual believes in stand a much greater chance of being realized if she has reasons to think she is not alone in taking them seriously and if their promotion does not depend merely on the contingent circumstances of one person's life. If an individual's plans are coordinated with those of others similarly inclined, together they form a collective agent with a more powerful voice in the public sphere. To take one familiar example, as an individual one may be unable to cause a state to adopt policies favouring global egalitarianism. But in coordination with others who are similarly motivated, one can seek to raise awareness among fellow-citizens about the importance of certain aims and principles and attempt to change laws in line with them. Although partisanship gives no guarantee that such transformations will eventually occur, it puts agents in a position where they can exert continuous pressure in that direction.

All this is true in ideal circumstances of democratic politics where parties are legally recognized political agents providing a point of reference to activist groups (including but not limited only to members) and a channel of mediation between government and citizens. But it is also the case when partisan groups are forced to operate outside the normal parliamentary contest, either because the projects they are committed to are so demanding that they stand little chance of being represented in parliament, or because they are not even legally recognized. Even, or perhaps especially, the most utopian of projects need partisanship to promote their feasibility.

One way to understand this point is by analogy with risk-pooling associative schemes. An effective way of managing risk with regard to uncertain projects can be to form alliances with others so that the negative effects of making particular investments can be offset through the contribution of members who join the same risk-management schemes. When particular members fail in their investments, others can bail them out. Likewise, particular political projects, especially those that require sacrifices, may be more effectively managed collectively when time and energy can be pooled so that the overall chances of the project remaining feasible do not decline with contingent fluctuations of activity. In this way shared political projects have a constant level of commitment behind them, even when particular individuals need to reduce their daily activity or step back for a while to pursue other valuable projects, ensuring their previous investment in the joint enterprise is not futile. As one writer and activist shows, militancy can be demanding:

[29] Pablo Gilabert and Holly Lawford-Smith, 'Political Feasibility: A Conceptual Exploration', *Political Studies* 60 (4) (2012), p. 811; also Mark Jensen, 'The Limits of Practical Possibility', *Journal of Political Philosophy* 17 (2) (2009).

> Even under the best circumstances, belonging to a trade union, or to any advanced party, requires a series of uninterrupted sacrifices. Even a few pence given for the common cause represent a burden on the meagre budget of the European worker, and many pence have to be disbursed every week. Frequent attendance at the meetings means a sacrifice, too. For us it may be a pleasure to spend a couple of hours at a meeting, but for men whose working day begins at five or six in the morning those hours have to be stolen from necessary rest.[30]

In the face of adverse circumstances, collective endorsement and joint participation in shared partisan activities contributes to the resilience of political projects. Where institutional channels are deficient, upholding such projects requires a higher degree of personal involvement, greater courage, more prudence, and increased emotional investment in what might appear a hopeless endeavour. Partisanship is important because such demanding projects are particularly vulnerable when pursued alone and in difficult circumstances. Where they are underpinned by a partisan association, their feasibility will be greater over time.

Partisanship therefore contributes to feasibility in two ways. Firstly, and most obviously, when it is conducted through effective parties, it renders political projects more realizable by providing an institutional channel through which agents' principles and goals can be brought to bear on the relevant legislative and executive mechanisms. But it also contributes to feasibility even in the absence of formal associative structures. Shared partisan ties supply individuals with the resources necessary to sustain their commitment in adverse circumstances (a point to which we return in Chapter 8). One reason relates to the collective benefits of risk-pooling. The other is a more familiar observation to do with the value of collective motivation: when people act with others, their virtues tend to be amplified and their passions tempered. To see the force of this latter argument, we need to consider the motivational benefits of partisanship.

The Motivational Benefits of Partisanship

Commitment in general, we have emphasized, requires long-term planning that helps agents endure motivational and epistemic obstacles to the realization of their projects. Shared activities are crucial, not only in normal democratic circumstances but where the resources necessary to cope with adverse external effects are deficient or unevenly spread. Consider one familiar example: the ANC's fight against apartheid in South Africa at the time when

[30] Peter Kropotkin, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* (New York: Dover [1889] 1971), p. 278.

it was considered a terrorist organization by several allegedly democratic states. Pursuing the anti-apartheid project came at a high cost to its members' personal security and typically required their willingness to abandon a stable life. In such circumstances, individual virtues of patience, persistence, courage, and resolve would have been constantly present only in the case of a few moral heroes (Mandela has often been heralded as one). But for many others, the continuity and consistency required for such projects to be carried forward for longer stretches of time would have been more difficult to achieve. In the absence of widespread confirmation that a project is worth committing to, the degree of motivation required to stick with one's initial intentions is higher and consequently more likely to be challenged in adverse circumstances.

This point speaks to one of the important objections to the ideal of political justification, that its distortion by political and economic asymmetries may render democratic politics vulnerable to manipulation by more powerful agents. Under these conditions and in the absence of strong political commitment to change the status quo, critical voices are liable to be excluded from the processes by which justification is provoked and provided. The motivational resources of partisanship offer an antidote. First, the inequalities which marginalize such voices can only be challenged by strong collective actors. Disparate congregations of individuals and civil society organizations may well lack the means to do so. Partisanship offers a support network, be it of tangible resources or of a psychological and intellectual kind, without which the voices of critical citizens are likely to be silenced. This was one of the merits Mandela himself identified in the Campaign for the Defiance of Unjust Laws, one of the first mass campaigns of civil disobedience organized by the ANC to protest against institutionalized racism: 'As a result of the campaign our membership swelled to 100,000. The ANC emerged as a truly mass-based organization with an impressive corps of experienced activists who had braved the police, the courts and the jails.'[31] Practices of partisan engagement offer an important means by which to challenge apparently insurmountable power and economic inequalities. As Mandela put it,

> the campaign freed me from any lingering sense of doubt and inferiority I might still have felt; it liberated me from the feeling of being overwhelmed by the power and seeming invincibility of the white man and his institutions. But now the white man had felt the power of my punches and I could walk upright like a man, and look everyone in the eye with the dignity that comes from not having succumbed to oppression and fear. I had come of age as a freedom fighter.[32]

[31] Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela* (London: Abacus, 1994), p. 129.
[32] Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, p. 130.

Shared partisan activity helps overcome motivational obstacles in two ways, both of which can be clarified if we consider the associative resources of partisanship. Firstly, shared political practices enable agents to be continuously involved with the projects they care about and bring them into contact with others of similar convictions. Observing commitment to a shared project in one's fellow partisans provides reassurance of the worth of one's own investment, giving individuals an ongoing opportunity to interrogate their personal weaknesses or remind themselves of their strengths. Other partisans committed to shared practices provide a 'mirror' for one's thoughts and actions, increasing one's ability to reflect on the principles endorsed, and strengthening the psychological disposition required to uphold them.

This 'mirror' view of partisanship may also explain why, insofar as certain associative practices rest on similarities of belief in the value of specific political projects, comparisons with like-minded others provide agents with important external resources to come to a better understanding of their own dispositions. Comparison with fellow partisans who act differently within a background of shared values allows individuals to reflect critically on their own attitudes. If they are overtaken by fear of consequences or inclined to sacrifice their principles for short-term gains that do not contribute to the overall project, observing others' actions in similar circumstances gives them a chance to evaluate their own conduct.[33]

To this we can add a second argument. In addition to acting as a mirror to each other, partisans share unique associative practices in which their commitment is not only sustained but enhanced. These shared activities not only consolidate their previous dispositions but develop new ones, including those of loyalty to their fellow associates, solidarity for each other when their projects are challenged, a sense of collective responsibility for their shared pursuits, feelings of guilt when opportunities are missed, or a sense of pride in achievement. By being part of a shared associative practice, partisans develop learning processes on which they can rely in the future when seeking to realize their projects. Their shared institutional memory provides a useful tool for anticipating future challenges and coping with unforeseen difficulties. This collective 'we' is an important source of motivation, since agents do not have to start each day from scratch but become progressively more familiar with what it takes to see certain normative principles obtain public relevance.

[33] This view borrows on the analogy with the mirror view of friendship suggested by Aristotle. For further discussion, see Nancy Sherman, 'Aristotle and the Shared Life', in *Friendship: A Philosophical Reader*, ed. Neera Kapur Badhwar (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 98.

The Epistemic Contribution of Partisanship (I): Peer Empowerment

Enduring projects are continuously subject to epistemic as well as motivational challenges. The principles and goals they involve are bound up with judgements about current states of affairs, the assessment of relevant social and political institutions, and expectations about future events that might affect agents' commitment. Knowledge central to the pursuit of shared projects is importantly shaped by external evidence: as a result, agents' may wish to revise or update their beliefs. Call the partisan associates with whom one is involved in such information-processing *epistemic trustees*. What we wish to argue here is that political deliberation with epistemic trustees (i.e. agents of roughly similar beliefs and commitment) about the weight to be given to new external information, or about how to update future plans in the light of that information, plays an important role in ensuring the sustainability of shared political projects when epistemic challenges are at stake. If exposure to external evidence generally involves confronting a combination of fact and interpretation, how far an agent trusts the source of new information and the interpretive frame in which it is placed is crucial to shaping the credence attached to it and lessons inferred. The more similar an individual's beliefs and values are to those of their political friends, the more likely they are to pursue actions that combine new information with prior values and beliefs, thereby strengthening the epistemic reliability of the projects they endorse.

This argument is especially important in the light of another objection to the ideal of political justification, examined in Chapter 3, concerning the impact of power asymmetries on agents' capacities to participate as equals in processes of reason-giving. Epistemic differences in people's ability to engage with complex social arrangements, or the presence of pervasive economic and power inequalities, are widely encountered circumstances that may undermine participation in collective decision-making. Critics of political justification as a political ideal have long emphasized how interactions in the public sphere occur among citizens whose level of education or eloquence varies, with negative consequences for the capacity of political judgement. It has been observed how the division of labour in modern societies implies a significant gap between the judgements of lay citizens and those of 'experts' (e.g. economists, lawyers, and professional politicians).[34] These latter are likely to contribute with specialist reasons in favour of or against a given course of action, and the complexity of their views (especially on topics requiring

[34] For one account of the problems this might pose for democracy see Christopher Bertram, 'Political Justification, Theoretical Complexity, and Democratic Community', *Ethics* 107 (4) (1997), pp. 562–83.

technical knowledge) may inhibit or weaken the arguments of ordinary citizens. If political justification is to make a positive contribution to democratic life, it is not enough that it simply be made available for those who know how and where to look.

While many democratic theorists have been aware of these challenges and prepared to address them in various ways,[35] there has been little reflection on how practices of partisanship make a distinctive and crucial contribution to weakening the force of the objection. Central to any such account must be the epistemic resources offered by partisanship. Partisan forums—i.e. sites of partisanship within and beyond political parties—are well suited to act as learning platforms for citizens, offering them the intellectual resources to deepen their knowledge of complex institutional arrangements and the opportunity to benefit from exchanges with leaders and activists. Traditionally these partisan forums have included party conventions, branch meetings, assemblies, and protests; recent additions include partisan websites, blogs, and pressure groups.[36] Such forums support the socialization of their members into political, economic, and legal affairs, thus acting as effective vehicles of civic education and epistemic empowerment.

To take a literary example, consider the effects of partisan engagement on the life-course of Etienne Lantier, the mine worker and protagonist of Emile Zola's well-known book *Germinal*. The novel describes the political and moral evolution of Etienne, from a poorly educated and rebellious young man whose views have led him to be fired as a railway mechanic, to an intellectually sophisticated activist who becomes the first worker to address the National Assembly in Paris. As Zola emphasizes in his account of Etienne's development, intellectual stimulation and contacts were the fruits of his involvement in the socialist movement:

> His own political education was now complete. Having begun with the neophyte's sentimental taste for solidarity and a belief in the need to reform the wage system, he had come to the view that it should be abolished as a matter of policy. At the time of the meeting in the Jolly Fellow his idea of collectivism had been essentially humanitarian and unsystematic, but it had now evolved into a rigid and complex programme, each article of which he was knowledgeably ready and able to discuss.[37]

That Etienne's education in its completed form should be 'rigid' as well as 'complex' reminds us that there is that further dimension to his political

[35] For an early discussion, see Cohen, 'Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy'; for more recent analysis, see Archon Fung, 'Deliberation before the Revolution: Towards an Ethics of Deliberative Democracy in an Unjust World', *Political Theory* 33 (2) (2005).

[36] The educational value of partisanship is one that has been emphasized by the contemporary partisans of the Podemos movement in Spain: see Iglesias, 'Understanding Podemos', p. 14.

[37] Emile Zola, *Germinal* (London: Penguin [1885] 1983), p. 286.

persona—what we might call his wisdom, or his deliberative ability to reflect on his education and adapt it—which remains incomplete and ripe for development in the experiences to follow. The high point of his trajectory may be yet to come, but a crucial point in the curve has been passed.

In Etienne's case, as in the biographies of many partisan activists, membership in a partisan association is a vehicle of epistemic enrichment.[38] An interesting historical example can be found in Mahatma Gandhi's autobiography, as he explains the role participation in the Natal Indian Congress played in gradually training members to voice public critique and engage in political reason-giving. Due to widespread lack of experience amongst lay activists, the process was initially an exclusive one, as Gandhi explains:

> Meetings used to be held once a month or even once a week if required. Minutes of the proceedings of the preceding meeting would be discussed. People had no experience of taking part in public discussion or of speaking briefly and to the point. Everyone hesitated to stand up to speak.

Yet, as Gandhi goes on to note, with ongoing involvement in meetings and familiarization with the relevant procedures, matters improved dramatically even for the most hesitant and unprepared: 'They realized that it was an education for them, and many who had never been accustomed to speaking before an audience soon acquired the habit of thinking and speaking publicly about matters of public interest.'[39]

Through partisan practice, sophisticated judgements and the sometimes esoteric terms of political justification cease to be available only to minority elites and may become part of a joint intellectual stock, available to other citizens and in turn reworked by them. Such actions amount to a 'pedagogy of the oppressed', one which 'makes oppression and its causes objects of reflection by the oppressed' as a prelude to efforts to address them.[40] Are partisan forums the only venue for this? Clearly there are other institutions with an educative profile (e.g. the school or the media) with something apparently similar to offer. Yet the kinds of experience made possible in partisan forums are distinctive, all the more so in circumstances where mainstream institutions suffer from the effects of power and economic inequalities. Concerns particularly pressing from a partisan perspective are addressed in these forums

[38] For further analysis and empirical evidence on the importance of political participation as a means of political education and intellectual empowerment, see also Carol Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970); Jane J. Mansbridge, *Beyond Adversary Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), pp. 239–47.

[39] Mahatma Gandhi, *An Autobiography: Or the Story of my Experiments with Truth* (London: Penguin [1927] 1982), p. 148.

[40] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (London: Penguin [1970] 1993), p. 30; see also Georg Lukács, 'The Vanguard Party of the Proletariat', in *Lenin: A Study in the Unity of his Thought*, ed. Lukács (London: NLB [1924] 1977), pp. 24–38.

in a practical and goal-oriented fashion, as we shall examine more closely in the next section. Even if alternative forums can go some way to performing the same function, the more limited reach of these forums, their issue-specific nature, and the non-continuous basis on which citizens are involved in deliberation, means they cannot substitute for the distinctive forms of involvement that partisan engagement affords.[41]

The Epistemic Contribution of Partisanship (II): Developing Hermeneutic Resilience

Strengthening political commitment by including citizens in a distinctively partisan practice of political justification is of course not just a matter of organizational empowerment. Identifying the consequences of imbalances of power, and of the uncritical absorption of dominant justificatory discourses, is also served by partisan forums. Partisans' shared experience of political activism encourages alertness to the dangers of political instrumentalization and misinformation on the part of more powerful actors. It contributes to consolidating their hermeneutic resilience in the face of dominant discourses that risk suppressing the voices of the marginalized.[42] An important component of partisan efforts to construct alternative discourses on society is the attempt to exchange information with their fellow activists and citizens on the limits of existing views, and to raise consciousness of the problematic aspects of common-sense thinking. The adversarial conditions in which partisans act help them develop the necessary critical awareness. That their challenges to existing inequalities are themselves made with power-political ends in sight is not to weaken their normative force. As noted in Chapter 1, reason-giving can co-exist with instrumental motivation. Partisanship does not offer an escape from power relations, but a means to identify and contest them. It makes available to the individual citizen a richer set of considerations upon which to ground her political judgement.

To see why political commitment is sustained and enhanced when agents' views and assessments of external evidence are filtered through shared associative practices, consider two further arguments. Both concern the hermeneutic resilience that allows marginalized agents in society to challenge dominant discourses. The first, and most obvious, has to do with the role that shared

[41] The point is acknowledged in a pioneering essay by Cohen ('Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy', p. 2) but the suggestion to take seriously partisan forums is left undeveloped, and has not been taken up by other scholars (though see Fabio Wolkenstein, 'A Deliberative Model of Intra-Party Democracy', *Journal of Political Philosophy*, doi: 10.1111/jopp.12064 (2015)).

[42] For more discussion of hermeneutic marginalization as a problem of epistemic injustice, see Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), esp. Chapter 7.

political activity plays in supplying evidence not readily available through normal channels of communication. Such epistemic reliance on one's political friends is clearly present in many episodes of political mobilization, as for example with the famous Monday demonstrations in Leipzig prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall.[43] Here, opposition activists relied heavily on networks of information sustained by their epistemic trustees in order to plan meetings, coordinate action, and share opinions and judgements with regard to future proposals and initiatives. The second, less immediately obvious reason, is when publicly available information needs to be processed in particular ways, i.e. ones relevant to upholding political commitment. This argument is also more controversial, and perhaps worth discussing in some detail.

Consider the hypothetical case of Rosa, a socialist activist living in Western Europe in November 1989. Suddenly, like many disaffected socialists, she faces the question of whether to abandon her belief in socialism as a project for a better society or to preserve her ideal by revising components of it in the light of what she has learned from the collapse of the Eastern bloc. As many excellent documentaries filmed during the period of transformation of former communist parties into parties of the democratic left show, partisans found it valuable to participate in activities where fellow associates could discuss each other's views and try to arrive at a considered judgement on such questions.[44] Deliberation of this kind would have been more difficult in conversation with those who were either direct political adversaries or politically apathetic citizens with no appreciation of the rationale behind the shared project. If commitment is to be understood as a species of intention to endure epistemic and motivational challenges for the sake of projects one has adopted, deliberating with epistemic trustees is more likely to ensure the evidence in support of change is properly examined before it is endorsed.

Notice we are not claiming that epistemic trustees are important to identifying the truth of the matter. Recent research in political psychology suggests partisan attitudes tend to make people more resistant to factual correction, and even subject them to a range of misperceptions that independents do not normally share.[45] If there is a truth of the matter to be found, exposure to disagreement and to the discursive challenge of one's own position may be

[43] For an empirical discussion, see Susanne Lohmann, 'The Dynamics of Informational Cascades: The Monday Demonstrations in Leipzig, East Germany, 1989–91', *World Politics* 47 (1) (1994).

[44] See e.g. Nanni Moretti (Director), *La Cosa*, DVD (Rome: Sacher Film, 1990).

[45] Cf. David Redlawsk, 'Hot Cognition or Cool Consideration? Testing the Effects of Motivated Reasoning on Political Decision Making', *Journal of Politics* 64 (4) (2002); Brendan Nyhan and Jason Reifler, 'When Corrections Fail: The Persistence of Political Misperceptions', *Journal of Political Behavior* 32 (2) (2010); Jennifer Jerit and Jason Barabas, 'Partisan Perceptual Bias and the Information Environment', *Journal of Politics* 74 (3) (2012); James Druckman et al., 'How Elite Partisan Polarization Affects Public Opinion Formation', *American Political Science Review* 107 (1) (2013).

more likely to contribute to an enlightened assessment. Precisely *because* arguing with one's political friends is more likely to consolidate one's previous opinions and beliefs and develop resistance to the tendency to revisit such commitment too lightly, taking part in associative practices strengthens the ability to stick with previously held beliefs and values, despite evidence that would suggest the need to revisit them. This is all the more important if we take seriously objections to the ideals of public reason that neglect the impact of asymmetries of political and economic inequalities on processes of reason-giving, and if we believe that a degree of political commitment is necessary to counter such asymmetries.

A well-known body of empirical literature documents the effects of informational cascades driven by deliberation with like-minded others, observing how individuals are more likely to shift views in a certain direction if they interact and deliberate with those sharing similar opinions.[46] Suppose one is a committed pacifist but one's beliefs are challenged by external evidence suggesting that, sometimes, armed conflict can bring about a more durable peace. If an individual, call her Lisa, is uncertain about whether maintaining US troops in Afghanistan will support the pro-democracy movement, but her friend Joe is sceptical, they may share knowledge and evaluations and come to a more informed view in support of a peaceful approach to conflict. If she and Joe are against maintaining troops but their friend Susan is uncertain, deliberating will help them process information in a way that is relevant to their shared commitment; Susan will be reminded of why she is a pacifist, will have further validation that her commitment is worth adhering to, and will have a greater pool of epistemic resources to rely on when defending her position with others of divergent views.

The tendency of friends (political and otherwise) to influence each other's evaluative outlooks is a well-known phenomenon. Often, however, the presence of such cascade effects is considered a cause for concern. Deliberation with epistemic trustees is thought to lead to the polarization of opinion rather than an improvement in the quality of one's arguments.[47] In much recent political science literature, polarization is perceived as an obstacle to responsible public decision-making and blamed for transforming institutional politics into a conflictual and divisive environment riven by political bias.[48] But whether polarization is bad depends on the nature and value of one's

[46] For further discussion on informational cascades, see Sushil Bikhchandani et al., 'A Theory of Fads, Fashion, Custom, and Cultural Change as Informational Cascades', *Journal of Political Economy* 100 (5) (1992); for experimental evidence, see Lisa R. Anderson and Charles A. Holt, 'Information Cascades in the Laboratory', *American Economics Review* 87 (5) (1997).

[47] Cass Sunstein, 'Deliberative Trouble? Why Groups Go to Extremes', *Yale Law Journal* 110 (1) (2000).

[48] Morris Fiorina et al., *Culture War? The Myth of Polarized America* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2004); Thomas E. Mann and Norman Ornstein, *The Broken Branch* (Oxford: Oxford University

commitment, and on whether there are good reasons for cultivating and upholding specific political projects in the face of epistemic challenge. It also depends on the relation between political and civic commitment, the institutional context in which democratic agency is expressed and how well it functions, the kinds of offices and positions agents occupy, how representative their views are, and how we strike the balance between the pursuit of particular projects and the necessity of compromising with others for the sake of stability.

To be sure, the tendency of partisans to take more seriously the views of their fellow partisans may become a source of bias, even fanaticism. It may lead to the creation of 'echo-chambers' where activists refuse to take different views into account.[49] But if we care about commitment, our critique of such tendencies to polarization must be qualified. In some circumstances, group polarization of this kind will be essential to ensuring agents do not give up too easily on political projects they have thought worthy of endorsement.

Historically, polarization of precisely this sort has been crucial in many important episodes of mobilization where information processing amongst epistemic trustees has led to fundamental transformations we now believe worthy of support. Think of campaigns in favour of universal suffrage, the civil rights movement, or environmental activism.[50] It is preferable to have had civil rights campaigners find epistemic support among their peers (even at the cost of some group polarization) than to have had them renounce their commitment due to countervailing pressure. Perhaps it is not the role of partisanship to identify which political projects are worth pursuing. But *if* there are political projects worth pursuing, partisanship will be an effective vehicle for sustaining and furthering them, crucially so in the face of epistemic pressure.

Problems with Political Commitment

One might worry that the conception of associative practice on which this argument relies sacrifices partisans' independence of thought and action to the identity of a collective 'we' necessary to sustain and enhance political commitment. The objection is hard to answer without conceding that *some*

Press, 2006); for a comprehensive review of the literature, see Mark J. Hetherington, 'Review Article: Putting Polarisation in Perspective', *British Journal of Political Science* 39 (2) (2009).

[49] Cass Sunstein, *Going to Extremes: How Like Minds Unite and Divide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[50] For a discussion, see Ypi, *Global Justice*, Chapter 7.

loss of independence is inevitable whenever there is commitment *in general*. Partisanship is not unique here. Most of the projects we commit to require sacrificing the ability to form plans incompatible with their pursuit: being a parent, for example, often means one is less in control of one's day than before. However, *some* loss of independence may be acceptable when on balance we believe these projects are worth committing to. We are prepared to put up with some sacrifice to our independence because we believe the benefits (to ourselves and others) outweigh the loss of some ability to pursue other options.

The same goes for political commitment. It would be naive to suggest that those who share partisan practices enjoy the same degree of independence as previously. Indeed, the benefits derived from such associative practices consist precisely in making available structures of cooperation that allow certain intentions to be preserved even in the face of countervailing inclinations. It is difficult for these associations to perform such a role without hindering the pursuit of alternative or incompatible ends: that they require this is the very point of having them in the first place. *If* we care about political commitment, the best way to promote it is to let it be shaped in practices where partisans take advantage of the benefits of association for the long-term pursuit of shared projects. These associative structures ensure that political projects survive epistemic and motivational obstacles to the principles and goals underpinning them.

One central feature of associations so understood is that they are non-fungible: agents come to value them not only for the instrumental role they play in supporting pre-existing commitments but also for their role in enhancing these commitments. But here another objection might arise. If all we care about is political commitment, why lock it in non-fungible structures with particular identities that endure across time? The answer is that the history of these associative practices plays a non-trivial role in explaining why they help agents survive epistemic and motivational obstacles to the realization of their projects. Precedents of interaction with fellow partisans, the shared symbolic language and system of values they develop through continuous engagement with each other, the epistemic and psychological resources on which they rely in making future decisions, and the learning processes they jointly develop, cannot be easily transferred to new sets of associative relations. Indeed, that history of interaction is what gives participants the necessary supporting background knowledge and skills. Benefiting from long-term learning processes implies a specific, non-fungible, relation to an association with particular characteristics and a particular history.[51] Were such associations to be

[51] Ypi, *Global Justice*, Chapter 6.

replaced, the epistemic and motivational benefits of the relations they embody would be either lost or significantly curtailed: such benefits accrue in virtue of that particular relation and not another.

This is not to deny that agents often fundamentally change their beliefs or revise their commitment. Starting a new associative relation that sustains new projects when the current one fails should always be possible, and may often be desirable. But it is important to understand that these new associative relations form new plural subjects.[52] The collective 'we' in which one takes part through preceding particular interactions is dissolved and the relevant historical properties that help sustain one's previous commitment no longer obtain.

As we have tried to show, political commitment is sustained and promoted in the presence of shared practices that develop a collective will. Sometimes, the party as organization is necessary to provide such shared associative framework, but our emphasis has been less on the organization than on partisanship as a form of political friendship taking associative form. Yet this leads to a third objection: if what we are interested in is an aspirational community of principles and the associative practices underpinning it, why mention parties at all? This objection is critical in the light of empirical concerns about the failure of current parties to represent citizens or stand up for principled alternatives. The point we have tried to make though is normative. We know of no other associative practice in democracy whose purpose is to represent principled views of how power should be exercised. We know of no other entity with a life that spans several generations, that is irreducible to a single-issue campaign, and that tries to bring disparate claims into a coherent body of rules.

Of course, parties have many failures, as we have already observed. But think about the analogy with families again. Marriage, civil unions, and de facto partnerships are all associative relations considered essential for the cross-temporal support of certain commitments (e.g. of love). They can take many forms, ranging from the more formal to those that are only loosely structured. Of course, not all of them succeed in fulfilling their purpose: there are many bad marriages; many people lose their belief in these joint projects, fall in love with other people, and so on. But these empirical contingencies do not detract from the main observation: insofar as people still care about such commitments, certain associative practices are essential to their support. The same holds true of partisan associative structures. To the extent that agents feel committed to certain shared political projects and believe it is important

[52] Bennett Helm, 'Plural Agents', *Noûs* 42 (1) (2008); Margaret Gilbert, *Sociality and Responsibility: New Essays in Plural Subject Theory* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000).

to change institutions compatibly with them, partisan associative structures are crucial in supporting and enhancing such commitments.

We might worry that partisanship isolates specific forms of interaction (i.e. modes of political friendship), hindering agents' capacity to engage with other worthwhile associative projects. Of course, if one does choose to commit, and to the extent that one only has limited psychological and motivational resources available, one will be less able to engage with other projects. It is difficult to see how one avoids this without sacrificing the value of commitment in general: to commit to one set of friends or a partner is necessarily to risk neglecting other equally (or more) deserving individuals. If we think this is a loss greater than the gains afforded, we have a problem with commitment in general, not with the associations through which commitment is sustained.

Conclusion

Political parties, wrote one of the greatest champions of partisan democracy almost two hundred years ago, 'appear in a state where political life moves freely'.[53] They fail to appear where 'indifference to public matters dominates, or where the ruler suppresses every free demonstration of opinions by groups in the population'. When such a vital tendency to associate in support of particular political projects is restricted, 'this impulse retreats from public life and flees into religious or ecclesiastical realms' or 'it drives out differences'.[54] Although the emphasis in this chapter has been less on parties and more on partisanship as the associative practice on which parties rely, the claims we have made very much resonate with these arguments.

Of course, as this scholar also knew, 'the party is only a part of a bigger whole; it is not itself the whole thing'. Indeed, were it to confuse itself with the whole, it would 'overestimate itself', and would treat 'unjustly all the other parts'. Therefore such an association can 'fight the other parties, but it should not ignore them, and it should not, as a rule, seek to annihilate them'.[55] It is also for this reason that the kind of partisan stance that one might adopt as an ordinary citizen must be tempered by the other commitments one endorses in different social roles.[56]

Political commitment is not the only commitment that matters. The fact that individuals belong to multiple associations and have different sources of commitment should be cherished, for it allows agents to interrogate and

[53] Bluntschli, *Charakter und Geist*, p. 1.
[54] Bluntschli, *Charakter und Geist*, p. 2.
[55] Bluntschli, *Charakter und Geist*, p. 2.
[56] To understand this difference, consider for example the position of a judge who must remain impartial and non-partisan in occupying that social role but who can associate strongly with like-minded others in his capacity as ordinary citizen.

integrate all these different commitments and counters the tendency for any given set to become a source of bias. What we have argued is that, if we care about political commitment, it is important to reflect on the kind of associative practices through which it is promoted and enhanced.

We may never be sure which political projects are desirable, and may therefore choose political apathy or agnosticism over the enthusiastic endorsement of uncertain projects. We may be sure about what the right projects are, or know what we want to avoid, but resist joining lasting associative practices that develop non-fungible identities and attachments. Perhaps one should not commit, even to the best of principles. Perhaps one should care less about *political* commitment. But if we both know and care, we will have to think about the trade-offs political commitment involves and about how to further and enhance it. Partisanship offers a remedy to some of the problems raised. At the very least, if someone suggests that remedy, one should think twice before considering them an imbecile.

5

Associative Obligations

Membership of an association, be it a state, family, or cultural group, is often said to bring with it a distinct set of obligations. Intuitively this would seem to be no less true for the kinds of association that are the focus of this book. To commit to a party is to make collective projects one's own, something that predictably involves a measure of self-restraint and sacrifice, and which puts those committed to the same political projects in a unique relation to each other. Moreover, partisans commonly appeal to the existence of such obligations when making demands of each other. The history of political parties is littered with calls for loyalty and charges of betrayal.

Yet the extent of any such obligations—to whom or what they are owed, and how constraining their demands should be—is less clear. For some, the obligations specific to the partisan may be quite limited, along the lines of a duty of loyalty to those immediate colleagues whose political fortunes they share. For others they will be rather more extensive, entailing a commitment to some larger community of the like-minded, extended in space and time. The obligations incumbent on partisans, independent of those they may incur as citizens or in other social roles, can be sketched in contrasting ways. Moreover, in this idea of the special ties of the group to itself lies one of the most widely-voiced concerns about partisan action. An established strain of critique sees the party as a source of conformism, an arbitrary interference on the individual's exercise of independence of thought and action. If it is to be entertained that partisans have special obligations to their peers, not only do we need some clarity on the extent of these obligations but some good arguments as to why they should be recognized at all.

Existing treatments of partisan obligation generally approach it as a special case of *political* obligation.[1] A core concern is how partisan conflict can be made compatible with a liberal order: questions of tolerance, free speech, and

[1] See e.g. Matteo Bonotti, 'Partisanship and Political Obligation', *Politics* 32 (3) (2012); on party loyalty, see Muirhead, *The Promise of Party*, Chapter 5.

the scope for civil disobedience are at the fore, with an emphasis on what partisans owe to those beyond their own circle (that is, to their political opponents and the wider political community). Rarer is a focus on what partisans, as members of a collective, owe their fellow partisans. Some of the essential elements that such an ethics of partisanship might cover have been highlighted in the occasional work on intra-party deliberation, participation, and respect for dissenting opinion.[2] But generally the question of partisan obligation is an under-explored one in both political theory and the study of parties alike.

We begin this chapter by asking how far one might get *without* an account of partisan special obligation. We examine a model of party that treats it as the contingent collaboration of the like-minded, disorganized and unconstrained, for which notions of obligation are unsuited. The approach resembles anarchist ideas of social order, and also finds expression in a number of contemporary movements. As a model of party it is hard to defend, however, as partisanship requires a level of coordination that surpasses it. With greater organization come burdens and constraints and the problem of how these are to be legitimately underpinned. Holding that an account of special obligation is needed, we go on to consider some of its possible forms.

We examine how it might be approached in contractual terms, with mutual obligations traced back to the voluntary act of joining a party. We show the significant merits of this approach, particularly as an account of the significance of party membership, but also why ultimately it is insufficient for conceptualizing partisan ties in their fullness. While consent must be central to an account of partisan special obligation, it cannot be thought of wholly on the model of a contract. The sections thereafter accordingly examine two further principles of allegiance, one centred on the moral significance of attachment to an association defined by shared ends, and another centred on concerns of reciprocity as these arise in a process of ongoing cooperation. These three bases of obligation are, we suggest, relevant to partisan associations across diverse cultural and institutional contexts, and of differing political orientations, albeit their relative significance may not always be the same.

What emerges is a compound theory of how the practices of partisanship generate special duties for those who engage in them. Individuals who have entered into relations of partisan association accrue requirements of solidarity.[3] These duties are relevant to a wide variety of situations in the life of a party. They bear on crisis moments when divisions emerge within the party

[2] Teorell, 'Deliberative Defence of Intra-Party Democracy'; Wolkenstein, 'Deliberative Model of Party Democracy'.

[3] On solidarity, see Hauke Brunkhorst, *Solidarity: From Civic Friendship to a Global Legal Community* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005).

that threaten to destabilize it, when individuals find themselves at odds with the majority views of their colleagues, or when compromises of some kind seem necessary. They also bear on quotidian concerns to do with how different sections of a party relate to one another—how the parliamentary wing connects to its base, for instance—and how they relate in turn to partisan organizations beyond the party such as trade unions and think-tanks. Such concerns anticipate questions of party structure we shall return to later in the book.

We do not intend a prescription of how partisans ought to behave—there are diverse ways to actualize the considerations discussed—but rather an account of the kinds of normative constraint under which partisans, as partisans, operate. With such an analysis one may hope both to better understand partisanship as it is currently practised, as well as gain a point of orientation for the reform of existing parties.

Partisanship without Special Obligations?

Partisans, like all persons, can be said to have a range of obligations of universal reach. These are the basic moral duties that persons owe to one another, simply by virtue of their humanity and irrespective of their particular identities. In addition, as citizens, family members, and occupants of a range of other social roles, partisans may be said to have special obligations to particular types of person. But do partisans have special obligations *to each other*, as partisans?[4]

There is a model of the political party, superficially consistent with our account of partisanship so far, in which the notion of special partisan obligations does not figure. This is the model of the *party as a contingent order*. On this view, the actions of the right-minded partisan are guided more or less exclusively by their personal judgements concerning how best to realize the political projects to which they are committed. That the party exists at all is because individuals converge in their views and find it productive to cooperate in efforts to achieve their shared goals.[5] But those individuals are under no obligation to engineer that convergence, for example by deferring to the views of a majority of their fellows, nor are they under an obligation to maintain

[4] For a rare discussion of special obligations in groups similar to parties (though with little reference to the latter), see Jonathan Seglow, *Defending Associative Duties* (London: Routledge, 2013), Chapter 6.

[5] The emphasis here on the public good follows from the conception of partisanship we are advancing; much the same point could be made though for those approaching the party as the convergence of interest amongst power-seekers.

their cooperation across time. They may come and go as they please and have no right to make demands of each other.

This is a conception of the party as essentially fluid and amorphous, one that can operate without a system of rules, a division of labour, or the formal allocation of offices. The party evolves according to the unconstrained preferences of those who choose to associate with it and survives for as long as this convergence of wills endures. Where individuals are in disagreement with their fellows they can exclude themselves, perhaps even join another party, and return when it suits them. At any given moment the party consists of the rump of individuals who continue to agree with each other in the relevant ways. There being no obligations to facilitate or enforce, there is no need for mechanisms of discipline. The party's contingent character may be celebrated by advocates as evidence of the good faith and purity of motivation of those engaged in it.

This conception of the party has affinities with certain anarchist conceptions of association.[6] While in no sense opposed to collective action, anarchists typically emphasize that collectives must be voluntary if they are to be legitimate—voluntary not just at the point of entry but in the entirety of the individual's relationship with them.[7] (The involuntary character of the state is, of course, the principal source of anarchist concerns about the possibility of legitimate political obligation.) Individuals should be bound only by decisions to which they themselves have agreed.[8] Membership should be fluid, and its differentiation into distinct roles avoided so as to avert the sharpening of power inequalities.[9] Variations on these ideas have been explicitly endorsed by a number of political movements, including in the recent past.[10]

[6] See, e.g. Max Stirner's notion of a 'union of egoists', a contingent order based on people pursuing their own ends (Max Stirner, *The Ego and its Own*, ed. David Leopold (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press [1845] 1995)); likewise Proudhon, advocating 'positive anarchy', i.e. association without authority, whereby everyone does 'what he wishes and only what he wishes', and some kind of order is the outcome (Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Solution to the Social Problem*, ed. H. Cohen (New York: Vanguard, 1927), p. 45). On the relevance of these ideas today see, e.g. Colin Ward, *Anarchism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Saul Newman (ed.), *Max Stirner* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

[7] Cf. point III of Bakunin's 'Revolutionary Catechism': 'Freedom is the absolute right of every adult man and woman to seek no other sanction for their acts than their own conscience and their own reason, being responsible first to themselves and then to the society which they have *voluntarily* accepted' (Mikhail Bakunin, *Bakunin on Anarchism*, ed. Sam Dolgoff (Montreal: Black Rose, 1980), p. 76).

[8] Robert Paul Wolff, *In Defense of Anarchism*, pp. xix–xxi, 23. Cf. point IX(G) of Bakunin's 'Revolutionary Catechism' (*Bakunin*, p. 78): 'every individual, every association, every commune, every region, every nation has the absolute right to self-determination, to associate or not to associate, to ally themselves with whomever they wish and repudiate their alliances without regard to so-called historic rights or the convenience of their neighbours'.

[9] Such arguments anticipate Michels's critique of the 'iron law of oligarchy', to which we return in Chapter 10.

[10] On the German Greens, see Offe, *Reflections on the Institutional Self-Transformation*; on social movements, see Kléber Ghimire, *Organizational Theory and Transnational Social Movements:*

Can the party adequately be conceived of as a contingent order in this way? Its appeal is clear, as a form that reconciles collective action with individual independence. No partisan finds themselves pressured to act or argue for something they are sceptical of, nor is there an expectation that they associate exclusively or even primarily with just the single party. Each is unbound, free to pursue their inclinations without fear of rebuke. In this image of association, the individual can be politically active if they choose, yet conscience remains their sole authority.

This unqualified independence of outlook is, however, also the deep flaw in the perspective. Partisanship, we have suggested, is a practice centred on the affirmation and maintenance of shared ends. If one takes seriously the arguments for political commitment described in the previous chapter, it is difficult to see how this good can be achieved without constraints on the individual partisan. Partisanship involves taking a stand with others, and needs individuals willing to defer occasionally on particulars to the judgement of their peers for the sake of forging the larger consensus needed for the pursuit of their chosen ends. Where partisans acknowledge no special obligations to one another, they leave their association on a precarious basis. If all partisans prize only their own individual judgement and show no hesitation in abandoning the party when it ceases to accord with their will, they leave the projects to which they have committed themselves vulnerable to decay.[11]

It is not enough to emphasize that partisanship is an activity conducted by the like-minded and that disintegrative tendencies should therefore be rare. Holding certain commitments in common does not eradicate the potential for disagreement, since differences of view may arise concerning how to interpret these commitments in the light of changing historical circumstances, as well as on the kinds of strategy and tactics best suited to advancing them. Furthermore, successful partisan cooperation will often require a distribution of roles within the party, which may be unachievable without a combination of obligations, procedures, rights, and discipline.

It is worth emphasizing that durability *is* something a party properly aspires to. To be sure, there are anarchists who would argue that desirable associations are likely to be temporary in duration, so that participation does not ossify into bureaucratic forms.[12] A high rate of turnover will then be regarded in a

Organizational Life and Internal Dynamics of Power Exercise Within the Alternative Globalization Movement (Lanham: Lexington, 2011), esp. p. 12.

[11] Cf. the Durkheim argument about purely interest-based conceptions of political community.

[12] Cf. Ward, *Anarchism*, p. 31: 'It is possible to discern four principles that would shape an anarchist theory of organizations: that they should be (1) voluntary, (2) functional, (3) temporary, and (4) small.' For an empirical analysis of movements that also emphasizes the value of spontaneity, see Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail* (New York: Vintage, 1979).

positive light. Moisey Ostrogorski made this the basis of proposals for a politics not of permanent parties but of temporary 'leagues', which would combine for a short period around a specific issue before giving way to new formations.[13] But the corollary of short-lived associations is that short-term goals will tend to be prioritized. The pursuit of long-term projects requiring consistent and cumulative efforts for achievement is likely to depend on associations that extend across a significant timeframe. The suspicion will be that where organization and obligation are rejected, what one is left with is a largely impotent and ephemeral talking shop that leaves the powerful undisturbed.

The shortcomings of the party as contingent order are not just, it should be underlined, problems of practical viability. As we shall argue, one of the corollaries of individuals pursuing projects in coordination with others is that they generate mutual expectations about their future actions. Whatever the anarchist may insist about the non-committal character of association, even modest forms of coordination entail individuals leading their peers to expect certain things of them, whether these are formally expressed or informally signalled. They also entail a distribution of burdens and benefits that may be highly uneven unless embedded and reconciled in a longer-term process of structured interaction.

For these reasons one must reject the model of contingent order and explore the ethical considerations that partisanship inevitably raises. The following sections seek to clarify the sense in which duties arise in the course of partisan activity—how partisans incur 'role obligations', i.e. special obligations that derive from the place they occupy in the party.[14] We seek to show why partisans are entitled to make demands of one another, and why individual partisans should generally feel obliged to heed these. Our account highlights different forms of ethical relation the partisan may have with the partisan collective, ranging from the ties generated by formal membership in the partisan association, to those arising from the shared fate of those who publicly define themselves by their common commitments, to those generated by the acceptance of the benefits of association. Each kind of relation, we suggest, draws different kinds of individual into the moral fabric of the party and, as we argue in the final section, gives nuance to the kinds of partisan duty that may be expected of them.

[13] Cf. Ostrogorski, *Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties*, Vol. 2, pp. 658ff.

[14] A party is therefore not merely an 'aggregation', i.e. a rule-bound group without moral commitments, geared to the pre-existing individual interests of its members (cf. Talbott Brewer, 'Two Kinds of Commitment (And Two Kinds of Social Groups)', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 64 (3) (2003)).

Relations of Contract

Parties, as we have noted, are voluntary organizations.[15] No one is born into a party: affiliation arises as the result of a choice, and even inherited dispositions can be reappraised and significantly revised.[16] In a pluralist political context the alternatives may include affiliating with other parties already in existence, founding a new party, and disengaging from political activity altogether. Yet once the choice to affiliate has been made, obligations to fellow associates may be said to arise. One way to think about why is to see partisanship as like entering a pact. Those who engage in it commit themselves to a certain standard of conduct rooted in the terms of their common agreement. While free not to join in the first place, once they become involved certain things are rightly expected of them. They become subject to legitimate demands on the part of their fellow partisans.

This is easiest to appreciate where affiliation takes the form of organizational membership, formalized by rituals of admission. Individuals who sign up to a party in this way make something like a *promise*.[17] They identify themselves with a set of political commitments—composed of general value orientations, the principles by which to interpret these, and concrete proposals for how to understand and realize them in a given time and place—and indicate their willingness to coordinate with others in the pursuit of these. This voluntary undertaking can be regarded as a source of obligation because it raises expectations amongst others about what the individual holds to be important and how they can be relied upon to behave. It is on the basis of such expectations that fellow partisans may motivate their own commitment to the party, as well as form plans concerning how best to advance its goals. As with acts of promising in general, the individual, having voluntarily cultivated these expectations, can be said to have a duty to ensure they are met. They have an obligation not to let others down.

This image of the party as grounded in relations of *contract* finds some of its appeal in the apparent clarity of the terms of the contract. A party is publicly defined by its present and historical commitment to an ongoing normative programme. Those who affiliate with it should therefore have some idea of what they are getting into. There is typically a wealth of materials that can be consulted for further clarification, from party speeches to the party

[15] Though the one-party state falls outside the scope of this book, it is worth noting that even in totalitarian contexts party membership is normally formally voluntary—presumably in part because this makes it useful as a form of surveillance, as non-members flag themselves as potential dissidents.

[16] Cf. Muirhead, *The Promise of Party*, pp. 120–1.

[17] On promise-centred accounts of obligation, see A. J. Simmons, 'Associative Political Obligations', *Ethics* 106 (2) (1996).

constitution. To be sure, where membership entails an oath of allegiance, the terms of affiliation may be stated quite broadly—perhaps as simply the willingness to support the 'values' of the party. To pick just one real-world example, the Swedish Social Democrats present those joining the party with the briefest of accounts of what membership signifies: 'Being a member of the Social Democratic Party means standing for and creating a society based on our values, which are that all human beings are born equal.' As contractual requirements go, it is hardly detailed. But one does not need to look far for a richer conception of what it is to be a member as signalled in the party's supporting materials.[18] As here, so generally: the terms of party affiliation are never without substance, and the consent of the partisan, made explicit with party membership, can fairly be considered informed. This is important, given that the notion of a contract and the set of promises that may be said to underlie it depends on clarity concerning what the participants are agreeing to, so that if necessary they can later be called to account for their actions.

Unlike the model of the *party as contingent order*, a contractualist conception of the party evokes genuine constraints on the individual partisan. It implies obligations to live by the rules of the collective for as long as the pact endures. It commits partisans to recognize an authority external to themselves as individuals, one that may require them occasionally to sacrifice some of their independence for the sake of a larger whole. It may also limit the circumstances under which partisans can legitimately extricate themselves from the activities of the party (as well as the circumstances under which they might later be readmitted). Like many contractualist accounts in politics more generally however, this conception of the party establishes obligations that remain to some degree conditional. It entails an image of the party as an instrument to achieve a defined set of purposes. To the extent that the party is unable to deliver the ends in question, or to the extent that other partisans renege on the terms of the agreement, the obligations involved may cease to hold. An association that puts forward a partisan claim, yet which does little to credibly advance that claim, would in this way lose its legitimate hold on the cooperation of its members.

The idea of contract evokes therefore an appealing blend of obligation with consent and limited authority. It is a line of thought frequently deployed in reflections on obligation at the wider level of the political community as a whole, but it would appear to be at least as well suited to thinking about an association such as the party. Whereas thinking about the *state* in contractual terms is thought by many to be a difficult idea to empiricize, not least due to the problems of inferring individual consent to the arrangement, in the party

[18] See the Swedish Social Democrats' membership webpage and the links embedded, http://www.socialdemokraterna.se/Internationellt/Other-languages/.

case we would seem to have a fairly clear account of the obligations incurred by partisans, at least those who are formally party members.

A purely contractualist conception of partisanship will only take us so far however. While a party, properly understood, has an identifiable normative programme that gives anchor to its activities, it remains the case both that this programme evolves over time and that it needs practical interpretation to establish its meaning in a given setting. However rich the party's documentary materials—its constitution, its publications, and its members' speeches—these are never sufficient to render its programme in determinate form. Ideals like liberty and equality, but also goals considerably less abstract, require deliberation to fix their significance and adapt them in the light of changing situations.[19] Even if one can well ascertain what a party has stood for up to the present moment, what its normative programme will entail *in future* is always to some degree unknowable.

This is a challenge for a contractualist conception of the party, as it suggests those who affiliate with the party can never be wholly certain of what it is they are committing to. There is ambiguity at the heart of the arrangement. Whereas the idea of a promise, typically said to be the moral basis of a contract, implies clarity on the part of those promising and those addressed as to what is at stake,[20] the reality of partisanship is rather that individuals are engaged in an ongoing effort to work out in full the nature of the commitments they hold in common. They are involved in a developing process and are not the signatories to a settled agreement.

It is not just that one needs a more dynamic conception of the substance of agreement than contractual relations imply. Another limitation is that not everyone who fits the description of 'partisan' is formally a party member. There are some contexts of partisanship, and some kinds of partisan, for which it is unfeasible to treat affiliation as genuinely grounded in an explicit pledge. Elsewhere in this book we have spoken for instance of partisans in the media, in NGOs, or in the world of think-tanks. Often such actors, though they may be sympathizers and activists, do not hold party membership.[21] In such cases it is difficult to speak of a 'promise' having been made, and thus to trace obligations back to a particular moment of interaction that stands as their source.[22]

[19] Cf. Brewer, 'Two Kinds of Commitment', p. 569.

[20] This clarity is never perfect, of course: contracts are always incomplete, in the sense that they presuppose knowledge which cannot be articulated in its entirety.

[21] On think-tanks, see Pautz, *Think-Tanks*; Andrew Rich, *Think Tanks, Public Policy, and the Politics of Expertise* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004). Note also that a party need not have a formal membership structure (consider in this regard parties in the US): this warns against exclusive focus on a contractual model of association.

[22] Likewise when members of other associations (e.g. trade unions) are enrolled in the party en masse: on 'collective membership', see Bonotti, 'Partisanship and Political Obligation', p. 157.

Yet if we are to speak meaningfully of partisan special obligations, such individuals can hardly be excluded from the analysis at the outset.[23]

Party membership is ethically significant and the model of contract gives us some indication of why. But it seems clear that an adequate account of partisan obligation will need to probe further.

Relations of Reliance

To appreciate the appeal of a second model of partisan obligation, it may be useful to begin with partisan associations in their infancy. Consider how partisan movements are often born of a particular set of crisis events that plunge individuals into a common situation—the parties emerging in Mediterranean countries from resistance to EU austerity measures are one example (e.g. Syriza in Greece, or Podemos in Spain). A sense of shared fate and common cause may take shape in such situations, producing ties felt to be intrinsically important to those involved in them, even before a clear partisan membership structure emerges. Such individuals are 'thrown together' by common struggles and emerge as a partisan collective only as a series of struggles cumulate and acquire distinctive significance. The revolutionary situation is similar, as we shall see later in the book. Rather than seeing such individuals as explicitly pledging to affiliate with a party, one might better see them as emerging as a collective partisan subject through the formative experience of events and their collective response to them.

That group obligations might follow from sustained, but informal, periods of interaction is an idea familiar from a wide range of social contexts. Relations of friendship and family are commonly said to involve special obligations, even though they cannot easily be understood in terms of promising, contracting, and so on.[24] It may be that partisanship in some of its guises resembles these relations more closely than it initially seems. That it might be approached as a form of friendship is implied by the historical adoption of words like 'comrade' to describe the relationship of partisans with their fellows. Such terms acknowledge not just the close personal ties that may develop in the course of face-to-face interaction, but hint at a distinctive form of solidarity that may derive

[23] Note also that contractual models struggle to accommodate the cross-temporal extension of the party: an association of open duration is one that involves an indeterminate number of members; cf. Gardiner in Axel Gosseries and Lukas H. Meyer, *Intergenerational Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 81.

[24] Cf. Margaret Gilbert, *A Theory of Political Obligation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); John Horton, *Political Obligation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Samuel Scheffler, 'Relationships and Responsibilities', *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 26 (3) (1997).

from shared political commitments. How though might we understand this as a source of obligation?

Shared commitments can be understood in at least two ways: as a convergence of individually-held commitments, or as commitments publicly affirmed as those of a collective (perhaps even constitutive thereof). The shared commitments which inspire partisanship are best thought of as of the latter kind. Partisans do not simply hold political views as individuals but proclaim them as 'our' views—i.e. as commitments that derive a significant part of their value precisely from the fact that they are assumed to be shared.[25] Commitments thus held in common are dependent for their value on the expected contribution of peers and are diminished for all when individuals fail to honour them, either by acting inconsistently with them, publicly rejecting them, or by revealing a lack of dedication to them.[26] All such deviations devalue those commitments and put the meaning of others' involvement in question. Here lies a major source of mutual obligation. Partisans have legitimate reason to rebuke those amongst their ranks who renege on commitments collectively affirmed, as by doing so they put the value of the party in question.

As in the case of the contractual promise, but here in a more informal sense, the point hangs on the significance of cultivating expectations in others about how one is supposed to behave. To affirm shared ends is to indicate, other things being equal, an intention to do certain kinds of things and not others. To stand with others in defence of shared projects is to give them reason to count on you. As a form of joint action, partisanship engenders relations of *reliance* amongst its participants, and obligations amongst them in consequence.[27] 'Don't let me down', the partisan is entitled to say of those who stand publicly by her side. The explicit pledges associated with party membership are only the most formal expression of such a tie, which can also exist in their absence.

This description fits certain kinds of party and partisan especially well. It fits resistance movements as previously noted, and those individuals of the party's founding generation who experienced certain formative events together. Interpersonal loyalty is likely to be particularly significant in such settings, and a decision to break with shared commitments a particular affront to peers.[28] In the case of the Greek anti-austerity party Syriza, one saw this

[25] Building on Gilbert's 'plural-subject account', see Maura Priest, 'Party Politics and Democratic Disagreement', *Philosophia* 42 (1) (2014), p. 140; cf. Charles Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 190ff.

[26] Cf. Brewer, 'Two Kinds of Commitment', p. 574.

[27] On reliance and joint action, see Facundo M. Alonso, 'Shared Intention, Reliance, and Interpersonal Obligations', *Ethics* 119 (3) (2009).

[28] Cf. Simon Keller, *The Limits of Loyalty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), Chapter 1.

view expressed in the condemnation of the decision in July 2015 by the party leader Alexis Tsipras to accept, without consulting the wider party, the austerity measures demanded of Greece by its international creditors. Fellow partisans accused him not just of capitulating but of thereby subverting the anti-austerity commitments articulated by the party's supporters in the national referendum just a few days before.[29] In a party shaped more by the shared fate of its adherents than by the contractual ties of membership, associative obligations were keenly felt. Relations of reliance are likely to be given emphasis also in parties which are small and whose partisans do not expect to gain institutional power in the short term but who seek rather to demonstrate through the party a social and political model. In these 'prefigurative' parties,[30] it is clear that the associative ties are intrinsically valuable to those involved, not just instrumentally important for the achievement of defined policy goals. The point of the association is to exhibit a way of life, a world in microcosm. Affiliation is constitutive of the good the group is seeking to achieve, and if the party decays it cannot be substituted with another at no cost—the integrity of the community in its specificity is crucial and the dedication of partisans to maintaining it especially vital.

But while such parties express the significance of shared commitments in particularly clear form, our contention is that this model is germane to partisanship much more widely.[31] Wherever there are individuals who, whether as formal members or not, act so as to engender expectations in their peers about their commitment to shared ends, an attendant basis of obligation comes into play. Relevant contexts of action here might include participation in party decision-making—consider for instance the 2015 leadership election of the British Labour Party, in which registered non-member 'supporters' were entitled to vote—or participation in street protests that bring actors together under a common set of demands. In such contexts, unity of intent and an emergent solidarity is publicly performed, even though nowhere contractually stated. Where, as amongst members, contract-like relations *are* present, they may yet be significantly augmented by more informal ties of this kind. In their study of the emergence in 1980s Britain of the Social Democratic Party, Crewe and King observe that one of the factors discouraging defections from the Labour Party amongst those who might otherwise have followed departing colleagues was the density of their ties with para-partisan groups in the labour movement: 'they were unwilling to end their public life under a cloud

[29] http://www.ekathimerini.com/201715/article/ekathimerini/news/varoufakis-turns-on-tsipras-and-syriza-during-vote.

[30] Winifred Breines, 'Community and Organization: The New Left and Michels' "Iron Law"', *Social Problems* 27 (4) (1980).

[31] See also Nancy Rosenblum, 'Political Parties as Membership Groups', *Columbia Law Review* 100 (3) (2000), section I (pp. 818–23).

and to retire to a community where they would be vilified as traitors by former friends and colleagues'.[32] Such sentiments hint at an appreciation of the kind of associative obligations we describe. The transnational context is also a relevant one: where parties in two or more different countries publicly affirm their shared objectives and enter into ongoing coordination in pursuit of these, they may be said to develop mutual obligations, even though as membership groups they remain separate and there is no contractual basis to their relation. Here is one way to understand the logic of the partisan internationals we turn to in Chapter 9, so mysterious if one conceives international relations only in terms of contending state interests or universal norms.

Partisanship seems therefore to include a principle of obligation grounded in relations of mutual *reliance*.[33] While non-contractual accounts are sometimes accused of accepting community ties uncritically,[34] it is worth emphasizing that the associative ties of partisanship are not to be confused with unreasoned attachment to tradition. The adoption of shared political projects is compatible with ongoing deliberation concerning how the partisan inheritance is to be refined and adapted to new circumstances. Moreover, while such ties in some contexts (e.g. the state, the ethnic group, even the family) are likely to be repressive of political and cultural diversity, in the case of the party there are already parameters to that diversity, in the form of claimed agreement on the normative programme to be advanced.

Relations of Reciprocity

There is a third, distinct source of obligation that is reducible neither to the moral status of contract relations nor to the condition of mutual reliance produced by the affirmation of shared ends. It is complementary with the other two—and for some individuals is merely additional to the weight of considerations of *contract* or *reliance*—but equally it has the potential to affect those touched by neither. This source relates to the norms of fairness that arise on account of the uneven distribution of burdens and benefits that partisan coordination entails.

In any partisan association, the input of individuals is necessarily varied. Different persons must perform different tasks, else the fruits of coordination

[32] Ivor Crewe and Anthony King, *SDP: The Birth, Life and Death of the Social Democratic Party* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 112.

[33] For recent overviews, see John Horton and Ryan Gabriel Windeknecht, 'Is There a Distinctively Associative Account of Political Obligation?', *Political Studies* 63 (4) (2015); Bas van der Vossen, 'Associative Political Obligations', *Philosophy Compass* 6 (7) (2011a); Bas van der Vossen, 'Associative Political Obligations: Their Potential', *Philosophy Compass* 6 (7) (2011b).

[34] Cf. Simmons, 'Associative Political Obligations'; Christopher H. Wellman, 'Relational Facts in Liberal Political Theory: Is there Magic in the Pronoun "My"?', *Ethics* 110 (3) (2000).

are fatally impaired. Moreover, at any given moment, some may be required to do more than others, and some will have contributed for longer than others. The party endures to the extent that it is an ongoing cooperative scheme in which these local differences are accepted as part of a larger process of give and take. It is only through the combined but varied efforts of a large number of individuals, spread over a period of time, that partisans are able to take steps towards goals that all of them wish to see achieved. From the uneven nature of their contributions arises the basis for mutual obligation. In line with a general principle of fairness and reciprocity, partisans may be expected not to free-ride on the sacrifices made by their fellows, from which they benefit to the extent that these give value to their own activities.[35]

Consider for instance the relations between a party's parliamentary wing and its activist base. Once their seats in the assembly are assured, why should the former consider themselves bound to the latter? Perhaps because the party's constitution requires it, and thus a form of contractual tie exists—but perhaps the constitution is silent or ambiguous. Perhaps because their political commitments would lose much of their meaning if the integrity of the partisan community were not reaffirmed—but perhaps the parliamentary wing has the media power to withstand this for a while. Even absent these two considerations, a plausible reason lies in how their gains were enabled by some of their fellow partisans taking on a quite different set of tasks, establishing an unevenness of contribution that requires persistent engagement to reconcile. It goes without saying that the argument works both ways—that the activist base is thereby bound also to the parliamentary party.

It is important not to over-extend the notion of benefit here. Potentially all citizens in a polity benefit in some way from the actions of a party that governs well, and to the extent that the party's rule is underpinned by law those citizens may have quite limited control over the advantages they accrue. The mere status of being a beneficiary is insufficient to generate partisan obligations.[36] But to the extent that those individuals who associate more closely with the party have reasonable ways of *rejecting* the benefits they derive (e.g. by distancing themselves from the party and aligning with another) their receipt of them becomes morally consequential.[37] Their acceptance can then

[35] On the fairness principle, see George Klosko, *Political Obligations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); H. L. A. Hart, 'Are There Any Natural Rights?', *Philosophical Review* 64 (2) (1955).

[36] See Brian Barry, *Theories of Justice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 232; Klosko, *Political Obligations*, introduction; see also Bonotti, 'Partisanship and Political Obligation', pp. 159–60.

[37] The standard objections to reciprocity-based accounts at the polity level (the existence of plural conceptions of what fairness entails; the ambiguity of what it means to *accept* a benefit) seem less powerful in a setting characterized by bounded diversity.

be read as an act of consent in the party's activities, placing them in an analogous relation to an ongoing process as that conjured more statically by the idea of a contract.

As before, those holding formal membership in the partisan organization are only part of the story here. To emphasize relations of reciprocity is to include the situation of those more widely who benefit from the endeavours of the party—those involved in think-tanks for instance, partisan policy institutes and foundations, or in various forms of para-partisan media. They may achieve through their association with the party a level of influence over public policy they might otherwise struggle to attain. An enrichment of their normative commitments is another foreseeable benefit, as their association with the party helps give programmatic focus to broad intuitions and offers reassurance that others share those intuitions. Having reaped the fruits of party activity, they may be said to have duties not to undermine the party, perhaps even to advance it. Whereas ideas of *contract* and *reliance* indicate why partisans should follow through on the expectations they cultivate in others, the principle of *reciprocity* reminds that even those 'lapsed partisans' whose association with the party is in doubt may nonetheless have lingering responsibilities towards it.

One of the distinctive features of this model of obligation is that it foregrounds the possibility of *degrees* of obligation, as well as how obligation is conditional on certain norms of fairness within the party being maintained. With the notion of reciprocity one has grounds to expect more of those who benefit most from the partisan association. Likewise, all those who contribute meaningfully to the party can rightfully expect recognition of their efforts in return, for example in the form of influence over the party's decision-making. The conditional aspect of reciprocity—the notion that benefits and sacrifices should in some measure be proportionate—also offers an indication of how partisans might be *released* from their obligations. When a powerful group within the party ceases to honour the principle of reciprocity—by denying voice to its fellow partisans on whose contributions it nonetheless depends for instance—then it may rightly forfeit the loyalty of its fellows. Here lies one guarantee against the prospect that partisans become trapped in an unjust association.

It is important to acknowledge an objection pertinent whenever moral significance is attached to consent. It may be noted that, in many empirical circumstances, persons faced with the decision of which party to commit to may have few reasonable alternatives to choose from. If only one party articulates a normative programme that the individual can reconcile with their core commitments, their affiliation loses much of its elective character, and the exit option they retain is a difficult one to exercise. If there exist political forces the individual specifically wishes to oppose, continuing

allegiance to the party may present itself as necessary.[38] The problem is compounded by the barriers that exist to forming a new party, whether in the form of material costs, the challenges associated with successfully initiating coordination with others, or the institutional impediments that make it difficult for emerging parties to gain representation.[39] One may wonder whether it is plausible then to argue that partisans incur obligations due to the voluntary character of their acceptance of the benefits of affiliation.

One response would be to treat partisan obligations as conditional on the existence of a set of institutions conducive to a well-functioning party system. Institutions that enable genuine party alternatives make more plausible the idea of partisan consent and the obligations that flow from this; in the absence of such institutions one might hold that no such obligations arise and whatever collective action occurs will of necessity resemble the model of contingent order. Such a position might form the basis of an argument to reform institutions precisely so as to strengthen their enabling capacity—for example by facilitating the formation of new parties and their entry into representative assemblies.[40] While such a view is essentially coherent and systemic reforms might well enhance the quality of partisan consent, it is nonetheless the case that partisans, even in the most challenging circumstances, generally retain the option of political abstention. They can choose to reject any form of partisan affiliation. If they do not exercise this option, it can be fairly said they have consented to participate in a cooperative scheme and should therefore accept the obligations that attend this. Introducing further institutional conditions risks undercutting any notion of the party itself as a transforming agent, able to operate in sub-optimal institutional environments and improve them by its own endeavours.

On the Content of Partisan Obligations

Our discussion has focused so far on the grounds for taking partisan obligations seriously. A distinct matter is how the substance of such obligations might look. This is something we shall examine more closely in the next chapter, when considering one dimension in particular—the inter-temporal

[38] Arguably this was the predicament of many British Labour partisans disillusioned with their leadership's support of the Iraq war in 2003: as the only credible means to oppose the Conservatives, the Labour party could count on support it otherwise would have lost.

[39] Cf. Katz and Mair, 'Cartel Party Thesis'.

[40] Political science suggests that in systems with more parties one can expect fewer 'ideological misfits', i.e. partisans intellectually at odds with their partisan fellows (Emilie Van Haute and R. Kenneth Carty, 'Ideological Misfits: A Distinctive Class of Party Members', *Party Politics* 18 (6) (2012), pp. 887–8). Here lies one argument for an institutional structure based on proportional representation.

one, to do with the obligations of partisans towards their predecessors and successors. It is also a matter that bears on issues of partisan *organization*, to which we shall return in Chapter 10. Here we restrict ourselves to highlighting just a few core features.

Intuitively, the essence of partisan obligation would seem to consist in accepting the will of the partisan collective as produced by its decision-making apparatus. This is what is commonly called 'towing the party line', as displayed by parliamentary representatives, party spokespersons, and others. There is a basic truth to this intuition: each of the accounts described in previous sections points to a partisan duty to accept positions that may provoke personal scepticism as the condition of the formation and maintenance of a collective programme. Especially at moments when public unity over a programme may be crucial to the party's success—before an election, for example—partisan obligation may be well conceived in terms of individual alignment with collective decisions.

But to emphasize endorsement of the party's collective will is to give a somewhat static rendition of partisan obligation: partisans must *make* their party's platform as much as accept it. It is also to make the strong assumption that there exists an organizational infrastructure that can adequately interpret the party's will. A better way to see the essence of partisan obligation, we suggest, is in terms of a duty of *justification* to fellow partisans. What is minimally incumbent on the individual partisan is that they account for their actions to their peers by recourse to their shared commitments. As we have noted, even within the context of shared basic commitments a divergence of views is foreseeable (and even desirable). Because individuals will tend to interpret somewhat differently the implications of the principles and aims that unite them, there is a necessary degree of personal compromise involved in maintaining the unity of the partisan project.[41] Rather than partisans expressing agreement on all issues, what is crucial is that they handle their disagreements in a certain fashion, engaging their fellow partisans in a deliberative process conducted within a common conceptual frame of reference.

This core obligation builds on each of the three models previously described. To the extent that at least some partisans in some parties can plausibly be understood to be in a contractual relation with one another, their actions should demonstrably respond to the declared terms of their association. It is by offering justification with reference to the commitments they share that they reassure each other of the enduring terms of their pact and adjust it in the light of new political developments. To the extent that some partisans are bound more informally by conditions of mutual reliance

[41] On the larger question of compromise between rival partisans, see Chapter 7.

arising from their public endorsement of shared ends, it is through a process of mutual justification that they give due recognition to that which defines their ties. To the extent that all partisans are bound also by norms of reciprocity, it is by such justificatory practices that they show due respect for the reasons for which others make sacrifices on behalf of the party.

It is worth emphasizing that the terms of such justification properly centre on the commitments that bind the partisan association. It is principally by invoking the normative core of the party's shared project—its declared principles, aims, and the concepts used to express these—that partisans appropriately present each other with reasons for action. Undoubtedly, there may be the temptation to rely on terms largely foreign to it, for instance to communicate with constituencies beyond the party. When candidates contend for the leadership of a party, they may be inclined to appeal over the heads of their fellow partisans to a wider public by using a normative language reported to be of wider resonance (as suggested e.g. by focus groups), irrespective of its relation to the terms of the partisan project. But while partisans certainly must address those beyond their own circle, the nature of their ties suggests this cannot fairly be at the expense of the ideas by which they define their association.[42] Albeit constrained by the standards of public reason examined in Chapter 3, justification in this context is justification *within* the partisan conceptual scheme.

Not all partisan obligations of course can be expressed in terms of a duty of justification. Depending on individuals' degrees of attachment, one can foresee additional forms of partisan obligation. For those with a loose, informal affiliation with the party, the obligations may centre on not harming the party, for example by switching allegiance capriciously or threatening to do so, by leaking information to rivals, or by misrepresenting the party's intentions. The active component may principally involve supporting the party during its electoral campaigns. By contrast, those who have made an explicit pledge to the party, as members, may be expected not just to desist from harm and offer support at critical moments but to have a positive obligation to work consistently in pursuit of their partisan goals. They may also carry a duty to accept collective responsibility for actions performed in the party's name, even where they themselves did not initiate them. The Roman origins of the concept of solidarity in the legal principle of *obligatio in solidum* foreshadow

[42] This is one way to read the dissatisfaction of some prominent Labour partisans at the insistent use of terms such as 'aspiration', of little long-standing Labour significance, by candidates in the party's 2015 leadership election: see, e.g. John Prescott, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/labour/11628209/Lord-Prescott-ridicules-Labour-leader-candidates-use-of-the-word-aspiration.html and Sadiq Khan, http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/may/31/sadiq-khan-aspiration-labour-leadership-overused-blair.

this idea of joint liability for the actions of the association.[43] Such obligations go beyond the discursive practice of justification, but take shape in the light of it. To the extent that partisans default on such duties, they will be legitimately subject to rebuke, be it in the form of criticism, penalty, expulsion, or ostracization.

Sometimes disagreement within a party runs deep. Occasionally an individual may find their views fundamentally and irreparably at odds with those of at least some of their fellow partisans. They may doubt that there still exist shared commitments to refer to. Perhaps their own views have changed, or perhaps those of their partisan peers. Here the prospect of a deliberate break with the party arises, either in the form of revoking membership or distancing oneself from a significant part of its activities. Is there a place in our account for the renunciation of partisan ties? The possibility of defection is implied in our previous remarks about the voluntary character of partisanship and is an important assumption for our argument.[44] It would be wrong though to see this as the point at which obligation gives out. Even in the moment of defection, there are arguably constraints on *how* the individual may legitimately defect—especially those who have formally affiliated themselves as members.

Here one might point to evaluative criteria similar to those typically invoked in discussions of civil disobedience. Defecting partisans may be considered obliged to communicate their misgivings to their fellow partisans, so that the latter do not mistakenly count on their wholehearted dedication, and to treat breaking with the party as a last resort, to be preceded by efforts to reform the party from within so that fellow partisans have an opportunity to be persuaded of the merits of reform.[45] If ultimately deciding to defect, they may be expected to do so with fair warning, to offer a principled justification for their actions, and to accept the authority of the party to punish them for their actions (e.g. expel them and/or obstruct their later re-entry).[46] These obligations, though they may overlap to some degree with general moral obligations, should be understood as special obligations insofar as they are

[43] Cf. Brunkhorst, *Solidarity*, p. 2.

[44] At least one form of this—the party split—is remarkably under-examined in comparative politics. For one of the few (admittedly brief) general treatments, see Peter Mair, 'The Electoral Payoffs of Fission and Fusion', *British Journal of Political Science* 20 (1) (1990); for a case study, see Crewe and King, *SDP*, esp. pp. 121ff.

[45] On the criteria for civil disobedience, including last resort, affirmation of the principle of the rule of law, acceptance of authority to punish, and so on, see Kimberley Brownlee, *Conscience and Conviction: The Case for Civil Disobedience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[46] Constraints on what partisans, as partisans, can legitimately do necessarily imply constraints on their freedom to associate and dissociate with the party. Should individuals be able to enter and exit at will, e.g. so as to avoid taking a position they are uncomfortable with, it would be equivalent to their being without obligations (equivalent, therefore, to the model of the *party as contingent order*).

guided by a residual concern for a shared history of partisan interaction. Fulfilling them, the dissident partisan is able to combine moral reflexivity with a recognition of the associative duties they choose to depart from.

These then are some of the special obligations that partisanship may be said to entail. Admittedly, the analysis cannot be exhaustive without attention to different political contexts. Moreover, nothing we have said should imply that such obligations will necessarily be the decisive consideration in any given political situation. Clearly such obligations need to be balanced against others—including general civic or cosmopolitan obligations—and one need not suppose their demands are always the most crucial. As the next chapter observes when examining the obligations of partisanship in time, the possibility of a clash is a real one. (This is certainly not to say a clash is inevitable, as those who would reduce partisanship to the pursuit of particularist principles and aims would maintain.) To recognize the possibility of a clash between partisan and competing obligations is not to significantly qualify our position though. On the contrary, to recognize this possibility is to presuppose that partisan obligations exist, and thus to accept the main claim of the chapter.

Conclusion

The grounds of partisan special obligation consist in a combination of the moral principles connected with contract, reliance, and reciprocity. We began by asking why, and indeed whether, partisans might hold certain duties towards each other simply as a consequence of their being involved in shared associative practices. Our discussion has indicated there are good reasons to recognize such duties, but we have resisted the tendency to ground them in a single moral principle, as works on political obligation often do. Multiple principles can cumulate and reinforce one another.[47] This pluralist orientation is particularly helpful when the goal, as here, is not so much to identify a definitive rationale for widely recognized obligations (e.g. those to do with obeying the law) but to cultivate sensitivity to obligations whose very existence tends to be only tacitly or reluctantly acknowledged. It is also worth emphasizing that the objections commonly raised about these theories of obligation when they are presented in other political contexts, as theories of obligation to the state for instance, are generally weaker in the case of the party.

Some principles may apply better to some kinds of partisan than others—depending, for example, on whether they hold formal party membership or whether they have built up a non-membership-based connection with it over

[47] A similar position is taken in Klosko, *Political Obligations*, pp. 99, 120; see also Jonathan Wolff, 'Pluralistic Models of Political Obligation', *Philosophica* 56 (2) (1995).

time. While an exclusively contractualist account restricts itself to those partisans who are officially party members, arguments from reciprocity may draw in those sympathizers beyond the party who derive benefit from the activities of members—the achievement of goals they believe in, opportunities for political voice, or simply intellectual and political inspiration—and who may influence the party's development without formally being members. The same is true of the principle of mutual reliance, which may generate obligations also in the absence of the receipt of tangible benefits. Some partisans may find themselves obligated on multiple grounds. Contract, reliance, and reciprocity may be of unequal import for the individual partisan, depending on the particularities of their relation to the party, but each has an important place in the overall moral order of the party.

In the next chapter we shall examine more closely how the associative obligations of partisans may find expression. The partisan collective is, we have suggested, one founded on long-term projects that require ongoing commitment to be advanced. It follows that the relation of partisans to the past and future of their association is likely to be a key dimension of their ethical ties. Partisanship is a relation in time: its associative obligations take shape in the light of its cross-temporal focus.

6

Partisanship in Time

In the previous chapter we introduced the idea that partisans may have special obligations to their partisan associates and discussed the grounds on which such obligations might rest. Here we examine the notion in more detail by introducing the temporal dimension. This chapter looks at what partisans may be said to owe their fellows in respect of their party's past and future. This is a distinct area of partisan ethics, centred on the party's evolution in time. Guided by an idea of partisanship as directed towards advancing a long-term political project, we explore the nature of partisan ties by approaching them as a question of intergenerational obligation.

Thinking about partisanship in this time-sensitive fashion is important if we are to fully understand, critically appraise, and perhaps even respond to, some of the key political trends of contemporary Western democracy. For many parties, recent years have seen declining rates of membership and increasingly uncertain voter support. Where once labour parties might have hoped to count on the stable allegiance of a working class, and conservative parties on that of the moneyed and propertied, today things seem more unsettled. What political scientists call processes of 'de-alignment'[1] have left parties needing to adapt in order to survive. One of the ways they have done so is by making fundamental revisions to party doctrine, in some cases changing their constitution to do so. This was the route the 'Third Way' parties of the 1990s chose, severing themselves from much of their socialist traditions in the name of modernization.[2] Conservative and centrist parties have seen parallel shifts, described by such terms as 'neo-conservatism' and 'neo-liberalism'.

Such parties are heavily criticized from within for disowning the commitments they once stood for. Efforts to shore up party support have been widely

[1] Russell J. Dalton and Martin P. Wattenberg, *Parties Without Partisans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[2] On the case of the British Labour Party and its revision of Clause IV of the party constitution in 1995, see below. For the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), the birth of the *Neue Mitte* is generally dated to the months following the party's arrival in government in 1998.

viewed as an exercise in 'selling out'. Yet the same critical attitude has appeared to others as a form of dogmatism. Mature politics, it is suggested, involves revising one's commitments as the electorate evolves. Parties must keep up with the times. At stake in these disputes are the parameters within which any process of partisan re-definition may legitimately unfold. We suggest that this, in turn, reflects how one draws the contours of partisan obligation. Decisions to reorient a party inevitably put the actions of predecessors and successors in a new light; the question is how much this matters. The pressing strategic decisions facing many parties today have thus brought a particular dimension of partisan ethics to the fore.

In the ethics of political community more broadly, questions of cross-temporal obligation have been usefully approached by distinguishing backward- and forward-looking perspectives.[3] This distinction can be applied to the present enquiry. In the first category, one might ask to what extent partisans are obliged to remain faithful to the commitments of preceding partisans. Does membership of an association extended in time, with an established history and an unbounded future, introduce constraints on the scope for legitimate political reinvention? Or should one emphasize the autonomy of today's members—the 'sovereignty of the living generation'? In the second category—the forward-looking perspective—one may ask whether the partisans of the present have obligations concerning their party's future. For example, do they have a duty to balance short-term gains such as electoral success against the party's long-term organizational and programmatic sustainability? How far, in short, should one conceive partisan obligations as extending cross-temporally?

We begin by examining what might be called the 'presentist' view of the party, in which obligations connected to the party's past and future are absent. In such a perspective, a party is correctly understood as an association of individuals whose mutual obligations, such as they are, are independent of the party's history and long-term trajectory. We argue this view is problematic, partly because it downplays one of the sources of a party's public credibility—its constancy of programme—but more crucially because it is in tension with one of the good reasons individuals may have to associate with a party: its commitment to a political project whose full realization necessarily lies in the long term, perhaps beyond their lifespan. Partisanship finds one of its strongest rationales in the idea of the party as a cross-temporal collective whose members' efforts cumulate over time. Insofar as partisans ought to respect the good reasons why their fellow partisans may associate with the party, they should not be indifferent to its coherence over time. We go on to

[3] See, e.g. Gosseries and Meyer, *Intergenerational Justice*.

explore the merits of an alternative account in which partisans *do* have cross-temporal obligations, both 'ascending' ones to the past and 'descending' ones to the future. We sketch how the attendant obligations might look, outlining two norms—*fidelity* and *sustainability*. Such norms need not always trump countervailing concerns: they apply in a context in which other citizen obligations continue to hold, and sometimes the demands of the latter will be judged superior. But these norms should be recognized, we argue, as one element in the moral calculus of partisanship.[4]

Thinking about obligation is one way to explore the nature of the group. This chapter's primary goal is to refine our concept of what a party is, offering a corrective to accounts that cast it as but a network of office-seeking individuals. A richer conception is needed if one is to grasp the stakes of contemporary partisan crisis and transformation, and make a critical evaluation of the strategies adopted by contemporary political elites. More widely, the chapter seeks to develop one branch of an ethics of activism. The political party, broadly understood, has been one of the paradigmatic forms of political involvement in the modern age and arguably still represents an important source of desirable change. If its progressive potential is to be realized, reflecting on the moral basis of the demands it makes seems important. In particular, in a period when real-world social and political movements often display an ephemeral quality, emerging and receding at some speed, it seems important to reflect on the activist's position in time.

Sovereignty of the Living Generation? Presentist Conceptions of the Party

We may define a *presentist conception of the party* as one that says that partisans, as partisans, have no meaningful cross-temporal obligations. In line with our wider account, by partisans we understand those who claim unity in the name of a shared political project and how best to realize it (a *normative programme*, as we call it), and who participate in coordinated activities designed to bring this interpretation to bear on authoritative political decision-making.[5] Provisionally, for simplicity, we shall refer only to those who are party members in the formal sense, though later we shall touch on the more ambiguous case of

[4] On 'presumptively decisive reasons' for action, see Scheffler, 'Relationships and Responsibilities', p. 196; see also Horton, *Political Obligation*, pp. 12–13.

[5] This definition emphasizes a *claim* to unity: we assume this unity will often be imperfect and that parties will tend to display a diversity of ideas and disagreement. We do not exclude, moreover, that these disagreements may be beneficial to parties, so long as the claim to unity prevails.

those who are consistent supporters but not formal members ('partisans beyond the party', as one might call them).[6]

In this presentist view, partisans have no reason to feel constrained in their decisions by concerns arising from how these decisions relate to the party's past. Nor need they make special allowance for the party's future, insofar as this is separable from their own immediate fortunes and the fortunes of the wider public on whose behalf they act. They have full discretion to discard or retain the existing normative programme as they see fit, and full discretion to discount the party's long-term prospects in favour of its short-term success, for example construed as electoral popularity or policy impact. They are unencumbered by cross-temporal partisan obligations. Borrowing a term used in eighteenth-century debates on the desirability of binding state constitutions, we might summarize this view as endorsing 'the sovereignty of the living generation'.[7]

Such a position can be found in what is sometimes called the *economic* view of the party, which conceives it as a network of elites seeking to maximize their personal advantage. The view has been popular in the study of parties, both within and beyond the rational-choice tradition. In this perspective, the party is conceived compatibly with the definition above, but with the additional proposition that the guiding motive of action is individual utility maximization.[8] Partisans are conceived of as office seekers, their decisions led principally by a concern for what will be electorally popular amongst a population of voters in the moving present. Although an argument against intergenerational obligation is rarely made explicit by adherents to this view, the focus on electoral measures of partisan success, which entail a numerically determinate population of voters comprised of those living at a given moment, implies a model of partisan rationality in which cross-temporal concerns are largely absent.

That partisans oriented only towards immediate success will lose public credibility over time is a point supporters of this view may freely concede.[9] If the world to which normative programmes are addressed is at all stable, what partisans advocate today and tomorrow ought to show some mutual resemblance, or else their actions will become too unpredictable to be meaningfully endorsed. Constancy of message is important, such authors will accept, even if partisanship is ultimately about nothing more than efficiency

[6] Cf. Bonotti, 'Partisanship and Political Obligation'.

[7] Thomas Jefferson, 'Letter to James Madison (6 September 1789)', in *The Portable Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson (London: Penguin, 1975).

[8] For the classic account, see Anthony Downs, 'An Economic Theory of Political Action in a Democracy', *Journal of Political Economy* 65 (2) (1957a), p. 137; cf. Downs, *Economic Theory of Democracy*. For discussion, see also Chapter 1.

[9] Downs, 'Economic Theory of Political Action', p. 142.

at winning power. This might be seen as a concession to the importance of cross-temporal demands—to the need for the ideal partisan to bring tomorrow's voters into their calculus alongside today's. But the argument turns on strategy rather than ethics. In this line of reasoning, in which voter behaviour is the ultimate measure of good (that is, effective) partisanship, cross-temporal thinking only becomes important to the extent that it helps to win votes. The implication is that if voters are willing to endorse radical ruptures in a party's programme, constancy of message does not matter. In other words, this concern with political credibility reflects merely an expectation of what kind of partisan strategy is likely to be successful. It is not derived from an assessment of what configuration of obligations is constitutive of partisanship. No special value is attached to the effort to harmonize present-day partisan actions with those of the past and future.

We foreground the economic view because it is a familiar one in the study of partisanship, but a presentist conception need not take this form. A less self-centred account is possible, whereby partisans have other-regarding goals, yet full discretion to pursue them as they see fit, unburdened by backward- and forward-looking partisan considerations. In the Jeffersonian reasoning against perpetual state constitutions, the sovereignty of the living generation is of course necessary not to liberate decision-makers to pursue selfish interests, but to prevent their being constrained by commitments not of their own making.[10] Similar arguments might be developed for the party, such that present-day partisans are said to be able to pursue their normative programme adequately only if their hands are not tied by the commitments and prospects of those of another time. It is their judgement that is thus privileged, not their interests narrowly understood. Such a view amounts to an enlightened presentism, for it is compatible with the intention to pursue the interests of a wider constituency. It is, however, in one important respect similar to the outlook previously described: no special value is placed on seeking to align present-day partisan actions with those of yesterday and tomorrow.

We want to contest this position without simply referring to the questionable credibility amongst voters that presentism may or may not entail. The major limitation of a presentist perspective lies, we suggest, in its discordance with the good reasons for which an individual might choose to associate with a party in the first place.

Whatever their political orientation, one of the important rationales available to individuals to motivate their involvement in partisan activity is, we suggest, the idea of helping to advance the kinds of normative goals that require coordinated effort over time. While small victories that favour ideals

[10] Jefferson, 'Letter to James Madison'. His remarks relate primarily to the transfer of debt, but are sufficiently generalized at the end of the letter to bear on the present case.

such as justice, equality, fairness, freedom, democracy, national development, and conservation can be aimed at in the short to medium term, they resist immediate satisfaction in anything close to their entirety. Those who commit to a party defined by such ideals, though they may also set themselves more achievable, less high-minded goals, are ultimately bound to principles and aims that cannot be fully realized within a single electoral cycle, a single period of office, a single political career, or indeed an individual's lifespan.[11] They commit themselves to projects that require time to implement and that cannot be tackled during the relatively short timescale of a political mandate. The value of the party lies in the way its extended lifespan makes the pursuit of these long-term projects possible. Borrowing terminology from existing discussions of intergenerational justice, we might say that the party represents a distinctive means by which to address 'lifetime-transcending interests'.[12] It provides an opportunity for those associated with it both to contribute to an ongoing, cumulative project and, less instrumentally and more expressively, to align themselves publicly with the ideas that inspire it.[13]

To be sure, for some individuals, personal power and prestige may be sufficient reasons to associate with a party, as the economic conception suggests. But while this may be an adequate motivation for some—particularly for those with realistic prospects of achieving a position of leadership within the party—for others it will be quite implausible.[14] Many partisans—especially

[11] Party scholars sometimes distinguish 'material' incentives for party affiliation (to do with rewards of income, power, or career opportunity) from 'solidary' ones (related to opportunities to form social ties) and 'purposive' ones (to do with the advancement of political goals) (Michael Bruter and Sarah Harrison, *The Future of Our Democracies: Young Party Members in Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 33ff.; Ware, *Political Parties and Party Systems*, Chapter 2). Our interest here is in the last of these, which is generally considered the most prominent in contemporary partisanship (certainly amongst European parties—cf. Bruter and Harrison, *Future of Our Democracies*, pp. 18ff. on 'moral-minded' members—but seemingly in North America too—cf. Lisa Young and William Cross, 'Incentives to Membership in Canadian Political Parties', *Political Research Quarterly* 55 (3) (2002)). Elements of the second incentive ('solidary') may also be present in the idea of the party as a cross-temporal project, insofar as this may be one source of the sense of collective identity traditionally associated with party membership.

[12] Janna Thompson, *Taking Responsibility for the Past: Reparation and Historical Injustice* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002); Thompson in Gosseries and Meyer, *Intergenerational Justice*.

[13] For studies of such motivations in the British Labour and Conservative parties, see Patrick Seyd and Paul Whiteley, *Labour's Grass Roots* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992); Paul Whiteley et al., 'Explaining Party Activism: The Case of the British Conservative Party', *British Journal of Political Science* 24 (1) (1994). On methodological considerations, see Jonathan White, 'The Social Theory of Mass Politics,' *Journal of Politics* 71 (1) (2009).

[14] That 'rank-and-file' partisans may be motivated less by interest and more by principle is a point long observed: see Hume, 'Of the parties of Great Britain', p. 41: 'Thus *Court* and *Country*, which are the genuine offspring of the British government, are a kind of mixed parties, and are influenced both by principle and by interest. The heads of the factions are commonly most governed by the latter motive; the inferior members of them by the former.' The point appears in comparative politics as 'May's Law': see John D. May, 'Opinion Structure of Political Parties: The Special Law of Curvilinear Disparity', *Political Studies* 21 (2) (1973).

those affiliated with large parties—may not be in a position to justify their involvement in terms of interest maximization, since they may gain little in strictly material terms. Economic theories of the party generally have little to say about what brings the ordinary partisan on board, yet without them there is no party.[15] Nor can an enlightened presentism adequately be the source of their allegiance. Those who take other-regarding commitments seriously and wish to shape institutions to reflect them must reckon with the fact that realizing goals through the political process demands patient efforts extended over time. Even in its more modest forms, partisanship is a protracted business, not least because political institutions themselves—the procedures of election, legislation, execution, and so on—have their own distinctive tempo to follow. Moreover, once attained, ongoing partisan dedication is required to maintain political achievements. Those who join a party expecting immediate and lasting results will typically be soon disappointed. If their involvement is to be meaningful, objectively and subjectively, an alternative rationale for association is needed; the idea of an ongoing collective project sustaining and enhancing political commitment provides this.

Here one gets the first glimpse of a possible theory of partisan cross-temporal obligation. If the idea of the party as advancing a cumulative, cross-temporal project provides a strong rationale for engaging in partisanship, then arguably this motivation deserves some form of respect, for it is the quid pro quo of the sacrifice and self-restraint that partisanship demands. As partisans seek to influence the course of their party, they should not be indifferent to the commitments of predecessors, whose efforts were crucial to the party's development and whose contributions find their meaning in the belief they will be continued. Partisans failing to show due respect for this motivation would be abusing the efforts of their fellow members, reaping the benefits of these efforts without acknowledging that which gives them their sense and coherence.

Cross-temporal concerns of this kind, it should be added, seem to form part of the self-understanding of partisans themselves. Moments of crisis in particular are a revealing site for the study of normative expectations. In the case of parties, notions of the intrinsic importance of constancy of normative programme are disclosed in those moments when a sub-group of the party sharply deviates from past practice. As noted, many are the party leaders in modern democracy who have been accused by large sections of their membership of having 'betrayed' their party's origins, 'sacrificed' its traditions, or

[15] The economic model arguably relies tacitly on a substrate of non-utilitarian motivations. Cf. Whiteley et al., 'Explaining Party Activism', Chapter 4.

'sold its soul'.[16] Such denunciations of broken commitments evoke the party as something larger than its living individuals—as part of an ongoing political project—and suggest the value of remaining faithful, one way or another, to the party's earlier incarnations.[17] Also, in moments of celebration, one may see the cross-temporal character of the collective emphasized. On accepting the leadership of the British Labour Party in September 2015, Jeremy Corbyn connected the present moment to its larger context as follows:

> our party is about justice, is about democracy, it is about the great traditions we walk on. Those that founded our party and our movement, those that stood up for human rights and justice, the right for women to vote, the right for others to vote. We stand here today because of their work.[18]

Nor are such ideas the preserve of a particular species of party. While the notion of commitment to a long-term normative project might seem to fit parties of the Left in particular, as those historically oriented to social progress and ongoing struggle, parties of the Centre and Right have by no means been immune to such concerns. Empirical observation reveals plenty of denunciations of betrayal here too.[19] Even parties that are considered 'conservative' generally set themselves some kind of ongoing project—for example, the restoration of a good society deemed to have decayed—and rarely cast themselves purely in the role of a rearguard action to defend the status quo.

In sum, if the unity of a party is grounded, as we have suggested, in shared political commitments, affiliation to it should be possible in terms of the goals it professes. Given that these goals are generally of a long-term character, this possibility relies on the ongoing cooperation of other partisans, acting in such a way as to make possible cumulative moves towards those objectives. Further, the wider contribution of partisanship to democracy arguably rests in part on partisans having exactly such long-term goals, thereby establishing a

[16] In addition to the Third Way examples mentioned see e.g. the disputes in the 1950s in the German SPD concerning the Bad Godesberg programme (Peter Lösche and Franz Walter, *Die SPD. Klassenpartei, Volkspartei, Quotenpartei: Zur Entwicklung der Sozialdemokratie von Weimar bis zur deutschen Vereinigung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1992), pp. 110ff.; Heinrich Potthoff and Susanne Miller, *Kleine Geschichte der SPD 1848–2002* (Bonn: Dietz, 2002), pp. 208ff.). For the extreme case of Fidesz in Hungary, a party moving from left to right, see Zsolt Enyedi, 'The Role of Agency in Cleavage Formation', *European Journal of Political Research* 44 (5) (2005). For an interesting political intervention seeking to capitalize on such expectations at the expense of another party, see Ed Miliband, 'Dear Lib Dem voter', *The Guardian*, 23 August, http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/aug/23/dear-lib-dem-voter.

[17] By contrast, in an association identical to its founding members (and thus without a history older than the present generation), such denunciations of broken tradition would sound odd.

[18] 'Jeremy Corbyn's Labour leadership victory speech', 12 September 2015, *PoliticsHome*, https://www.politicshome.com/news/uk/social-affairs/politics/news/61354/jeremy-corbyns-labour-leadership-victory-speech.

[19] On debates led by Erwin Teufel in the German Christian Democratic Union, see Jonathan White, 'Left and Right in the Economic Crisis', *Journal of Political Ideologies* 18 (2) (2013).

systematic connection between political ideals and institutional decision-making.[20] It is because the notion of partisanship as a cross-temporal project is one of the most plausible rationales for partisan practice, as well as one apparently evident in the intuitions of partisans themselves, that it should form the basis of a more detailed exploration of partisan cross-temporal obligation.

Partisan Ascending Obligations: on a Norm of Fidelity

Reflections on intergenerational justice sometimes distinguish between *ascending* and *descending* obligations, that is, between obligations concerning the past and future.[21] The distinction can usefully be applied when thinking about the ethics of partisanship and is adopted in this section and the next. Our goal is to identify a core set of obligations that help illuminate some of the essentials of partisan ethics. The discussion is necessarily selective: additional obligations could very possibly be included, not least because the details of a party's ideological profile may generate obligations specific to partisans of that persuasion.[22]

Let us look first at obligations of the backward-looking, 'ascending' kind. We have argued that a long-standing and coherent reason to be a partisan has been to contribute to the advance of 'lifetime-transcending interests'. Included in this rationale for partisanship is, we suggest, an expectation that tomorrow's partisans will seek to act in a way broadly consistent with the efforts of today's. Given that the fruits of these efforts will be deferred, and dependent for their realization (partial or complete) on the labours of those to come, these activities are likely to derive much of their value for those engaged with them from the belief they will be continued, and certainly not discontinued or flouted arbitrarily. Partisanship may be classed as a 'future-oriented' practice in this sense.[23] As such, it may be said to generate obligations amongst present-day partisans to respect the actions of their predecessors, and to give sense to the future-oriented spirit in which these were conducted.[24] This is what is intended by the *norm of fidelity*.

[20] White and Ypi, 'Rethinking the Modern Prince'.

[21] e.g. Gosseries in Gosseries and Meyer, *Intergenerational Justice*.

[22] There are some which we have chosen not to discuss which might be widely agreed upon, e.g. an obligation not to slander individuals. While significant, these are not central to the chapter's focus on evolving normative programmes.

[23] Lukas H. Meyer, 'More Than They Have a Right to: Future People and our Future-Oriented Projects', in *Contingent Future Persons: On the Ethics of Deciding Who Will Live, or Not, in the Future*, ed. Nick Fotion and Jan C. Heller (London: Kluwer, 1997), pp. 141ff.

[24] Víctor M. Muñiz-Fraticelli, 'The Problem of a Perpetual Constitution', in *Intergenerational Justice*, ed. Axel Gosseries and Lukas Meyer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

In the most obvious sense, fidelity might be taken to imply an obligation to act in strict accordance with the traditions of the party as established by its founding partisans. It can be read as an effort to adhere as far as possible to the inherited normative programme. In many parties the fundaments of this programme are laid out in a constitutional text,[25] which can be understood as the founders' effort to embed certain long-term commitments at the party's core. It is this text, one might argue, that authoritatively reveals their future-oriented projects and those of all partisans who choose to associate with the party over the course of its subsequent development. Fidelity to predecessors in this view means fidelity to the constitutional text.

Yet while strict conformity with a founding document is clearly a form of fidelity, such an interpretation is not without problems. Firstly, it is liable to produce a rather static conception of the party in which partisans are condemned to 'live in the past'. It reserves partisanship for the dogmatic, understood as those unwilling to revise commitments in response to changing empirical circumstances. Secondly, one intuitively senses that it overstates the claim of past activists to set the course followed by their successors. The future-oriented actions of the dead or retired seem to achieve an unjustified dominance over the future-oriented actions of the presently engaged. While a *presumption* of constancy in commitment seems plausible, strict conformity itself is too demanding. If this signifies a reductive understanding of fidelity, what could be meant by it instead?

Rather than an obligation to avoid innovation at all costs, one may interpret fidelity to mean an obligation to justify innovation and to pursue it incrementally. It amounts to a requirement to show, in convincing fashion, how new initiatives connect in some minimally coherent way to the traditions from which they depart, and to explain why their novel elements are needed. To better understand what this norm might entail, we first set out the general criteria that might guide such a process of justification, before looking at an empirical case that clarifies their application in practice.

On this account of fidelity, deviations from past practice ought (1) to be the subject of partisan debate. They should be overt initiatives, openly weighed by fellow partisans, rather than privately promoted by a faction. It is a minimum condition of respecting party predecessors that their commitments are challenged openly rather than covertly, else their claim on the party's course is ignored. Beyond this basic requirement, we may hold that where departures from past practice are sought, these should (2) be credibly presented as building upon existing elements of the partisan tradition, rather than marking a wholesale rupture. Links to predecessors' commitments ought to be visible,

[25] Cf. Rodney Smith and Anika Gauja, 'Understanding Party Constitutions as Responses to Specific Challenges', *Party Politics* 16 (6) (2010).

with innovations presented as reinterpretations of values shared by past and present partisans alike, or as extensions of older commitments into new domains. That innovations do not undermine broad swathes of existing commitments, even if they necessarily marginalize some, ought to be demonstrated. When it is proposed that Commitment X replaces Commitment Y, it should be shown this is compatible with the continued pursuit of Commitments A, B, and C. This applies, in addition to commitments traceable to the party's founding text, to those more recently affirmed in major documents such as manifestos.[26]

A further criterion is (3) that the necessity of such innovations should be properly accounted for. Short-term electoral popularity, or some general notion of change for change's sake, are weak grounds on which to compromise a party's constancy of programme. Where shifts in the party's direction are sought, these should be grounded in an analysis of how far-reaching changes in the wider society render certain commitments outmoded. To the extent that adaptations of programme can be convincingly related to societal change, the break with tradition leaves intact the rationality of partisan predecessors as they pursued their projects in a different social context, and indicates why the party must proceed in ways they could not have foreseen.[27]

To illustrate how such considerations might play out in practice, it is useful to observe a concrete case at some critical moments. Perhaps no party history better illuminates the claims of fidelity than that of British Labour, a party of long traditions that has been subjected more than once to pressures to redefine its programme. In the two most prominent instances, the central question has concerned the party's commitment to public ownership in the economy. Clause IV of its 1918 constitution committed the party to seeking 'the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange'. First under the leadership of Gaitskell in 1959–60, then under Blair in 1994–5, and both times in the context of electoral defeat, there were moves to revise this commitment. Each was a genuinely revisionist effort, designed to detach the party from a significant strand of its orthodox views.[28]

How do these initiatives match up against the fidelity criteria described above? Was the norm adhered to in practice? To their credit, both Gaitskell and Blair were quite open about their proposed acts of redefinition. In line with criterion

[26] Cf. Chapter 10.

[27] The importance of observing these criteria increases in proportion to the scale of the changes proposed.

[28] On the emergence of this orthodoxy with the 1918 constitution and its reproduction in the decades thereafter in major party documents, see Tudor Jones, *Remaking the Labour Party: From Gaitskell to Blair* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 18ff.). As the author notes, that there is an identifiable orthodoxy does not mean the party's tradition is not composed of plural strands. In this way, party traditions resemble the ideological traditions they draw on: Freeden's account of ideologies in terms of core, adjacent, and peripheral concepts that can be rearranged in diverse ways captures well this bounded pluralism (Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory*, pp. 77ff.).

(1), their initiatives were overt, publicly announced at a party conference and much debated before a decision was made.[29] Furthermore, broadly consistent with criterion (2), both involved efforts by the advocates of change to show how the proposed innovations were continuous with the party's traditions. A distinction was made between the means and the ends to which the party was committed: public ownership, argued the revisionists, was but the contextually appropriate means to advance the underlying goals of equality and social welfare, which now needed to be pursued by other means.[30] To be sure, in Blair's case, the continuity was thinner—partisans in 1995 were being asked to embrace the principle of private ownership and competition, whereas in 1960 they were being asked simply to consider exceptions to the rule of public ownership.[31] Arguably the later shift risked emptying the Labour tradition of its coherence; it was also combined with open disparaging of large chunks of the party's past. Yet there was some effort to show continuity with the past.[32]

Where the experiences significantly diverged was in regard to criterion (3), concerning the depth of analysis deployed to justify change. Gaitskell's initiative was underpinned by a comprehensive account of societal transformation, developed by intellectuals such as Crosland and widely disseminated in party literature, that sought to explain why public ownership no longer deserved the emphasis it had been granted in 1918.[33] The initiative was also accompanied by clear arguments for where the party should be going. Blair's proposal, by contrast, lacked any such intellectual support. The main texts, such as they were, emerged in the following years. Also vaguer was the alternative that Labour partisans were to consider. The burden of persuasion fell largely on data from polling and focus groups, and the prospect of further electoral defeats, rather than on a principled case for change.[34] These failings

[29] Gaitskell's was more overt than Blair's, in that it was explicitly presented as an effort to revise the party constitution. Famously, Blair did not mention Clause IV itself when first outlining his proposal (cf. Peter Riddell, 'The End of Clause IV, 1994–95', *Contemporary British History* 11 (2) (1997)); the goal became apparent soon afterwards, however. By contrast, under the leadership of Neil Kinnock the party made changes in its manifesto commitments on public ownership that were probably equally as radical as Gaitskell and Blair were proposing, but without overtly framing them as a constitutional question (cf. Jones, *Remaking the Labour Party*, pp. 123–4).

[30] Cf. Jones, *Remaking the Labour Party*, pp. 27, 34. A similar strategy was adopted by revisionists in the German SPD in the debates leading up to the Bad Godesberg reorientation (Lösche and Walter, *Die SPD*, pp. 110ff.; Potthoff and Miller, *Kleine Geschichte der SPD*, pp. 208ff.).

[31] Cf. Michael Kenny and Martin J. Smith, 'Discourses of Modernization: Gaitskell, Blair and the Reform of Clause IV', *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* 7 (1) (1997).

[32] Also, Blairite revisionism was not quite as radical as a straight comparison with the 1950s suggests, given how the party had evolved in the intervening decades.

[33] See especially Anthony Crosland, *The Future of Socialism* (London: Cape, 1956).

[34] On the intellectual underpinnings of Gaitskell's initiative, see Jones, *Remaking the Labour Party*, pp. 25ff. On the looser argumentation of the Blairites, and the importance given instead to the social–psychological tools of focus groups and surveys, see Jones, *Remaking the Labour Party*, pp. 137–8; James E. Cronin, *New Labour's Pasts: The Labour Party and its Discontents* (Edinburgh: Pearson, 2004), pp. 14, 394ff.; Riddell, 'The End of Clause IV'. A somewhat superficial approach

of justification were all the more problematic given that the break with party tradition was more far-reaching in this case.

The norm of fidelity thus looks to have been fairly well served in the earlier phase of Labour revisionism, and less so in the later one. In the former case an arguably modest break with the party's past was advocated with precision, in a way that upheld the rationality of what partisan predecessors had been seeking to achieve in an earlier societal context. In the latter case, a more radical break with the party's tradition was argued for loosely, and often with the explicit denigration of 'Old Labour' partisans. While both initiatives were revisionist, one displayed noticeably more appreciation than the other for the projects of partisans past.

Or at any rate, this is how it appears from the outside. The plausibility of revisionist claims is of course ultimately for partisans themselves to assess. Partly a matter of individual judgement, it is also something for which, in any given party, institutional mechanisms are foreseeable as a means to guide evaluation and give voice to partisans past. While the party constitution is an obvious reference point for establishing the party's core commitments, along with past manifestos and salient policy statements, such texts require interpretation. A deeper institutionalization of the norm of fidelity might involve a party establishing a council of partisans, separate from the leadership, to act as an authoritative interpreter of the tradition. Its role would be to engage in judicial-style reasoning concerning the meaning of the constitution, subsequent interpretations of it, and the kinds of precedent established by departures from it.[35]

To conclude, the trajectory of any party will legitimately include elements of rupture as well as continuity. There will always be ways in which real-world conditions have changed unforeseeably such that significant departures in programme are necessary. Sometimes the goals of yesteryear will genuinely need to be pursued by different means. Sometimes individual ends themselves, or their relative significance, may need to be reassessed. These are ways in which partisanship is necessarily a *creative* activity. An obligation of fidelity nonetheless implies real constraints on how the partisans of the present may define and promote their normative programmes. It hitches a burden of justification to revisionist initiatives, and renders suspect the kind of opportunist strategy that seeks immediate popularity without regard for the party's longer-term past.[36]

also characterized the revisionist initiatives of the Kinnock era—as the leader himself would later acknowledge (Jones, *Remaking the Labour Party*, p. 128).

[35] For a more detailed consideration of these institutional aspects, see Chapter 10.

[36] These constraints are real unless one assumes yesterday's partisans would endorse whatever it takes for their successors to gain power, including the abandonment of the existing normative programme, or its public denial and entirely covert pursuit. We assume partisans committed to the

Partisan Descending Obligations: On a Norm of Sustainability

If partisans have *ascending* obligations, can one identify a corresponding set of *descending* obligations? Partisans, it may be said, have a duty to preserve the conditions in which the just-described process can continue into the future.[37] This is an ethical—as opposed to merely prudential—demand, for it is a condition of partisan successors being in a position to continue to pursue the projects of their predecessors. Specifically, partisans can be said to have a duty to preserve the conditions in which future partisans can draw on a tradition and credibly present themselves as connected to it. This obligation may be examined under the heading of a *norm of sustainability*.

How might this be interpreted? Clearly the transfer of material resources is likely to be one component. Without the basic foundation of sound party finances and a reasonable membership base, the ongoing viability of the party is in question. Just as important, however, is the party's endurance in an ideational rather than an organizational sense, which depends on the transfer of symbolic and intellectual resources. Future partisans will require a meaningful set of concepts and a related vocabulary with which to articulate and continue a normative programme, and the visible public profile and good reputation needed to promote it.

This can be approached as a problem of conservation and depletion. One might speak, for instance, of a partisan obligation to avoid using the core concepts of the party's ideological tradition in contradictory ways such that their meaning is hollowed. Such a stipulation would exclude what political observers call 'cross-dressing', whereby party elites seek the short-term approval of a certain group of voters (or to demobilize those who might support competing parties) by making themselves ideologically indistinguishable from their opponents.[38] Such moves make it more difficult for their partisan successors to stake out a distinctive position and convincingly present themselves as part of an enduring political tradition. Rather than as members of a cross-temporal political project, they risk appearing as nothing but a collection of self-interested individuals that uses political language for instrumental purposes rather than to express sincerely held commitments.

party as a cross-temporal project are not wholly indifferent to the ends the party promotes, or willing for those ends to be pursued without public recognition.

[37] This assumes, of course, that the party's programme remains unfulfilled: should its work be done, there would be little need to sustain it. The assumption seems reasonable: historically there are few parties whose partisans have considered their work done, and even where their achievements were dramatic, these need to be defended.

[38] See, e.g. The Nation, 'Political Cross-Dressing', 22 July 2002, http://www.thenation.com/article/political-cross-dressing#.

A related obligation concerns the influence that present partisans may have on the wider political culture beyond their party. The sustainability of their partisanship depends on a culture that readily accepts the idea of principled disagreement between competing political views. In the absence of such a culture, future partisans are likely to struggle to promote their political projects to the general public: their ideals will fall on deaf ears. The sustainability of a political culture is a matter of *partisan* obligation (whether or not it is also a matter of political obligation more generally). An obligation to uphold such a culture might entail, for instance, a responsibility not to deny the reality of political disagreement with adversaries, or to cast it in merely technical terms when it concerns ends as well as means—temptations to which Third Way parties were famously prone.[39] Disavowing principled differences in the present is liable to make critical perspectives harder for future participants in the democratic process to articulate. Succeeding partisans become more likely to struggle ineffectually.

These are some of the important ways in which partisans may be said to have obligations to seek the sustainability of their practices. It may be wondered whether there is something problematic though about the notion that future partisans can be harmed by the actions of their predecessors. If later generations encounter the party in a sufficiently adequate state that they wish to associate with it, this is reasonable evidence, it might be said, that their predecessors did not behave irresponsibly. Their enduring willingness to affiliate is evidence that no harm was done. Alternatively, where earlier generations do behave irresponsibly and the party loses its appeal to would-be partisans, again it may be said that no harm was done, for the successors who might raise a complaint do not exist. Plausible as it may sound, this challenge is too dichotomous. It must be expected that a party will continue to attract partisans even in a compromised state, due to its still representing the best option available for those of a certain political persuasion. (Alternative parties may be wholly unpalatable and the costs of establishing a new party high.) For these partisans still drawn to the party, the task they face is made more arduous by their party's diminished condition. As a collective then, even if not as separate individuals, future partisans can be left with stronger or weaker prospects, according to the condition in which the party is transferred.[40] Decisions made in the present will predictably affect the challenges that succeeding partisans must face.

[39] On the tendency of ordinary partisans in the context of the Third Way to disavow political differences and adopt an increasingly managerial self-understanding, see David Weltman and Michael Billig, 'The Political Psychology of Contemporary Anti-Politics: A Discursive Approach to the End-of-Ideology Era', *Political Psychology* 22 (2) (2001).

[40] Cf. Joel Feinberg, *Rights, Justice, and the Bounds of Liberty: Essays in Social Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 181–2.

Furthermore, the obligations associated with a norm of sustainability, though directed towards future partisans, also connect to partisans of the past and present. Sustainability is the condition of respect being accorded by present-day partisans to the future-oriented actions of their predecessors and peers, since these actions gain their meaning from the reasonable expectation they will be advanced not just by one particular generation (the present one) but also by others continuing into a more distant future. Consequently, while such a norm is geared towards the welfare of partisans-to-be in its concern that the point of departure for *their* projects be favourable, it also aims to protect the future-oriented projects of those who came before.[41]

It remains the case that sometimes considerations of fidelity and sustainability may clash, or (purely on the descending side) that there may be a tension between preserving the party as a coherent normative unity and ensuring its material survival. It is not difficult to imagine occasions when there is a tension between consistency of programme and the party's material prosperity as an organization, even its survival.[42] But to acknowledge such clashes is already to grant the reality of cross-temporal considerations. How they are then to be weighed is a matter for situated judgement.

Objections

In these final paragraphs, let us examine a cluster of objections to the chapter's argument. First, it may be asked whether the obligations we have described, to the extent that they are embraced by the partisan, are not liable to divert from the fulfilment of competing obligations, for example to the political community as a whole. If, for example, a party of government can save lives by shifting policy in a way that breaches fidelity, should its partisans not override their cross-temporal obligations without hesitation? One can imagine various states of emergency in which this might apply (leaving aside the fact that in such scenarios a norm of fidelity may equally be a useful source of orientation).[43]

Clearly there is a difference between sketching these obligations at a general level and identifying their force in the particular instance. It has not been our

[41] Cf. Meyer, 'More Than They Have a Right to', pp. 144–5; John O'Neill, 'Future Generations, Present Harms', *Philosophy* 68 (263) (1993), p. 42.

[42] Note that one need not suppose organizational survival necessarily trumps ideational survival—arguably some ideas are worth the party dying for.

[43] As Simmons ('Associative Political Obligations', p. 269) puts it, proceeding from a distinction between 'local associative obligations' and 'external principles': 'it seems appropriate to ask why our moral attention should ever be focused locally rather than on the more weighty general moral concerns that require action far beyond (and sometimes in competition with) what is required by our local role obligations'.

argument that partisan cross-temporal obligations necessarily trump countervailing concerns, but rather that they should be recognized as one element in the moral calculus. *Ceteris paribus* they hold force, but there will be occasions when they are outweighed by competing concerns.[44] Discharging an obligation will not always be the right thing to do, but it is a consideration to take seriously as part of the deliberative process that seeks to establish what the right thing to do may be.[45] In the case of a persistent tension between norms, some might be inclined to see cross-temporal obligations as not merely outweighed but *dissolved*. Where a sharp change in party programme seems desirable, it may be felt that no trace of blame—as a breach of obligation implies—should be attached to the decision to pursue rupture. Although it is tempting in this way to resolve the tension, we prefer to see cross-temporal obligations as existent but persistently outweighed in such cases.[46] Without contextual knowledge, one should note, it is unclear that the good of the polity is necessarily better served by breaches of cross-temporal partisan obligations than by their observance, and thus the persistence of the party in a form that makes it (and its ideas) a visible target of condemnation.

A second, related challenge to the argument resembles the first in inverted form. Cross-temporal obligations are generally trivial, it may be said, destined not so much to distract from competing obligations as to pale beside them (not to mention the temptations of power and prestige). The claims of predecessors and successors will never be sufficiently strong to deflect partisans from what other kinds of obligations require them to do. Here one is being asked to consider whether partisan cross-temporal obligations are really consequential enough to be weighed at all.

It is by no means clear that such obligations will always be trivial. There may be occasions when competing obligations balance each other, or when it is uncertain what actions they prescribe. In such cases, considerations to do with fidelity and sustainability may tip the balance in favour of one course of action over another.[47] They may be decisive, in other words, even when they are not the most crucial considerations in play.

Furthermore, even obligations that are rarely decisive may still be worthy of recognition. Those that we have sought to describe retain significance even if they are weakly observed and rarely serve as a sufficient guide to action. They introduce an additional source of pressure on the partisan to justify his or her normative position, in particular to say how specific commitments square

[44] On the force of moral requirements, see Klosko, *Political Obligations*, pp. 76ff.

[45] Cf. A. J. Simmons, *Moral Principles and Political Obligations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), pp. 8–10.

[46] For a similar argument, see Yael Tamir, *Liberal Nationalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 101; for critical discussion, see Horton, *Political Obligation*, pp. 160–1.

[47] Cf. Michael Ridge, 'Giving the Dead their Due', *Ethics* 114 (1) (2003), p. 49.

with one another and with others previously held, and to explain why a given party is the most appropriate means to pursue certain goals. These obligations also offer a resource by which fellow partisans and the wider political community can hold their leaders to account. A celebrated thesis in the study of partisanship holds that party elites have a tendency to separate themselves from the rest of the party membership, pursuing a distinct set of interests and thereby undermining the normative programme.[48] The idea of partisan norms of fidelity and sustainability offers an important corrective mechanism, an ideal standard against which to assess decision-making and with which to counter the tendencies of an elite to retreat into a self-referential world. It offers a basis on which to integrate the party around the commitments claimed as the basis of its unity. It further may cultivate reasonable scepticism—amongst the partisans of a given party and amongst unaligned individuals more generally—towards the celebration of novelty, or cognate processes such as 'modernization', as goods in themselves, without need of further justification.[49] Thus even in a merely negative fashion, in the form of the denunciation of breach, the norms we have examined may be considered significant in various respects.

It might still be argued that the account presented is too constricting for partisans themselves. The concern is perhaps not that the standards of fidelity and sustainability force them into the role of the conservative: after all, the normative programmes advanced with greatest constancy over time may well be amongst the most politically radical. But what space does this account preserve for their independence of mind and critical capacity? Are they not condemned to an unthinking role, habitually seeking continuity with their party's past? It needs emphasizing that where individuals wish to break decisively with existing commitments they retain the option to exit their party. They can renounce the larger part of their partisan obligations and revert at least temporarily to the status of non-partisan, perhaps before founding a new party. This is one way that radical novelty of thought and practice can find expression, notwithstanding the significant institutional barriers that may impede it.[50] Is leaving the party not just as great a breach of fidelity as participating in its radical revision from within? In one important respect it is

[48] Michels, *Political Parties*.

[49] Such scepticism might usefully constrain not only the elites of established parties but also those of new, anti-establishment parties tempted to define themselves exclusively by their detachment from the past.

[50] Questions of loyalty and exit raise many important issues that cannot be examined here. For instance, if it can be said that radical revisionists have an obligation to *leave* the party rather than subvert it from within, do traditionalists have an obligation to *stick* with it so as to stand up for their predecessors' commitments? As mainly functional rather than ethical questions, these appear in Hirschman's insightful discussion of exit, voice, and loyalty (Albert O. Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), Chapter 7).

not: exit leaves the party intact, as an organization and an idea, for others to maintain or resurrect. Radical change from within obstructs this possibility, preventing others inheriting and continuing the partisan project in a recognizable form.

To be sure, under imperfect institutional conditions it is not easy to found a successful new party. If the electoral system makes it difficult for small parties to gain representation in the legislature (for example, because there are thresholds of minimum support), new parties will need to work hard to establish themselves. Institutions can be redesigned to strengthen proportionality, but only under certain conditions.[51] Launching a new party is likely to be an option of last resort, challenging to carry out and of uncertain outcome.[52] But it remains an important possibility. And even were it true that the chances for major innovation lay exclusively within the confines of existing parties, a norm of fidelity might still carry force, albeit in an attenuated form: as the obligation to publicize the extent of a party's transformation, for example by surrendering the symbols that evoke its continuity, including its name and its imagery. Such an act of separation would ensure revisionist partisans do not unfairly benefit from a misleading association with the endeavours of their predecessors and would insulate the actions of the latter from the programmatic shifts that might distort their original meaning. It would further leave intact the identity of the older tradition for a later set of partisans to reconnect to.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued for a conception of partisanship that includes cross-temporal partisan obligations. It has sought to show how these are implied by the good reasons for which ordinary partisans may join a party, and the nature of the goals parties define themselves by. Meaningful partisanship, it has been suggested, relies on the idea of the party as advancing an ongoing project. The obligations that ensue take both ascending and descending forms, corresponding to what we have called norms of *fidelity* and *sustainability*, respectively.

In the parties of contemporary Western democracies, elites are frequently denounced precisely for having reneged on such obligations. In the post-Cold War period especially, partisan traditions are said to have been neglected or systematically undermined by leaders at the helm of a wide range of parties,

[51] Cf. Katz and Mair ('Cartel Party Thesis', p. 759) for examples of courts protecting small parties.
[52] For the same reason, its existence is hardly sufficient to absolve present-day partisans of their obligations to partisan successors.

both Left and Right, often in tandem with the celebration of a politics of pragmatism that makes the reactivation of such traditions by future partisans ever harder. This is one way to understand the nature of those 'cartel parties' that scholars in comparative politics tell us are increasingly common.[53] The maintenance of meaningful divisions of opinion between parties would seem to depend in large part on the extent to which cross-temporal obligations of the kind described here are observed. Partisans that breach such obligations are liable to end up looking rather alike, tempted to collude rather than criticize. Perhaps one should not be surprised that these developments coincide with declining rates of party membership. While there is no mono-causal explanation, one may wonder whether this is at least in part because the good reasons to join a party are nullified by partisan elites who show little awareness of cross-temporal obligation. Parties with no discernible past and future convey little sense that they stand for something. Elites who act as though a presentist conception of the party is adequate contribute to the decline of existing parties: the model is an unstable one.

Perhaps in the same instant that they weaken existing organizations, these transgressions make a contribution, however modest, to the renewal of the partisan idea. To put it in Durkheimian terms, they offend the partisan *conscience collective*, and by provoking denunciation they give this ethos new visibility. Converting this into a productive source of pressure on decision-making is likely to depend on the strengthening of intra-party institutions that can authoritatively interpret a party's foundational commitments, and combining these with mechanisms for intra-party deliberation such that the kinds of norms we have examined can be compellingly invoked in party debate.

[53] Katz and Mair, 'Cartel Party Thesis'.

7

Partisan Compromise

'But what is politics for, then, if not to give both parts a chance to compromise themselves?', the cynical and reactionary Naphta asks the progressive and enlightened Settembrini in one of the dialogues of Thomas Mann's masterpiece *The Magic Mountain*.[1] The two are discussing the shape of Europe on the eve of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, and hold opposite views on the nature of politics and its relation to moral norms. For Naphta the struggle of European states reveals nothing but their selfish desire for survival. Compromises between states are motivated only by 'the last feeble stirrings of the instinct of self-preservation' on the verge of an imminent catastrophic war. Settembrini abhors compromise. Politics for him is about principles: political aspirations, he claims, are at the service of a larger ideal of universal brotherhood, justice, science, and human reason. 'What you say is cynical', he answers Naphta. 'Why should you scoff at human nature's yearning for social amelioration? A people that thwarts such aspirations exposes itself to moral obloquy.'[2]

The positions of Naphta and Settembrini are paradigmatic of the conflicting views many people seem to hold when asked to assess the morality of compromise. For some, compromise is intrinsically desirable and essential to civilized interaction. Without it, disagreements among human beings will tend to descend into open conflict, with potentially very high costs.[3] Compromise, as Robert Louis Stevenson was apparently fond of saying, is the best and cheapest lawyer. Yet for others compromise almost always implies betrayal: of one's integrity, of one's principles, of one's relations to significant

[1] Thomas Mann, *The Magic Mountain* (London: Vintage [1924] 1999), p. 379.
[2] Mann, *Magic Mountain*, p. 379; see also pp. 377–9.
[3] For praise of compromise in general, which includes attempts to distinguish between good and bad compromises, see Avishai Margalit, *On Compromise and Rotten Compromises* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); on political compromise, see Amy Gutmann and Dennis F. Thompson, *The Spirit of Compromise: Why Governing Demands It and Campaigning Undermines It* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012). For an historical analysis of the concept, see Alin Fumurescu, *Compromise: A Political and Philosophical History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

others, even of one's identity.[4] As one author puts it, 'compromise is odious to passionate natures because it seems a surrender, and to intellectual natures because it seems a confusion'.[5]

Political compromise is possibly even more tricky. In the previous chapters we explored how partisanship should be understood as a form of associative practice with the purpose of promoting and sustaining principled projects. We reflected on the question of *intra*-party compromise in the context of the associative obligations of partisans and the balance between tradition and innovation in promoting the principles and aims to which they are committed. In this chapter we turn to the relation between partisans and their wider institutional setting. Our interest is in one particular kind of compromise, the compromise between partisans of different political persuasion. In what relation does commitment stand to compromise among partisans who radically disagree with each other? Does making compromises always entail compromising oneself? Can compromise be reconciled with the associative obligations of partisans, or does it threaten to sacrifice their integrity? What reasons do partisans have to compromise?

Compromise and Compromising on Principles

To compromise, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, is to 'settle a dispute by mutual concession'.[6] As the ordinary use of the term suggests, compromise takes place in circumstances of sharp disagreement but where a joint course of action is needed. Those who acknowledge this need typically respect the status of each other as agents of equal standing, even if they have reason to object to the content of their convictions (we shall return to this issue below). Resolving a dispute by mutual concession can refer both to the process through which one comes to a joint decision and to the outcome of that decision. The two things need not go together. One can make mutual concessions in the process of reaching a common decision while achieving an outcome no different from the one initially favoured by one of the agents in dispute. Or one may compromise on the outcome of the decision, that is accept a proposal different from and inferior to the one each of the groups initially favoured.[7] Most of the time the two are related; the process of

[4] For a critique of compromise in politics, see Richard Weisberg, *In Praise of Intransigence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), Chapter 2.

[5] George Santayana, *Soliloquies in England and Later Soliloquies* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923), p. 83.

[6] http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/compromise.

[7] On the difference between compromise as outcome and process, see Martin Benjamin, *Splitting the Difference: Compromise and Integrity in Ethics and Politics* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1990), pp. 4–5 and more generally Chapter 1.

compromising often requires concessions that rule out certain outcomes while favouring others.[8] But the distinction is useful because it allows us to understand better the circumstances of compromise and how compromise may be distinguished from related concepts.

Let us then say something more on each of these, starting with the circumstances of compromise. Compromise, we have noted, takes place in circumstances of disagreement and conflict, where the need for joint action is acknowledged by all protagonists. It is also usually said to involve factual uncertainty, scarce resources, and moral scepticism.[9] Placing too much emphasis on the last feature may be misguided however. As we shall see, what makes a certain kind of compromise particularly intractable is not moral scepticism but precisely its opposite: the attitude of those who strongly believe in principles grounded in moral convictions whose validity they see no reason to question.[10] In this case, to compromise means to endorse an alternative perceived as inferior (on principled moral grounds) to the one initially put forward. The question then becomes what reasons agents have to accept such alternatives, and what dilemmas they face in doing so.

The last point brings us to an important distinction: that between compromises based on interests and on principles.[11] Conflicts involving the former tend to involve the distribution of particular goods or resources, be they money, power, offices, positions, or even love and care. All subjects to the conflict acknowledge their adversaries may have interests different from their own, and all seek to advance their perspective whilst still being prepared to make concessions that accommodate others. The result is often one that splits differences along a continuum, with some kind of common denominator helping to negotiate the different positions.[12] Compromises of principle, on

[8] See, on this issue, Martin P. Golding, 'The Nature of Compromise: A Preliminary Inquiry', in *Compromise in Ethics, Law, and Politics: Nomos XXI*, ed. J. Roland Pennock and John W. Chapman (New York: New York University Press), p. 8.

[9] For a longer discussion of the circumstances of compromise see Benjamin, *Splitting the Difference*, pp. 26–32. See also Arthur Kuflik, 'Morality and Compromise', in *Compromise in Ethics*, ed. Pennock and Chapman (1979).

[10] For a discussion of moral uncertainty in relation to political compromise, see Joseph Carens, 'Compromises in Politics', in *Compromise in Ethics*, ed. Pennock and Chapman (1979), esp. pp. 125–6.

[11] For a discussion of the difference between the two, see Theodore M. Benditt, 'Compromising Interests and Principles', in *Compromise in Ethics*, ed. Pennock and Chapman (1979). See also the analysis of the difference between what Bellamy calls the compromises of 'traders' and 'trimmers' in Richard Bellamy, *Liberalism and Pluralism: Towards a Politics of Compromise* (London: Routledge, 1999), esp. Chapter 4.

[12] See Benditt, 'Compromising Interests and Principles', esp. pp. 30–1. Splitting the difference however, as Weinstock notes, should not be understood too literally, lest the protagonists be encouraged to put forward extreme positions so they can then be seen to have compromised half-way: cf. Daniel Weinstock, 'On the Possibility of Principled Moral Compromise', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 16 (4) (2013), p. 539.

the other hand, are more difficult. Compromise here implies giving up, at least in part, what one stands for. To make concessions to another party's position is to become complicit in (what one considers) morally wrongful actions.[13]

It is especially the latter form of compromise—on principles—that will occupy us in the following pages. This is not to deny that compromises on interests are important; in fact, in some circumstances they may be even more important than those of principle. It is also not to deny that the distinction between interests and principles can be ambiguous. To take one obvious example: a trade union negotiating with employers on the modification of pension rules may well advance a different set of interests from its interlocutor, but in doing so it is likely to proceed from more fundamental, principled disagreements, for example concerning how decisions in the workplace should be made, how the nature of labour and its contribution to productivity should be seen, or what the place of solidarity in the firm should be. Since the main focus of this chapter is on partisan compromise, and since our analysis of partisanship has so far emphasized the principled nature of partisan commitment, it seems appropriate to narrow our focus to principled compromises. This allows us to raise some distinctive and especially pressing issues to do with the morality of compromise as it affects partisan politics, in the hope that once some of them have been clarified, the problem of interest-based compromise will also become more tractable.

What Compromise is Not

The circumstances of compromise, prime among them disagreement and the necessity for joint action, are shared with many other processes of collective decision-making. But there are also important differences. One of them is the difference between compromise and consensus. While both are deliberative processes that imply engagement in good faith with another agent's divergent views, they differ importantly in their outcome. Consensus takes place when subjects end up settling their dispute in such a way that the initial disagreement is resolved either by coming to see the limitations of one's initial perspective or by acknowledging the superiority of a third point of view that was previously inaccessible to the subjects in conflict.[14] Different agents might have different reasons for reaching such a consensus. They might succeed in clarifying their own views, correcting informational failures, or

[13] On the relation between compromise and complicity in wrongdoing, see Chiara Lepora and Robert E. Goodin, *On Complicity and Compromise* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), esp. Chapter 1.

[14] For emphasis on the distinction, see Philippe Van Parijs, 'What Makes a Good Compromise?', *Government and Opposition* 47 (3) (2012); Weinstock, 'Possibility of Principled Moral Compromise'.

remedying interpretive errors in the course of a deliberative exchange: this is typically the case with deliberative convergence. Or they might retain different views but end up endorsing the same solutions, as in the case of incompletely theorized agreements. They might even dissolve an apparent conflict by redefining the initial problem or introducing new perspectives thanks to the process of deliberative exchange, as in the case of integrative negotiation.[15]

In the case of compromise, however, no such acknowledgement of the moral superiority of the agreement reached can be expected. Naturally, all subjects to a conflict may accept that such an agreement constitutes an improvement on the status quo. Yet such acceptance may have pragmatic roots, to do with the consequences of not compromising or the importance of promoting stability given a certain dynamic of interaction between agents. The important point is that consensus and compromise are processes in which the reasons of conflicting agents reveal different attitudes to moral learning and error. In the first case, a process of mutual justification leads to a revision of one's own initial point of view, including the possibility of acknowledging one might have been mistaken. In the second case no such outcome is expected; no moral correction takes place. Thus consensus-based reasons could be understood as first-order reasons that concern changes to the merits of a position. Reasons for compromise on the other hand can be seen as second-order reasons that concern only how firmly one should hold to a first-order position in the face of moral disagreement.[16]

Both consensus and compromise are deliberative processes where resort to coercion, threats or manipulative offers are excluded or at least minimized.[17] In both cases, agents in conflict acknowledge certain constraints on the process of decision-making. They acknowledge the standing of rival negotiating positions and proceed to articulate their reasons on that basis. Therefore, compromise (like consensus) is importantly different from what we might call bargaining or settlement, where the resolution to a dispute only reflects the balance of power between different subjects. The former involves mutual concessions proceeding from an ideal of mutual justifiability, recognizes the legitimacy (though, as we shall see, not necessarily the validity) of another agent's point of view, and follows a process of good-faith negotiation of the differences. On the other hand, settling a dispute through bargaining

[15] This taxonomy is based on Mansbridge et al., 'The Place of Self-Interest'.

[16] We owe this formulation to Simon Căbulea May, 'Principled Compromise and the Abortion Controversy', *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 33 (4) (2005), p. 319.

[17] For further analysis of the importance of excluding coercive means from a genuine process of deliberation, see Mansbridge et al., 'The Place of Self-Interest', p. 70. On how compromise excludes coercive means, see also Carens, 'Compromises in Politics', p. 126.

essentially involves relying on strength as measured by the threats or manipulative offers one party is able to issue to another.[18]

Of course, the distinction between bargaining and compromise is sometimes unrealistic when we examine instances of compromise in the real world. Here, it must be conceded, the attitudes of negotiating agents may not be so pure. It would perhaps be unrealistic to expect those with more power, resources, or influence to take no advantage of their superior negotiating position. And yet, here too, it can be expected that such negotiating agents will avoid trying to resolve a dispute *merely* through recourse to the tools of bargaining. If they are engaged in a process of compromise rather than simply trying to exercise superior bargaining power, they will value the exchange of reasons and seek to minimize taking advantage of their superior position. And they will have reason to do so knowing that the outcome of compromise-based processes is typically more reliable and stable than the results of mere bargaining.

When examining the importance of mutual justification to the process of making concessions between contending subjects, it is also important to distinguish between compromise and arbitration. A conflict is settled by arbitration when those subjected to it recognize the necessity for a solution and place responsibility for formulating constraints on a third agent, who in turn assesses their claims and makes an authoritative and binding decision.[19] In this case, compromising subjects are equal among themselves but unequal vis-à-vis the arbitrator. However, as we shall see, the grounds on which an arbitrator can claim authority and the process by which it is wielded matter enormously when assessing the morality of compromise.

Finally, the distinction between compromise and toleration is also important for our purposes. Although a tolerating stance towards positions, ideas, and commitments one objects to is a necessary precondition for compromise (especially on matters of principle), compromise is more demanding than toleration. One can tolerate others without having to act jointly with them, and without one's own beliefs, practices, and commitments being undermined in any way. Toleration, one might argue, borrowing from a famous discussion of relativism, is both too early and too late. It is 'too early, when the parties have no contact with each other, and neither can think of itself as "we" and the other as "they". It is too late, when they have encountered one another: the moment they have done so, there is a new "we" to be negotiated.'[20] But in the case of compromise, the negotiation of a collective 'we' is

[18] See, on this issue, Golding, 'The Nature of Compromise', p. 15.
[19] Golding, 'The Nature of Compromise', p. 15.
[20] See Williams's remarks on relativism in Bernard Williams, *In the Beginning was the Deed: Realism and Moralism in Political Argument* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 69.

crucial. Here a common course of action has to be decided between different subjects to a conflict. Mere toleration is not possible. A more active engagement is required with practices, principles, and commitments one might find objectionable, and some of one's own commitments may need to be sacrificed for the sake of integrating such opposing views into decisions commonly agreed to. It is for this reason that compromise is more demanding than simply recognizing the legitimacy of certain views for those who choose to be committed to them.[21]

Partisan Compromise

The account of partisanship in this book has focused on the importance of a particular kind of associative practice aimed at sustaining and enhancing political commitment. Partisanship, we have argued, contributes to the epistemic resilience of certain principled projects, strengthens their motivational base, and increases their feasibility. But these features may be in tension. This becomes apparent when we connect the idea of partisanship as a set of practices to the party as the organization that aims to promote them by seeking executive power.[22]

The executive capacity of parties is essential to the feasibility of the projects they promote, but the circumstances under which such responsibilities are discharged raise important questions for the ethics of partisanship. On the one hand, the party is required to continue supporting the associative obligations of partisans. On the other, once parties have been successful in obtaining a share in office, the circumstances under which such projects are to be implemented change. Parties must contribute to formulating laws and policies compatible with their principled commitments in a context where no such decisions can be made without some degree of cooperation with political adversaries. The institutional contexts in which these activities take place, most importantly parliaments, are best seen as deliberative forums staging

[21] The difference remains even when we turn to more demanding conceptions of toleration, such as a respect-based conception that requires agents to recognize one another as moral and political equals in pursuit of different forms of life. For the distinction between permission, coexistence, and respect conceptions of toleration, see Rainer Forst, *Toleration in Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[22] In a recent book, Gutmann and Thompson have also reflected on this problem with regard to two different stages of partisan politics, campaigning and governing, emphasizing how the demands of the former often undermine the aims of the latter, giving rise to an uncompromising attitude between political adversaries. Their appeal to a compromising mindset driven by 'principled prudence' (understood as 'adapting one's principles') and 'mutual respect' (understood as 'valuing one's opponents'), however, runs the risk of neglecting the virtues of what they call 'principled tenacity' in upholding political commitment. For a discussion, see Gutmann and Thompson, *Spirit of Compromise*, pp. 16–17.

processes of political justification where proposals are adopted following a process of trial by discussion.[23] That is to say, parties in parliament do not simply channel political conflict by articulating lines of division with their adversaries: they also engage with each other in an attempt to make decisions on matters of common concern. The point of such decisions is to improve upon the status quo whilst continuing to further partisans' distinctive political projects.[24]

It is with regard to this Janus-faced feature of partisanship—on the one hand inward-looking and oriented to the realization of certain principled commitments; on the other hand outward-looking and constrained by institutional circumstances and responsibilities to the political community at large—that the issue of compromise becomes pressing. On the one hand, political commitment requires action to realize one's valued principles, and action in adversarial political circumstances implies making concessions to those one disagrees with. Without this, commitments are doomed to fail. On the other hand, compromising often means weakening the degree of tenacity with which one holds on to first-order principles. It implies endorsing decisions deemed to be inferior, from a moral point of view, to the ones one would have approved in the absence of adversarial exchange. The point is not simply that any higher-order principle or abstract slogan will require some degree of negotiation between differing views before it can be interpreted in specific contexts and translated into concrete policies and projects. The point is that compromises involving principled disagreements bear traces of commitments typically revered by one group and despised by another. As a consequence, partisans can never be sure that the principles and projects they believe in will not be undermined in the long run. Some have labelled this the paradox of compromise: 'morality and its abandonment seem to implicate one another'.[25]

This paradox is not troubling for all defenders of partisanship. For some, the ability to compromise is precisely where one of the strengths of partisanship compared to alternative forms of political agency lies. Within parties, it may be said, partisans already make mutual concessions so as to agree on joint political action; indeed, in the last two chapters we have noted some of the ways compromises among fellow partisans can be made compatible with their distinctive associative ethics. To be sure, these compromises are in some ways more tractable, since a greater degree of convergence on foundational

[23] For an analysis along those lines, see Bernard Manin, *The Principles of Representative Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 183–92.

[24] On the relation between adversarial and deliberative exchange in parliaments and the importance of this process for educating the political judgement of citizens, see Dominique Leydet, 'Partisan Legislatures and Democratic Deliberation', *Journal of Political Philosophy* 23 (3) (2014).

[25] David Luban, 'Bargaining and Compromise: Recent Work on Negotiation and Informal Justice', *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 14 (4) (1985), pp. 414–16.

principles and commitments can be supposed. Indeed one might plausibly question whether in this case we are really speaking of compromise at all, for it may be that the different forms of consensual decision-making (e.g. integrative negotiation, deliberative convergence, or incompletely theorized agreements) are more appropriate. Still, assuming that compromise is often also at stake, one of the virtues of partisans is that, having practised compromise among themselves, they have a greater appreciation of its benefits when interacting with adversaries. A true partisan is arguably someone who condemns purist extremism, who prefers to get their hands dirty for the sake of political change, and who takes responsibility for making steps forward. 'What childish innocence is it to present one's own impatience as a theoretically convincing argument!' Engels wrote in 1874 against the Blanquist Communards and their refusal to compromise.[26] On this account, an uncompromising stance violates the ethics of partisanship by choosing single-mindedness over the continuation of joint struggle, capitulation over finding solutions, and withdrawal over acknowledgement of the long-term nature of the struggle.[27]

One of the most interesting aspects of the defence of compromise as a virtue of partisanship consists in its relation to the ideal of collective self-rule that party democracy instantiates. To be politically free means to be at the same time subjected to political rules and to authorize them. Yet, in complex modern societies this is practically impossible without some mechanism of political representation able to give collective shape to individual principles and projects. As Hans Kelsen puts it, in the presence of political conflict and disagreement on issues of common concern, 'compromise constitutes a real approximation to the unanimity that the idea of freedom demands in the development of the social order by its subjects'.[28] In a society characterized by the division of labour, technological complexity, cultural divisions, and the coexistence of a plurality of ways of life, it is unreasonable to expect convergence of political views without agents able to facilitate compromise whenever collective decisions must be taken. This is an aggregative conception of the general will. Compromises between parties, on this view, are intrinsically desirable. They realize the idea of collective self-rule in a procedural space where all interests are represented. But little is said here on exactly *how* all interests can be represented and what count as more or less adequate forms of

[26] Friedrich Engels, 'Programme of the Blanquist Communards', from *Volksstaat*, 1874, No. 73, cited in V. I. Lenin, *'Left-wing' Communism: An Infantile Disorder* (Rockville, MD: Wildside [1921] 2008).

[27] For a critique of extremism as an anti-partisan virtue along similar lines, see Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels*, pp. 402–8.

[28] Kelsen, *Essence and Value*, p. 76. For a more detailed analysis of the centrality of compromise in Kelsen's defence of democracy, see Sandrine Baume, *Hans Kelsen and the Case for Democracy* (Colchester: ECPR Press, 2012).

representation. The work is left to the invisible hand of political competition with, as we shall see, little sensitivity to justificatory constraints on partisan discourse. As Kelsen puts it,

> the division of the People into political parties, in truth, establishes the organizational preconditions for the achievement of such compromises and the possibility of steering the will of society in a moderate direction.[29]

He goes even further:

> since the 'People' does not actually exist as a viable political force prior to its organization into parties, it is more accurate to state that the development of democracy permits the integration of isolated individuals into political parties and, hence, first unleashes social forces that can be reasonably referred to as the 'People'.[30]

The advantage of such a perspective, it may seem, is that it does away with the fiction of an organic common will as the original source of legitimacy. The general will emerges aggregately from compromise between parties and there is no mention of reasonability constraints on the process through which that compromise is facilitated. And yet there is a tension, since Kelsen acknowledges the relevance of ideas such as majority rule and proportional representation does not lie in their numerical component but in the dynamic relation between political forces such mechanisms express. Indeed, the will of society reflected in the majority principle does not represent 'a dictate from the majority against the minority, but is rather the result of the mutual interaction between the two groups and a consequence of their colliding political persuasions'.[31]

Parliamentary democracy, in its real-world form, constitutes the paradigmatic exemplification of this process. As Kelsen argues, 'the entire parliamentary process, whose dialectical procedures are based on speech and counterspeech, argument and counterargument, aims for the achievement of compromise'.[32] The trial by discussion that parties put forward can only produce relevant outcomes if the merits of compromise as an inherent value of the democratic process are recognized. 'Compromise means favouring that which binds over that which divides those who are to be brought together. Every exchange and every contract represents a compromise, because to compromise means to get along.'[33]

Notice how on this account parties aim at compromise and nothing more than this. They recognize their role in the system is as one of parts that promote different political projects, knowing that no final reconciliation is

[29] Kelsen, *Essence and Value*, p. 76.
[30] Kelsen, *Essence and Value*, p. 76.
[31] Kelsen, *Essence and Value*, p. 69.
[32] Kelsen, *Essence and Value*, p. 69.
[33] Kelsen, *Essence and Value*, p. 70.

possible, that interests are as diverse as the agents in charge of articulating and mediating them, and that there is no further criterion to which one can appeal in distinguishing more or less reasonable instances of disagreement. As one author puts it, partisanship within a system of regulated rivalry entails 'commitment to the provisional nature of political authority, its periodic recreation'.[34] Compromise with, as opposed to destruction of, one's political adversaries is entailed by partisans' recognition that their own standing is 'partial and temporary'.[35] The political process is noted to be iterative, and the positions of those who share in government or who struggle to undermine it are observed to be impermanent. While such a stance provides partisans, especially losing partisans, with the resilience needed to accept defeat and prepare for future struggles ('elections are not followed by waves of suicide' as one author puts it[36]), the reasoning is not unproblematic, as we may now examine.

Compromising by Aggregating Interests

The defence of the intrinsic value of partisan compromise, as put forward in the aggregative account just examined, relies on a certain understanding of the relation between moral norms and political life. Hans Kelsen is one of the very few authors to provide a systematic analysis of this point. The reason compromise between parties is the closest approximation to the ideal of collective self-rule, he argues, is that politics is permeated by fundamental pluralism and value relativism. Kelsen argues that

> The idea of democracy thus presupposes relativism as its worldview. Democracy values everyone's political will equally, just as it gives equal regard to each political belief and opinion, for which the political will, after all, is merely the expression. Hence, democracy offers every political conviction the opportunity to express itself and to compete openly for the affections of the populace.[37]

But if this account of the relativity of moral norms is correct, compromise can only ever be a compromise of particular interests. Political parties here do no more than articulate, channel, and publicize the interests of particular groups in society, and the primary aim of the parliamentary process is to support their mutual adjustment and negotiation so as to facilitate collective decision-making. Indeed, Kelsen says as much when he toys with the idea of a common

[34] Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels*, p. 363.
[35] Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels*, p. 364.
[36] E. E. Schattschneider, *Party Government* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers [1942] 2004), p. 91.
[37] Kelsen, *Essence and Value*, p. 103.

good that stands above group interests and, hence, 'above partisanship'. 'Such an idea proves', he claims, 'to be a metaphysical—or, better, meta-political—illusion.'[38] Compromise is then celebrated as the only way by which joint political decisions can be taken: 'there is nothing more characteristic of the relativistic worldview than the tendency to seek a balance between two opposing standpoints, neither of which can by itself be adopted fully, without reservation, and in complete negation of the other'.[39]

The problem with this argument is that, in praising political compromise as an inherent value of the democratic process, it ends up undermining the ideas of both deliberative consensus and of principled political commitment, which, as we have argued in the previous chapters, are essential components of the ethics of partisanship. In the Kelsenian account, all political conflicts are reduced to conflicts of group interest and the only way to resolve such conflicts is to give them political representation in the hope that the democratic process will adjudicate between them in a freedom-preserving manner. This answer, however, neglects the substantive difference between interests, their varying relevance and weight, in what relation they stand to each other, and how they affect the relative power positions of the agents who articulate them. Furthermore, one ends up losing sight of the difference between compromise and bargaining, a difference that is nevertheless crucial if interests are to be negotiated fairly. As argued in earlier chapters, without constraints on the decision-making process, the prevalence of one solution over others merely reflects the power and bargaining strength of the agents. To overcome such obstacles, as we argued in Chapter 3, interests must be connected to principles and embedded in processes of political justification where constraints of generality and an orientation to public reason prevent compromises between parties being reduced to plain bargaining.

Historically, the degeneration of partisan compromise into bargaining is precisely what seems to have happened when political groups have been unable (because of structural constraints) or unwilling (because of a refusal to engage with issues of principled justification) to confront each other on matters of principle. When groups are limited to seeking compromises over particular interests, open discussions on common principles in parliaments become mere facade activities. They face each other as representatives of different socio-economic power-groups whose agreements merely seek to maximize their opportunities to come to power and whose appeal to constituents is moved by selfish or particularist purposes. As an early critic put it, this reduces the role of parliaments to 'a superfluous decoration, useless and even embarrassing, as though someone had painted the radiator of a modern

[38] Kelsen, *Essence and Value*, p. 40. [39] Kelsen, *Essence and Value*, p. 40.

central heating system with red flames to give the appearance of a blazing fire'.[40] The danger is that when interests are unmediated by principles, when no effort is made to justify them and reflect on whose interests they are, what purpose they serve, and whether such purposes are compatible with norms that might be generalizable and justified, they end up corrupting those very processes of political justification that can confer on them a legitimate basis. A handful of elites decide about public policies behind closed doors, in meetings and committees unaccountable to the larger public, under the pressure of particular economic interests or guided by national and international regulatory bodies that increasingly deprive decisions of their basis in ideas and principled exchange.[41] Partisan compromise and the competition that gives rise to it can still be animated but, as one contemporary critic underlines, 'it is often akin to the competition on show in football matches or horse races: sharp, exciting and even pleasing to the spectators, but ultimately lacking in substantive meaning'.[42]

Confronted with such practices, the ideal of modern parliamentarism that emerged out of the imperative of open exchange of principles, a requirement for checks and balances, guarantees on the freedom and equality of all citizens, and an appreciation of the virtues of the public sphere against the secret politics of absolute monarchs, suffers from disenchantment. 'How harmless and idyllic are the objects of cabinet politics in the seventeenth and eighteenth century compared with the fate that is at stake today and which is the subject of all manner of secrets', Carl Schmitt observed acutely.[43] If partisan compromise is reduced to a compromise based on particular interests, and if the whole point of mutual concessions between parties is to shape the political agenda in a way that best balances such interests, parliamentary activity would seem to drift away from its deliberative function, the state instead being captured by various social, economic, and religious groups and its main purpose weakened and relativized. As Schmitt put it, the state ends up being

> if not practically the servant or instrument of a ruling class or party, then a mere product of the balance between various fighting groups—at best a *pouvoir neutre et intermédiaire*, [...], a balancer of groups fighting one another, a sort of clearing office [...] that refrains from any authoritative decision making.[44]

One can concur with this diagnosis without sharing Schmitt's anti-democratic prescriptions concerning the relevance of executive discretion or the value of

[40] Carl Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, trans. Ellen Kennedy (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), p. 6.
[41] This anticipates more recent critiques of 'cartel parties' (cf. Katz and Mair, 'Cartel Party Thesis').
[42] Mair, *Ruling the Void*, p. 571. [43] Schmitt, *Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, p. 50.
[44] Schmitt, *Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, pp. 49–50.

sovereign decision-making. A different, normatively and politically more appealing way to respond to the crisis of parliamentary democracy is available. It involves, as we have suggested throughout the book, a retrieval of the meaning of partisanship that emphasizes principled constraints on partisan action and that highlights the compatibility with and contribution of partisan agency to standards of political justification. As indicated in this section, the price to pay otherwise is that the notion of a modern party system intended to preserve the institutional preconditions for decision-making conducive to the ideal of collective self-rule instead undermines the basis for its own existence and contributes to the resentment and alienation of citizens subjected to the arbitrary rule of interests.

Compromising on Principles

The previous two sections have emphasized how the appreciation of compromise as intrinsically desirable in modern party democracy rests on an understanding of parties as associations for the representation of particular interests. Analysing some shortcomings of compromise based on interests has led us to reaffirm the importance of the constraints of public reason in processes of political justification. Partisanship in its ethically most defensible form, as we have argued, is a type of associative practice in which the many come together to form a collective 'we', one that advances distinctive principles and aims in the name of the whole, rather than just for the advantage of some particular class or group.

Such a defence of partisanship as an essentially principled form of political agency raises complicated questions regarding the matter of compromise. To be a partisan means to align oneself with a principled project and to comply with the associative obligations that accordingly arise. But to compromise implies making concessions that lead one to endorse outcomes deemed inferior, from a moral point of view, to those shaped by the fundamental principles and values one attaches to. Thus there seems to be a difficult balance to achieve between preserving the integrity of one's commitments and the necessity of compromise for the sake of improving the status quo.

Before examining the nature of the reasons for compromise, a note on integrity and its relation to commitment is in order. Integrity, it has been observed, 'is to human institutions what truthfulness is to the institution of language'.[45] Every action in the context of social institutions is action presupposing a cross-temporal dimension and requiring agents to be able to relate to

[45] Peter Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1972), pp. 70–2.

each other by reference to intelligible long-term plans and goals. Therefore, the concept of integrity is closely related to that of commitment. 'To lack integrity is to act with the appearance of fulfilling a certain role but without the intention of shouldering the responsibilities to which the role commits one. If that, per absurdum, were to become the rule, the whole concept of a social role would thereby collapse.'[46]

Of course, there are different ways to understand integrity. It could be seen as the attitude of preserving one's desires, evaluations, and intentions together within oneself, or as fidelity to the projects that define what one stands for, or as a disposition to avoid dirty hands, and so on.[47] In the case of an institution such as the political party, the second of these would seem the most relevant. Integrity here means protecting the kinds of 'ground projects' that define what a party is and what goals it advances, and doing so in a way that allows the party to remain recognizable to those who invested in it across time.[48] A party lacks integrity to the extent its founding principles and goals become unrecognizable in the long run and to the extent the constancy and sustainability of its core values is progressively eroded. It is reasonable therefore to worry that a disposition to compromise risks undermining integrity by leading agents to make hypocritical or opportunistic decisions that impair the development of these ground projects in the long term.

The difficult question is not whether partisans should or should not compromise in general. Clearly there are circumstances in which prudential considerations demand it, including the need to have a stable framework for interaction with adversaries, or to preserve precarious gains. To dismiss such considerations would be to adopt the position of a beautiful soul whose purity can be preserved only at the price of inaction, but whose inaction ultimately means, as Hegel says, it 'wastes itself in yearning and pines away in consumption'.[49] The interesting question is not whether partisan compromise is acceptable at all, but whether there are moral and not just prudential reasons to compromise, or indeed whether compromise can be considered intrinsically valuable.[50] Or to put it differently: since to compromise one's principles means to endorse, at least in part, views one believes to be erroneous,

[46] Winch, *Idea of a Social Science*, pp. 70–2.

[47] See Cheshire Calhoun, 'Standing for Something', *Journal of Philosophy* 92 (5) (2005).

[48] For a discussion of integrity in relation to 'ground projects', see Bernard Williams's essays on 'Persons, Character, and Morality' and 'Moral Luck', in Bernard Williams, *Moral Luck: Philosophical Papers 1973–1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

[49] See Hegel's remarks on hypocritical inaction in G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press [1807] 1977), p. 407.

[50] For an excellent analysis of this problem, to which we are sympathetic, see May, 'Principled Compromise and the Abortion Controversy'; see also the response in Weinstock, 'Possibility of Principled Moral Compromise'.

what possible basis of respect for one's opponent can provide reasons for accommodating what one believes to be in error?[51]

The Character of Compromise

How might one try to defend partisan compromise as something intrinsically valuable in circumstances of radical disagreement, quite aside from pragmatic concerns to do with particular conflicts? Three arguments have been offered in this regard: one based on epistemic uncertainty, one based on the relevance of community, and one emphasizing the nature of democratic institutions.[52] As we will try to show, while the first two do not score well when it comes to partisan compromise, the third is more appealing, though not without problems. The upshot is that, differently from the search for consensus, compromising from a perspective on partisanship that emphasises the centrality of principles is seldom intrinsically valuable.

Let us begin with the epistemic argument. The claim has to do with the kind of knowledge relevant to reaching complex public policy decisions in cases where finite knowers (whether individuals or, as in our case, parties) may have only limited access or limited time to examine the evidence necessary to approve particular proposals. One might argue that in such cases compromise is intrinsically desirable because it allows finite knowers to integrate into their preferred policy options a greater number of relevant values and principles. Deliberators reflecting on the limitations of their own epistemic conditions, and equipped with some degree of trust and respect for their adversaries' views, might come to see that a position that compromises their own principles with those of their opponents is more likely to be right than one that proceeds in isolation. Agents' first-order reasons are therefore suspended in recognition of the status of others as 'epistemic peers', and in light of the second-order recognition of the imperfect epistemic situation in which they find themselves.[53]

The problem with this argument is that, in understanding the outcome of a decision as morally superior (or more likely to be right) than the pre-compromise position of the relevant agents, it seems to conflate consensus and compromise. As emphasized earlier, in the case of consensual decision-making, parties at the end of the deliberative process come to approve of a joint decision as rationally superior to the alternatives they had advanced and

[51] On this question, see Benditt, 'Compromising Interests and Principles', p. 34.

[52] All three are made in Weinstock's defence of principled compromise, examined in the following pages.

[53] The argument outlined here is analysed in greater detail in Weinstock, 'Possibility of Principled Moral Compromise', pp. 545–6.

endorse it on that basis. In the case of compromise, however, the parties remain aware of the limitations of the decisions they reach even though they may realize that, for any number of reasons, such decisions are superior to the status quo. In suggesting that a more complete community of knowers is more likely (under circumstances of scarcity of time or insufficient evidence, for example) to integrate a greater number of values and principles into a policy proposal, the epistemic argument runs the risk of praising the moral virtues of consensus when the initial challenge was to defend the intrinsic value of compromise.

Moreover, while the epistemic argument is promising in circumstances of moral scepticism, it has less force in the case of disagreements stemming from conflicts of principle. Partisans committed to principles are not moral sceptics: they know where they stand, hold themselves to be correct, and believe they have an obligation to deliberate with their adversaries to persuade them of the limitations of the alternatives they propose. Although they might trust and respect epistemic peers holding opposing principles, they do not trust and respect them *to the same degree* as fellow partisans. Indeed, as we noted in Chapter 4, fellow partisans act not merely as epistemic peers but as epistemic trustees for each other; the level of trust on information-processing is much higher among fellow partisans than between partisans and their adversaries. It would be naive to expect the way one processes evidence with one's fellow partisans to hold in the same way for the unaligned and for political opponents. Yet if epistemic trust is in this case unequally shared, it is unclear why one should fundamentally challenge one's own status as a knower in the light of the fundamental principles and values promoted by adversaries, as opposed to having one's hermeneutic resources strengthened through interaction with fellow partisans. It is unclear, in other words, what the epistemic benefits of compromise for the re-assessment of specific courses of action are.

Let us now consider the second argument for the moral desirability of compromise: the argument of community solidarity. On this account, compromise is intrinsically desirable because an attitude of compromise is expressive of the norms of mutual respect and recognition that ought to characterize a community where citizens are not atomistically divided but take responsibility for each other's fate. Here, as Daniel Weinstock puts it, 'compromise is required because without it, there will be fellow citizens whose ends will go unrealized, where we could have done something to help partially realize them, namely, compromise'.[54] The ideal of society underpinning this model is one that rejects 'winner takes all' politics in the name of a model of

[54] Weinstock, 'Possibility of Principled Moral Compromise', pp. 545–6.

solidarity whereby the winning majority is always prepared to leave space for compromise with the minority, sensing a duty to help it realize its principled projects. Admittedly, those defending this argument understand the obligation as supererogatory, connected to the preference that some citizens might have to live in a society where winners do not claim everything and leave their adversaries on their knees, unable to further their ends. The argument from community states that compromise is desirable from a moral perspective to the extent that, as Weinstock puts it, 'citizens attempt to build bridges toward reasonable others with whom they disagree, rather than maximizing the extent of their policy victories, at the cost of contributing to a "winner-take-all" society'.[55]

The difficulty with this argument is that it seems to provide moral reasons for toleration and not compromise. It is easy to see how a certain ideal of community might prevent the winning party from imposing their principles and goals on those who do not share them. But the necessity to compromise arises, as we emphasized, in circumstances where parties to a conflict need to act together and must make mutual concessions to reach a common decision. When it comes to joint actions, it is not clear why it would be desirable for citizens strongly committed to particular principles to sacrifice part of their integrity and commitments for the sake of ends they ultimately believe to be mistaken. Suppose a parliament needs to make a decision on whether to intervene in a foreign conflict. Suppose further that one of the parties supports the decision to join the war on grounds of national security, whereas the other rejects it on account of the potential costs to innocent civilians and advocates diplomatic efforts first. Suppose the outcome of their compromise is that the intervention will go ahead only if there is sufficient support from ground troops in the area in question. Even if, for some pragmatic reason, the pacifist party ends up supporting intervention with such constraints, it is not clear why they should value more a world in which they end up supporting the war as opposed to one where diplomatic options are exhausted first. The argument from community neglects the cost of compromise for those whose integrity is at stake in agreeing to certain decisions. Supererogatory duties are easier to discharge when they do not conflict with more fundamental ground projects, but in the cases in which they do, it is not clear what basis one has for granting the demands they make on principled partisans.

Let us now turn to the third argument in favour of the moral desirability of partisan compromise: one that focuses on the ethos of democratic institutions. The argument emphasizes the centrality of accommodation and inclusion in a democratic government representative of all its citizens and not just

[55] Weinstock, 'Possibility of Principled Moral Compromise', p. 552.

the party or parties that happen to be in office.[56] Respecting fellow citizens, even when they endorse positions opposed to one's own, requires treating them as equal agents with a relevant say in decision-making processes rather than as enemies to be destroyed when the opportunity arises. However, there is a difference between an argument that demands inclusion of all citizens in relevant democratic practices on grounds of mutual respect and one that seeks to incorporate their particular views once fair processes of decision-making have had their say. One can incorporate one's adversaries without also endorsing the moral obligation to make compromises with them, especially if compromise requires a party to sacrifice or water down some of its foundational commitments. If, following fair procedures of decision-making, a party has a sufficient democratic mandate to implement policies compatible with its founding principles, it is not clear why democratic inclusion requires it to compromise with opponents. As Simon May puts it, 'an official state policy is not more democratic because it emerges as a moral compromise between opposing parties if this also means that it diverges from the fair and just policy that a majority has voted for after public deliberations in which all parties were accommodated'.[57]

One way to respond to this claim is to point out that it relies on an idealized account of the democratic system. In practice, it has been argued, representative institutions have many failures, including failures of appropriate concern for dissenting voices, inclusion of minority points of view, distortions in the process of public deliberation, and so on. In the light of such failures, one might see the imperative to compromise with adversaries as driven by a duty to remedy substantively the failures of the democratic system.[58] Moreover, even assuming well-functioning political communities, institutional design often implies choices that prioritize one mode of representation over others, with resulting trade-offs to be made. So, for example, voting systems and electoral design can have important implications for the representation of different parties, the opportunities they have to acquire office, or the way their ground projects are expressed by existing institutions. Whilst all of them are in principle compatible with the idea of democratic inclusion, there may be significant differences between proportional and first-past-the-post systems when it comes to the degree of political divergences they allow. As Daniel Weinstock plausibly argues, the fact that democratic institutions can always only approximate rather than fully realize the ideal of inclusion 'is an institutional feature, rather than a real-world bug'; it is always going to be the case

[56] For analysis of this argument and different responses to it, see May, 'Principled Compromise and the Abortion Controversy', pp. 342–3, 348–9.
[57] May, 'Principled Compromise and the Abortion Controversy', p. 349.
[58] Weinstock, 'Possibility of Principled Moral Compromise'.

that some views end up failing to acquire adequate representation, and to remedy such failures we have moral reasons to compromise.[59]

This seems the most plausible argument for why occasionally compromise is not merely a pragmatic necessity when one has no choice of doing otherwise but a necessary recognition of the unavoidable fallibility of political institutions, a fallibility that can only be corrected if adversaries cultivate an attitude of compromise and respect for each other's differences. This principle of respect for adversaries is well captured by the idea of 'loyal' opposition, recognized implicitly or explicitly in many political systems. This notion might seem to give parties intrinsic reasons to compromise, reasons grounded in recognition of the importance of institutions in securing the background circumstances in which parties advance their principled goals.

Loyal opposition, as has been noted, implies more than mere toleration of one's political adversaries or acknowledgement of the structure of regulated rivalry on the basis of which oppositional activity is coordinated. But it also implies less than conversion to consensual mechanisms of decision-making: opponents remain opponents and the idea of loyal opposition does not commit one to accepting the validity of principles one believes to be flawed. Moreover, the idea does not essentialize a structure or entity to which loyalty is owed (the nation, a particular kind of constitution, the rules of the game).[60] It is best interpreted as an open-ended reminder to ruling majorities that their political adversaries should not be treated as inherently subversive, nor their loyalty questioned to the political system and its improvement in line with principles in the name of all.[61]

However promising it may appear, one wonders whether the idea of loyal opposition is enough to persuade us of the intrinsic value of compromise on principles. Understood in the open-ended fashion described, loyal opposition does require occasional compromises between adversaries. But it is not clear that these virtues are properly expressed in coming to agree on particular decisions rather than appreciating the virtues of the procedures conducive to them. In agreeing to specific decisions by relaxing commitment to one's higher-order principles, it is not clear that the integrity of one's partisan principles is never undermined. In circumstances where their integrity is at stake, partisans have good reason to compromise on particular decisions only insofar as these continue to advance the projects they are committed to (even if imperfectly). The ability to preserve their integrity may well require a stable political system amenable to improvement and change, but it seems too demanding to ask partisans also to agree to decisions they regard as

[59] Weinstock, 'Possibility of Principled Moral Compromise'.
[60] On this issue, see Waldron, 'Loyal Opposition', pp. 18–19.
[61] Waldron, 'Loyal Opposition', pp. 18–19.

sub-optimal. After all, it may be equally plausible for them to view their contribution to upholding the idea of loyal opposition as bound up precisely with the advancement of the first-order principles they are committed to. Without such commitment, the institutions they have reason to respect would have little chance of being reformed. Given the fallibility of any institutional system and decoupled from the first-order commitments to which partisans have reason to adhere, the idea of loyal opposition risks undermining rather than advancing the projects of partisans. Even though compromise in its name is the most plausible argument we have for thinking compromise can be justified from a moral rather than merely pragmatic perspective, ultimately the emphasis should remain on the partisan contribution to improving procedures rather than agreeing to decisions they regard as sub-optimal. If we believe that a more productive exchange with adversaries is necessary and desirable, the ideal for such an exchange should be that of consensual deliberation rather than compromise.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the value of compromise in circumstances of deep disagreement among partisans of different persuasion, but in the face of a necessity to establish a common course of action. We began with some clarifications on the concept of compromise in general, focusing on the important differences with deliberative consensus, bargaining, and toleration. We then turned to political compromise and more specifically to partisan compromise. The main aim was to bring out the Janus-faced quality of partisan compromise: the realization that certain political commitments might require compromise, but that compromising on principles risks undermining them in the long run. Reflecting on this tension led us to examine the reasons partisans may have for compromising, whether such reasons can be moral or pragmatic, what justifies the decision to compromise in any concrete situation, and how the dilemmas raised relate to the account of partisanship developed in this book.

Our analysis brought us to distinguish the role of compromise in two different models of partisanship. The first is a model based on an aggregative conception of the general will, where different parties reflect particular societal interests and the compromises between them provide the closest approximation to the ideal of collective self-rule. Because of the relativistic stance such an account unhesitatingly embraces, partisan compromise represents an intrinsic virtue: a balance of political forces is the only way of guaranteeing the legitimacy of political institutions. Yet the drawback of such a model, as we have seen, is that without any recourse to standards of political

justification, such an account leaves too much leeway to asymmetries of power and resources, ultimately undermining people's equal capacity to participate in relevant decision-making processes. In the second model, parties stand for generalizable principles and the political projects that serve them. Such principles are subject to constraints of political justification, even where partisans acknowledge that their adversaries may contest the validity of those principles. This means that, as an ideal, political justification constrained by norms of public reason is always to be preferred over the politics of compromise. Indeed, given the principled nature of partisan commitments and the importance of preserving the integrity of the associative practices that promote them, compromise is not intrinsically valuable. Those arguments that seek to persuade us to the contrary (epistemic arguments, arguments from community solidarity, and arguments from the importance of democratic institutions) are at best successful in convincing partisans of the need to uphold democratic processes that preserve political contestation as a matter of procedural fairness. But they cannot show that the necessary compromises partisans make with their adversaries for the sake of jointly-required actions contribute, on their own, to upholding democratic institutions. Indeed, where pragmatic compromises threaten to undermine the integrity of principled projects, the democratic ethos itself may be significantly weakened.

8

Revolutionary Partisanship

The previous chapter analysed the meaning of partisanship in relation to the ethics of compromise. Our starting point was that when a political party assumes an executive role (either contending for or having obtained a share in political office), the need for compromise with adversaries of different political persuasion is both pragmatically desirable and an important democratic imperative. Although, as we emphasized in our conclusion, such an imperative must remain compatible with partisan integrity, this need not be too demanding in a stable institutional context where a basic level of respect for shared democratic norms can be presupposed. Indeed, the idea of respectful adversarial exchange that recognizes the contestability of partisan claims is an important component of the ethics of compromise. It is reflected in the civic commitment to uphold rules and procedures embedding the constraints of public reason, and in the maintenance of the minimal legal and political conditions by which principled claims can be appropriately channelled and made conducive to political justification.

In this chapter we turn to the meaning of partisanship in circumstances where such a shared democratic ethos (including the ethos necessary to partisan compromise) not only cannot be presupposed but needs to be constructed. Partisanship here is revolutionary partisanship, at the service of a project of social and political transformation that seeks to awaken (or revive) the democratic demand for collective self-rule. The first, fundamental, task of revolutionary action is therefore to establish the minimum institutional and social conditions in which political justification is possible. This in turn means shaping the discourses, agents, and events that enable partisans to perform their role as catalysts of political justification in a future political order committed to the constraints of public reason. As we shall see, partisanship in revolutionary circumstances concerns both the construction of justificatory discourses directed at the inclusion of demands previously excluded, marginalized, or unrecognized by existing power structures (call this the problem of justice) and the subsequent legitimation of these demands in a stable body of

legal and political norms able to command widespread allegiance (call this the problem of legitimacy).

The chapter proceeds as follows. We begin by discussing the concept of revolution, restricting ourselves to an analysis of the phenomenon that understands it as an attempt to force political institutions to recognize the concerns and commitments of previously oppressed, silenced, or marginalized agents. In our interpretation, revolutions are shaped by conflicts that erupt when norms reified in particular legal and political structures systematically obstruct the demands of agents subjected to those structures.[1] They constitute events aimed at the political inclusion of those previously denied a voice (e.g. the third estate, the working class, women, or a population more generally living under autocratic power structures) and involve agents emphasizing the general character of their grievances (often the degradation of their very humanity). In this sense, despite the different political, economic, and social conditions in which particular revolutions are staged, there are elements that many of them share, a script they have in common.[2] Revolutionaries often make explicit reference to previous examples of failures and successes and in doing so they contribute to collective learning processes through which normative constraints on legal and political institutions are either endorsed or reshaped and adapted to new circumstances.[3] As one recent study puts it, '[O]nce known and enacted, the script can be replayed indefinitely; but it can also be changed, adapted, or even subverted by the introduction of new events, characters, or actions'.[4]

The idea of a revolutionary script that defines the narrative structure and interpretation of salient historical circumstances is a useful reminder of the limitations of deterministic perspectives on revolution that portray it simply as an effect of crises or structural relations. Such an idea also allows us to approach the phenomenon at an appropriate level of generality without sacrificing sensitivity to the political and historical contingencies in play. In other words, understanding modern revolutions as events that involve political competition and partisan disputes allows for a better grasp of the role of human agency in shaping such events. Considerations such as when a revolution deserves the name of revolution, what kind of break it marks with the

[1] For a discussion of the relation between tradition and innovation with regard to the recognition of new political subjects, see Ypi, *Global Justice*, Chapter 2. For a more specific analysis of the evolution of legal norms and their relation to revolutions, see Hauke Brunkhorst, *Critical Theory of Legal Revolutions: Evolutionary Perspectives* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), esp. Introduction.

[2] Keith Baker and Dan Edelstein (eds.), *Scripting Revolution: A Historical Approach to the Comparative Study of Revolutions* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015).

[3] For an analysis of the relevance of such learning processes in making space for new concerns and commitments as applied to the global justice debate, see Lea Ypi, 'The Owl of Minerva only Flies at Dusk, But to Where? A Reply to Critics', *Ethics and Global Politics* 6 (2) (2013b).

[4] Baker and Edelstein, *Scripting Revolution*, p. 3.

past, whether it is continuous with tradition or marks a departure from a particular body of legal and political norms, and how the boundary between normality and emergency is negotiated in the context of particular forms of rule, all raise questions the partisan character of which cannot be ignored. While acknowledging their character as such leads to a more nuanced appreciation of the relevance of partisanship in revolutionary circumstances, this exercise also forces us to acknowledge the tensions that arise when the legal and political institutions supposed to shape partisanship by enacting the constraints of an impartial public reason are seen themselves as the result of partisan disputes. In the absence of established norms that help stabilize new constraints, discovering the partisan origin of every foundational project threatens to explode the fragile balance between the part and whole essential to cultivating political justification.

In the second part of the chapter we examine this question and analyse two contrasting models of revolutionary organization to see if they contain resources for responding to the dilemma outlined. One is a recently celebrated model of partisanship without parties, which places particular emphasis on network structures, horizontal relations amongst activists, and spontaneous mobilization as drivers of political change. The other is a more traditional account that stresses the relevance of strict membership rules within a centralized organization, featuring trained professional revolutionaries and a disciplined mass membership. Both models, we suggest, encounter distinctive obstacles as they grapple with the relation between part and whole in revolutionary circumstances. We conclude with an appeal to a mixed account that combines elements of both and argue that rather than seeking to eliminate the tension one should encourage forms of partisanship able to render it productive. The revolutionary potential of partisanship should not be aborted by political institutions that reify existing norms. Its potential to innovate by seeking to radically transform or, where appropriate, transcend existing arrangements in the light of changed circumstances should be protected and enhanced. In the next chapter we develop this point further with reference to the specific example of transnational partisanship.

Revolution in the Name of the People

The term 'revolution', as we are reminded by one of the great twentieth-century scholars and observers of the phenomenon, originally began circulating in the fourteenth century as an astronomical term, popularized by Copernicus to indicate the rotation of celestial bodies in orbit in accordance with physical laws.[5] This early scientific use of the term appears at first sight

[5] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (London: Penguin [1963] 1990), pp. 43–4.

to have little in common with how the concept of revolution has been invoked in political discourse at least from the eighteenth century onwards, to denote a series of events that break with the old social order and inaugurate an era of new relations among humans.[6] The scientific concept of revolution tracks ideas of predictability, foreseeable motion, circularity, and conformity to laws; the political one signifies upheaval, departure from the familiar paths, and the creation of previously unknown institutions. The former brings us closer to the real workings of nature; the latter paves the way to a utopia of freedom.

This apparent discrepancy in the use of the term is settled, however, if we bracket for a moment the observer's point of view and examine more closely that of the protagonists of revolution themselves. For revolutionaries, the political struggles to which they are committed are conducted not in the name of abstract ideals held by visionary individuals but for the sake of return to a rightful condition; one that follows the destruction of privilege and abuse, that respects the freedom and equality of all human beings and that seeks the help of laws to render power justifiable to all. In the words of one (ill-fated) revolutionary: '[W]e wish to fulfill the intentions of nature and the destiny of man, realize the promises of philosophy, and acquit providence of a long reign of crime and tyranny'.[7] 'Virtue', Robespierre argues, 'is natural in the people', and if governments neglect their interests, 'the light of acknowledged principles should unmask their treasons' in accordance with 'the natural course of things'.[8]

The idea that revolutionary principles reflect the claims of the whole people, and that revolutionary activity is necessary to align institutional politics with generalizable demands, is one of the most persistent tropes of revolutionary discourse. This idea also illustrates why, when philosophers took sides with regard to particular revolutionary projects, they did not think of themselves as supporting a 'revolution' in the sense of a radical break with the past but rather, as Kant had it, citing a lesser-known contemporary Jacobin, 'the evolution of a constitution in accordance with natural right'.[9]

[6] See the discussion in Reinhart Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis*: *Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), p. 160.

[7] Maximilien de Robespierre, *Report upon the Principles of Political Morality Which Are to Form the Basis of the Administration of the Interior Concerns of the Republic* (Philadelphia: Benjamin Franklin Bache, 1794).

[8] Robespierre, *Principles of Political Morality*.

[9] See Immanuel Kant, 'The Conflict of the Faculties', in *Religion and Rational Theology*, ed. Allen W. Wood and George Di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press [1798] 2001), p. 304 (VII: 87). Kant was referring to a book by his admirer and friend Johann Benjamin Erhard who, inspired by Kant's views on the Enlightenment, had defended the right to revolution as an anti-despotic device in cases where a country's rulers ignored the natural rights of the people to enlightenment. See Johann Benjamin Erhard, *Über das Recht des Volks zu einer Revolution* (Jena and Leipzig: Gabler, 1795).

And yet, as both philosophers and revolutionaries knew, the people had to have its champions or else its principles might never become reality. Political activity, as Lenin emphasized citing the socialist Chernyshevsky, 'is not the pavement of Nevsky Prospekt (the clean, broad, smooth, pavement of the perfectly straight principal street of St. Petersburg)' and those who ignored or forgot this truth 'have paid the cost of numerous sacrifices'.[10] Or, as Chairman Mao's more colourful saying goes, a revolution 'is not a dinner party, or writing an essay, or painting a picture, or doing embroidery; it cannot be so refined, so leisurely and gentle, so temperate, kind, courteous, restrained and magnanimous'.[11] Revolutionaries have had to be prepared to put up with significant physical or emotional harm, humiliation, hostility, and attempts to undermine their principles and projects. They have remained committed to these even when their plausibility or feasibility was under sustained attack, in circumstances when they disagreed even amongst themselves on the best interpretation of these principles, and on what course of action should be recommended. They have had to do all this without knowing they would ever triumph. Indeed, most of the time, they have been defeated.

But sometimes they have won, at least apparently so. In such cases, the revolutionary partisans of the past have had to become the rulers of the present. And if their governments were to be considered legitimate in the eyes of the whole people, they have also had to justify the newly established system of rules to everyone and in everyone's name. They have had to rule, that is, not only on behalf of the fellow partisans who actively endorsed and promoted their shared political projects but also on behalf of all others: those who disagreed with them, those who were indifferent to their calls, those who ridiculed them, those who actively sought to undermine their projects, the politicians who made decisions to persecute them, the bureaucrats who carried out their orders, and the militaries who tortured and shot them. They have had to create institutions able to command widespread allegiance in the knowledge that they themselves did not command such allegiance, even if the project they were committed to was one that everyone had good reason to endorse.

For all this to be possible, two alternatives have presented themselves. The first, historically most common and better known, is revolutionary terror: if all opposition is eliminated, those who are left are necessarily those who endorse the revolutionary project. Speaking in the name of the whole (surviving) people is guaranteed at least for the short term. Many of the revolutions we are familiar with, including the French Revolution and the October

[10] Lenin, *'Left-wing' Communism*, p. 65.
[11] Mao Tse-Tung, 'Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan', in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung* (Oxford: Pergamon [1927] 1965), p. 28.

Revolution, seem to have followed this path, the latter self-consciously adapting the script of the former and justifying its terror with reference to the oppressive rule of the old regime and the threat of its imminent return.

The second option is more recent. It is the alternative pursued by those revolutionaries who learnt the lessons of history and understood how revolutionary terror profoundly undermined the principles of the revolutionary movement (whilst also being ineffective in the long run). Two good examples are Nehru's National Congress party after defeating British colonialism in India and its role in the Constitution of 1950, and Mandela's African National Congress after the successful struggle against the apartheid regime and the establishment of the 1996 Constitution.[12] In both these cases, the revolutionary energy characteristic of the first stages of revolutionary struggle had to give way to carefully constructed compromise, including compromise between former adversaries that involved rebalancing the powers of parliamentary, executive, and judicial authorities so as to contain and limit the potentially polarizing effects of partisanship.

In adapting to the role of rulers in the present, these revolutionaries had to forget they were the partisans of the past. As Nehru reminded Indians in his famous 'A Tryst with Destiny' speech delivered on the eve of Indian independence, 'Before the birth of freedom we have endured all the pains of labour and our hearts are heavy with the memory of this sorrow. Some of those pains continue even now. Nevertheless, the past is over and it is the future that beckons to us now.'[13] The Constituent Assembly of India, an institution that would have been impossible without the formidable political struggle of the Congress party, had to now explicitly disavow its partisan origins. As Nehru put it in one of his first speeches addressing the Assembly, the Assembly was united 'because of the strength of the people behind us'. But what that now meant was that 'we shall go as far as the people—not any party or group but the people as a whole—shall wish us to go'.[14] The projects to which revolutionaries were committed, the principles in the name of which they fought and died, had to be formulated in the name of all their fellow citizens and hitched to processes of decision-making that were all-inclusive, open, and fair to all. The more such institutions were perceived as a heritage of radical contestation and divisive struggles, the less secure the foundation of the new government would appear to its critics. Legitimacy would have been

[12] For an interesting analysis of the dilemmas and difficulties posed by this 'revolutionary' path to legitimation, culminating in the recognition of the authority of revolutionary constitutions, see Bruce Ackerman, 'Three Paths to Constitutionalism—and the Crisis of the European Union', *British Journal of Political Science* 45 (4) (2015).

[13] Available at http://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2007/may/01/greatspeeches.

[14] Cited in Sarbani Sen, *The Constitution of India: Popular Sovereignty and Democratic Transformations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 91.

undermined. And yet, the more revolutionary principles that had been obtained the hard way entered the realm of negotiation and ongoing deliberation about their meaning, function, and validity—the more, in other words, their advocates had to concede to adversaries of the revolution for the sake of legitimacy and stability—the more the revolutionary spirit risked being sacrificed, and justice with it.

It is for this reason that partisanship appears here as both essential to revolution (in its genesis) and detrimental to it (in its completion). In the following pages we explore this tension by reflecting on two theories of revolutionary activism typically contrasted to each other: one which emphasizes the relevance of spontaneous action, mass participation, and horizontal movements (what we call the spontaneist account[15]) and another which defends the role of vanguard parties in preparing and educating the people for revolutionary transition (the centralist theory). Both, it is argued, provide resources to respond to the tensions of revolutionary partisanship as outlined. And yet both have limitations, albeit for different reasons.

Partisanship without Parties

In one celebrated line of thinking on revolutions, the answer to resolving some of the tensions outlined in the previous section lies with the abandonment of the party form itself. An alternative model of partisanship without parties, celebrating the role of spontaneous movements characterized by the absence of associative obligations, hierarchy, and leadership structures, has been heralded as a potential solution to the autocratic degeneration or the bureaucratic reification of the revolutionary spirit in party-led transformations. Such a mode of agency, elegantly defended in Hannah Arendt's celebration of popular societies during the Paris Commune or in her praise for the role of Soviets in the Hungarian revolution, promises to revive civic participation and overcome partisan divisions through an appeal to deliberation, inclusivity, and horizontal networks of activists promoting public spiritedness while explicitly rejecting a share in executive power.

Appreciation for such spontaneous forms of organization rose to prominence after the 1968 anti-system protests in North America and Western Europe

[15] The term 'spontaneism' here and in the recent literature is used to denote a model of revolutionary organization that actively seeks to subordinate parties to social movements. This recent use of the term should therefore not be confused with its appearance in early twentieth-century Marxist debates on the relation between parties and movements as it is articulated in the writings of e.g. Rosa Luxemburg. In fact, in Luxemburg's account, which also goes by the name of spontaneism, the party and the movement rely on each other—a model more congenial to the one defended in this book.

and triumphed with the celebration of the civil society movements that played a pivotal role in the democratic revolutions of 1989 in Eastern Europe, from Poland to Hungary and East Germany to the Czechoslovakia. Spontaneism has since been continuously invoked, most recently in the analysis of the Arab Spring revolts against autocratic forms of rule in Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen, and elsewhere. These movements, as observers have noted, were largely leaderless, often prompted by seemingly contingent or accidental events, and reliant on knowledge generated locally rather than carried over from previous experiences of political mobilization.[16] The protagonists of such episodes of radical protest explicitly refused to be represented by leaders, parties, or charismatic religious forces. As one observer explains, the idea of the civic state as it featured during the protests of Tahrir Square was defined with reference to what it was not: 'not ruled by identifiable agents known to be likely candidates for ruling the post-revolutionary state'.[17] Indeed,

> only in excluding such identifiable agents could the future state assume a 'civic' character, i.e. express peoplehood as the concept felt during the revolutionary moment. [The people, Al-sha'b, itself] an abstract formulation, did not appear to require being made concrete by being embodied in a savior leader, an organized party, or any concretely identifiable entity, since Al-sha'b, at that rare revolutionary moment, felt so concretely close to earth, so directly present: 'the people' was experienced as a direct outgrowth of what the little person was doing.[18]

No tactics were decided in advance, but insofar as some were privileged, they tended to converge on occupation rather than marching, since the latter would have required more discipline and leadership than spontaneous uprising could afford. Yet the absence of hierarchies, of fixed roles and responsibilities, and the refusal to make binding decisions for the future were celebrated rather than abhorred. The tactics of occupation became a symbol of fixation on the present and a refusal to link the politics of the extraordinary with the normal institutional politics that would follow once the revolution had succeeded.[19] As one participant noticed, 'everybody was like, well, when we reach Tahrir, we'll see'.[20]

Forms of political activism that reject organization and celebrate horizontal political relations are often explicitly contrasted with those centred on programmatic commitments promoted by parties. In the words of one of the

[16] Cf. David A. Snow and Dana M. Moss, 'Protest on the Fly: Toward a Theory of Spontaneity in the Dynamics of Protest and Social Movements', *American Sociological Review* 79 (6) (2014).
[17] On this see the analysis in Mohammed A. Bamyeh, 'Anarchist Method, Liberal Intention, Authoritarian Lesson: The Arab Spring between Three Enlightenments', *Constellations* 20 (2) (2013), p. 191.
[18] Bamyeh, 'Anarchist Method, Liberal Intention', p. 191.
[19] Bamyeh, 'Anarchist Method, Liberal Intention', p. 194.
[20] Cited in Snow and Moss, 'Protest on the Fly', p. 1122.

activists participating in the 2001 protests that followed the collapse of neoliberal debt policies in Argentina, horizontalism is all about active and continuous reinvention rather than the long-term pursuit of historically known political commitments. 'Every day we keep discovering and constructing while we walk. It's like each day there's a horizon that opens before us, and this horizon doesn't have any recipe or program. We begin here, without what's in the past.'[21] To those who criticize such spontaneous forms of activism for their hostility to organization and lack of coherent ideology, defenders of the model respond that experimenting with these new forms is precisely what the ideology is about: 'creating and enacting horizontal networks instead of top-down structures like states, parties, or corporations; networks based on principles of decentralized, non-hierarchical consensus democracy'.[22]

Yet there is more to the critique of spontaneism than just lamenting the absence of a coherent alternative 'for' something instead of a series of struggles 'against'. These difficulties are manifest both at the point of mounting a revolutionary challenge and at the point of continuing it. They have to do with the ability to preserve the consistency of such struggles knowing they can only be won in the long term. Activists themselves are aware of how spontaneous mobilizations often pay a high price for the lack of associative rules that can reinforce the collective and help it survive the challenges arising from the erratic and sporadic involvement of particular actors. They also know how difficult it is to maintain high levels of mobilization without being able to rely on a collective agent able to capitalize on successful protests and enforce the resulting agreements and binding decisions. To take just one example, in documenting the transformation of Bolivia's indigenous movements from a set of communities (*ayllus*, traditional Indian units) and syndicates into an organized political agent able to negotiate with the government, one observer noted the centrality of debates about party organization in the Assembly of Native Populations that took place in 1992 and paved the way for the presidential candidacy of Evo Morales. Here the question of the relation between movement and party (or the 'political instrument', as it was called) was discussed with clear sensitivity to the limitations encountered by the struggles of the indigenous movement in pursuing radical protest through the typical means of street blockades and mass protests but without an agent able to carry forward the results of such struggles.[23]

[21] Cited in Marina Sitrin (ed.), *Horizontalism: Voices of Popular Power in Argentina* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2006), p. 58.

[22] David Graeber, 'The New Anarchists', *New Left Review* 13, Jan/Feb 2002, p. 70.

[23] For a discussion of this point and the transformation of the movement into a successful electoral force, see Martin Sivak, *Evo Morales: The Extraordinary Rise of the First Indigenous President of Bolivia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 78–9.

If such erratic phenomena of political mobilization are to succeed, activist struggles need to be given a much more unified, continuous, and stable nature, beyond the specific episodes of contestation in which revolutionary energy is high but where the lack of long-term associative rules often implies unpredictability and an inability to plan for the future. Some of the implications of these critiques are not difficult to spot when one observes the outcome of many of the Arab uprisings, whether in the form of Libyan chaos and civil war, the re-emergence of Egyptian authoritarianism, or the dramatic increase of uncertainty concerning opposition groups in Syria. In none of these scenarios did a progressive revolutionary movement succeed in transforming political institutions: in many of them the nightmare is ongoing.[24] As one author put it, reflecting on the lessons learned by Tahrir Square protesters, only a few years after the ousting of Mubarak, the situation in Egypt suggests 'counter-revolutionary forces under the leadership of the military and state/capital nexus have conclusively written the end of the inchoate revolutionary movement'.[25] In part this is due to the repressive legal measures adopted to restrict social protest, to censorship of the media and civil society organizations, and the persecution of political activists. But it is also due to the weakness of a civil society movement that had avoided, in the name of creativity and dynamic consensus-building processes, the question of how to obtain and exercise institutional power for the sake of long-term goals.[26]

One might argue perhaps that the strength of spontaneism becomes visible not so much in the initial stages requiring the overthrow of a revolutionary government and the seizure of power but in the preservation of the revolutionary spirit after a successful revolutionary transition. Such spirit, it may be said, is necessary to ensure the sovereign people continue to be present, to ensure decision-making processes are irreducible to the decisions of institutionalized elites or a bureaucratic class. Might then one defend this mode of action as one immune to the limitations of institutional representation and the neglect of revolutionary spirit that party-based accounts seem guilty of?

There are reasons for scepticism on this front too. To the extent that the spontaneist account relies on high levels of mobilization, participation, and civic enthusiasm, we may wonder whether such episodes of mobilization can be sustained over the long term without associative practices able to distribute

[24] Indeed, the one case where a slightly more optimistic story can be told is that of Tunisia, where spontaneous initiatives played a more marginal role and where it is doubtful that the adoption of a new constitution would have been achieved without the intervention of progressive Islamist forces in favour of democratization, such as the Ennahda party.

[25] Maha Abdelrahman, 'Social Movements and the Question of Organisation: Egypt and Everywhere', *LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series* 08 (2015), p. 8.

[26] On these problems afflicting the Arab Spring, see John Chalcraft, 'Horizontalism in the Egyptian Revolutionary Process', *Middle East Report* 262/Spring (2012), pp. 6–11; Abdelrahman, 'Social Movements'.

the costs of political commitment. This may require aligning the ends of the movement with long-term associations through which revolutionaries can coordinate their principles and projects without having to renew each decision from scratch and knowing they can rely on established political procedures, long-term institutional memory, and accumulated resources to ensure the sustainability of their projects. The division of political labour by means of an association able to coordinate the ends of different activists is also necessary for a fair distribution of responsibilities among them. The goal then becomes not so much the elimination of any kind of organized structure and settled procedures for collective decision-making but the maintenance of channels of communication and deliberation by which to include all citizens.

It is possible to object further that the spontaneist account is not as immune to the risks of elitism and professionalization as it might first appear. Indeed, the kind of voluntarism that characterizes exposure to spontaneous political forums is largely based on self-selection. It is true that social movements often appear more inclusive than organized parties because they lack formalized membership rules that are binding for the long term, but this is not always cause for celebration. The promise of more inclusive democratic participation and the idea movements enjoy more legitimacy by virtue of their lack of fixed membership rules or detachment from state institutions may be illusory. The risk that only some individuals (typically those with the relevant knowledge, interest, and skills) end up participating actively in spontaneous exercises of political decision-making is present here too. The classic problem of who is left to articulate the true voice of the people when the people needs to speak with one voice (as Plato's discussion of demagogy or Hobbes's description of flatterers in assemblies already warn us) becomes all the more pressing in the absence of long-term participation in associative practices able to remedy the epistemic and motivational limits to inclusive practices of justification.

Moreover, even if that concern could somehow be addressed, one has to consider how much political virtue is required for ordinary citizens to be constantly involved in social-movement initiatives. The risk is that the more they feel that the period of extraordinary politics and mobilization is over and has been supplanted by normal politics, the more they will retreat into the private sphere and leave those with more energy, knowledge, and commitment to sustain the movement. The vanguard may not be what explicitly precedes spontaneous uprising, but it is what such uprisings must leave behind if the revolutionary spirit is to be preserved.

Finally, and relatedly, the danger of elitist degeneration, progressive detachment from people's concerns and commitments, and the betrayal of revolutionary ideals remains in this model too. If spontaneous associations continue to remain outside institutional politics so as to remind those in power of the betrayal of revolutionary ideals, they will be seen as eroding the legitimacy of

the newly-emerged revolutionary government. If they want to influence the decisions of such governments, they can do so only by undertaking functions that go beyond consultation and involve decision-making capacities. Yet once such bodies do this, the risks of co-optation and bureaucratization are as present as in party-based models of revolutionary activism. Moreover, there is no guarantee that even when such groups remain outside political institutions, they are not equally subject to perverting pressures from external forces (of, e.g., the market). Problems with funding and the inability to rely on a constant base of affiliates able to shoulder the financial costs of political commitment can make movements overly dependent on external donors or fundraising campaigns over which they have little control—an experience familiar to many civil society movements across Western Europe, Eastern Europe, and Latin America.

A Centralist Alternative?

It might be argued that the objections outlined in the previous section overestimate the extent to which an alternative based on partisan association can provide effective remedies to the shortcomings of spontaneity described. A powerful line of critique holds that the emphasis on collective practices nurturing political commitment in revolutionary circumstances merely shifts the burden from thinking about the limitations of spontaneous participation to the problem of what might incentivize individuals to form a partisan association. First, a critic might suggest that, while we can grant that partisanship plays an important role in explaining how revolutionaries can act together once an association is in place, it does not explain how that structure can emerge in the first place without the help of spontaneous mobilization. Second, the argument may be said to neglect the fact that the fortunes of the partisan project depend not only on the organization of revolutionaries themselves (a view which favours the defence of partisanship) but also on actions taken by the oppressive government (where the emphasis is on the burdens that resistance poses).[27] As we saw with the example of the Tahrir Square protests in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, oppressive political forces may respond to insurgence with increased levels of repression, for example by stifling the circulation of seemingly dangerous ideas, by censoring, imprisoning, or murdering activists, and by contributing to the climate of fear and intimidation likely to make revolutionary activity unenticing even in the presence of partisan structures. Furthermore, depending on the strength of

[27] For discussion, see Allen Buchanan, 'The Ethics of Revolution and its Implications for the Ethics of Intervention', *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 41 (4) (2013), pp. 301–3.

the resistance, they may respond by making compromises that appear promising in the short-term but run the risk of undermining the prospects of more radical transformation in the long run.[28]

These critiques allows us to understand better why many earlier accounts of partisanship in revolutionary circumstances have tended to focus on the strictly organizational aspects of partisan activity, sometimes at the expense of a more fluid understanding of the relation between the party as organization and the larger movements and practices of contestation surrounding it. Indeed, more than an open-ended set of practices grounded in spontaneous initiatives, what has seemed necessary is a conception of the party as a semi-coercive organization relying on leadership and discipline. Leadership is essential in developing the first steps of political organization and addressing the problem of how a revolutionary group can be established in the first place. Discipline, on the other hand, is essential to ensuring a certain level of political commitment is maintained even in the face of changing circumstances, when the costs of activism become high, or when the regime bribes or manipulates its opponents into making compromises.

Both of these features characterize an account of the value of partisanship in revolutionary circumstances that we might label the *centralist* theory. Perhaps the best known articulation of such an account is in the writings of V. I. Lenin, although arguably Marx and Engels's analysis of the role of the party in the *Communist Manifesto* anticipates several elements of it.[29] The centralist account places special emphasis on the role played by vanguard parties in disciplining the masses to secure their ongoing commitment to a long-term political project. The vanguard party consists of a selected group of trained activists: the most disciplined, morally motivated, and intellectually sophisticated members of the revolutionary forces, responsible for organizing the movement and connecting a wide-ranging struggle with short-term episodes of mobilization and spontaneous resistance. Here the problems of revolutionary organization are addressed by highlighting the role of leadership in a relatively well-structured organization of professional revolutionaries whose

[28] In his excellent analysis of the ethics of revolution, Buchanan seems to neglect this second aspect, mentioning only the possibility of increased coercion by the regime ('Ethics of Revolution', pp. 301–3).

[29] See the passage in the Communist Manifesto in which Marx and Engels explain the difference between communist parties and other proletarian parties by emphasizing that the former are 'practically, the most advanced and resolute section of the working-class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others; on the other hand, theoretically, they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement'. See Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 'The Communist Manifesto', in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, ed. David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 255–6. Note however that it is also possible to emphasize the anti-centralist tendencies in Marx's thoughts by focusing on his more historical writings and the defence of workers' councils during the Paris Commune.

function is to nurture the people and to ensure their political commitment is preserved in the face of fluctuating developments.

The centralist model of the party therefore serves a double aim. On the one hand it purports to educate vulnerable groups about the oppressive effects of a range of political actions pursued by the dominant regime and to accompany the intermediate struggles that are both an expression of the level of ongoing political oppression and necessary to build more consistent mobilization. But, more importantly, its purpose is also to cultivate 'agitation' with the goal of transforming short-term rebellions based on self-interest into a political struggle with universal character avoiding both the dangers of opportunism (excessive compromise) and sectarianism (insufficient compromise).[30] The work of the revolutionary vanguard is not confined therefore to training the masses to reflect on their own condition and react to the circumstances of oppression. It is rather, more importantly, to observe the position of all social groups in society, in particular how they relate to each other and to the political questions at stake, and to connect these interests and goals into a single political vision. As Lenin puts it, the professional revolutionary is not merely a 'trade union secretary' but

> a tribune of the people, able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it takes place, no matter what stratum or class of the people it affects; he must be able to group all these manifestations into a single picture of political violence [...] in order to explain to everyone the world-historical significance of the struggle.[31]

A Tribune of the People?

The previous passages suggest that one way to overcome some of the limitations of the spontaneist account is through an emphasis on specialization, the imparting of skills, the general education of the people, and the raising of popular awareness about the sources and effects of political conflict beyond their immediate material or social conditions. Lenin's account of the desirability of 'an organisation of revolutionaries capable of maintaining the energy, the stability and the continuity of political struggle' highlights the importance of the motivation of oppressed groups to join the revolutionary vanguard in a larger and more effective resistance movement, an association able to survive the obstacles discussed in the previous pages.[32] There is much that is instructive here and an account of partisanship that seeks to be effective

[30] V. I. Lenin, 'What is to be Done?', in *Essential Works of Lenin*, ed. Henry M. Christman (New York: Dover [1929] 1987), p. 95.
[31] Lenin, 'What is to be Done?', p. 113. [32] Lenin, 'What is to be Done?', p. 132.

in revolutionary circumstances should not abandon this analysis but rather integrate it with a more nuanced account of spontaneous initiatives. But before turning to the question of how this can be done, we need to reflect on some of the limitations of the centralist account as a self-standing alternative.

Here, one may note that what is desirable at the point of initiating and promoting revolutionary conflict—a force that directs the people by imprinting a will of its own and determining the direction of the struggle—does not necessarily continue to be beneficial once the revolution is far advanced. The development of a revolutionary vanguard runs the risk of deepening the division of labour between a semi-professional revolutionary elite and oppressed ordinary citizens with little knowledge and few skills. Such a way of conceiving the relation between the party and the masses makes it difficult for a revolutionary elite to avoid the bureaucratization of its members and the transformation of mass-based politics into a politics of expertise where only some representatives of the people are qualified to act. This risks detrimental consequences at the point at which the revolution must move to the next phase and see its founding principles turned into legal and political institutions.

Indeed, as we saw at the beginning of this chapter, to preserve the outcomes of the revolutionary struggle, the winning party needs to ensure that the radical visions of social justice that inspired its projects become part of a new system of rules that can be justified to the entire people. But the risk here is that, following a centralized model, rather than an agent articulating the claims of the whole people in a process of ongoing political justification, revolutionary parties become progressively more detached from the people, losing contact with popular concerns and excluding ordinary citizens from decision-making processes in which they should have a say. Indeed, in order to guarantee stability and a competent government, the revolutionary elite needs to rely on the array of bureaucratic, governmental, judicial, and military resources and skills they inherit from their ruling predecessors (and which often require cooperation with these predecessors), but in a way that does not threaten the foundations of the new system.[33] As Weber's remarks on the institutionalization of charisma in relation to the professionalization of politics indicate, 'the emotionalism of revolution is then followed by a return to traditional, *everyday existence*, the hero of the faith disappears, and so, above all, does the faith itself, or it becomes (even more effectively) a part of the conventional rhetoric used by the political philistines and technicians'.[34]

[33] Ackerman, 'Three Paths'.

[34] Max Weber, 'The Profession and Vocation of Politics', in *Political Writings*, ed. Peter Lassman and Ronald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press [1919] 1994), p. 365. For an excellent discussion of this problem in Weber, see Andreas Kalyvas, *Democracy and the Politics of the*

All this, however, implies an even deeper divide between the spirit of the revolution and its institutional realization, between how the people is invoked at the point of founding a new political order and how it is instrumentalized once that order becomes a given. The model of vanguard parties celebrated by the centralist model as a way to overcome the initial obstacles to revolution is also what undermines its completion. The general will, the very people whose voice is necessary to inspire its 'tribunes' at the point of revolutionary awakening, becomes ever more difficult to capture once ordinary politics begins to replace the activism of extraordinary circumstances. Organizational hierarchies, divisions of labour, institutional compromises, and technocratic decision-making join the bureaucratic apparatus of the state at the expense of a more dynamic interaction between the activism of the people and the political vanguard. The reliance on revolutionary elites in extraordinary circumstances contributes to deepening the divide in normal circumstances. In Arendt's insightful words, this further implies that 'only the representatives of the people, not the people themselves have an opportunity to engage in those activities of "expressing, discussing, and deciding" which in a positive sense are the activities of freedom'.[35] The risk is then that the interests of those who facilitate the revolution become progressively more detached from those in the name of whom the revolution is made. Again, as Arendt emphasizes, the risk is that the 'old adage: "All power resides in the people" is true only for the day of the election'.[36]

Parties *with* Movements

In the previous pages we have emphasized how, while the democratic centralist account scores well regarding the organization of revolution, especially in highly repressive circumstances, it is less successful concerning the construction of legitimate institutions once the revolution has been achieved. On the other hand, we saw that a party-sceptic spontaneist account also faces limitations in preserving political commitment in different phases of revolutionary activity and increasing the participatory basis of the newly established order.

The shortcomings of both models are instructive. Although much reflection on the ethics of partisanship in revolutionary circumstances has been framed in terms of a dichotomy between these two models, the choice is a false one. What we need instead is a 'mixed' account of partisan structures with different degrees of affiliation that can be relied on at different stages of the revolutionary story, of the kind we described when examining the associative

Extraordinary: Max Weber, Carl Schmitt, and Hannah Arendt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), Chapters 1 and 2.

[35] Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 235. [36] Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 235.

obligations of partisans in Chapters 5 and 6. Revolutionary circumstances offer a reminder of how the meaning of partisanship consists of the promotion and sustenance of political commitment in a way that combines features of spontaneity (including the deliberative basis, inclusivity, and mass participation) with the associative rules made available by a cross-temporal institution such as the party. The meaning of partisanship in revolutionary circumstances is reducible neither to the party as organization nor to a movement that dispenses with it altogether: crucial instead is a fluid model that seeks to combine the two whilst retaining awareness of the trade-offs involved.

Once more the idea of a party built on long-term principled commitments and associative obligations, yet open to external supporters with a looser degree of affiliation, is important. It promises to balance discipline within the association with the guarantee that decisions remain subject to scrutiny and input from movements acting outside. In her insightful remarks criticizing the centralist model, Rosa Luxemburg came close to championing this view when she argued the spirit of partisanship requires 'the co-ordination and unification of the movement and not its rigid submission to a set of regulations'. Indeed, she argued, if the party combines the 'spirit of political flexibility' with 'firm loyalty to the principles of the movement and its unity' then 'the bumps in any organizational statute, even a badly drafted one, will very soon be ironed out by practice itself. It is not the letter of the statute, but the sense and spirit instilled into it by the active militants, that determine the value of an organizational form.'[37]

To see the importance of an analysis that does not reify the dichotomy between party and movement but looks to channel it productively in revolutionary initiatives, let us return to the idea of partisanship as an associative practice necessary to sustain and enhance political commitment as defended in Chapter 4. Such an associative practice plays not only an instrumental role in supporting commitment but is crucial to giving it shape and orientation. This is because, in the course of partisan association with others, individuals know (and are known to know) about the existence of shared political ends and of others similarly committed to them. Moreover, such shared ends are promoted in a coordinated and continuous way, guided by formal and informal associative rules that give them definition and bring them to bear on day-to-day coordination with like-minded others. Partisan associative structures thereby reinforce activists' understanding of their projects as plausible ones. Moreover, the greater the number of people who uphold such projects, the more likely the projects themselves are to be upheld in the long run.

[37] Rosa Luxemburg, 'Organizational Questions of the Russian Social-Democracy', in *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader*, ed. Peter Hudis and Kevin B. Anderson (New York: Monthly Review [1904] 2004), p. 257.

In circumstances of severe injustice and widespread oppression, the epistemic and motivational value of partisanship emphasized in Chapter 4 plays an important role in addressing the problems of activism in the initial stages of revolution. But an appreciation of these virtues of partisanship does not require us to dismiss the spontaneist insistence on inclusive, consensus-based, and non-hierarchical participatory processes. Of course, in deciding how to strike the balance between exercising leadership on particular high-stake decisions and opening up debate to learn from disagreements among fellow associates, one has to be sensitive to circumstances, the nature of the regime being challenged, the background culture of mobilization, and so on. But regardless of circumstances, the points to which we drew attention in earlier pages remain important in the revolutionary context.

From an epistemic perspective, partisanship provides activists with a structure of collective support and information-sharing which makes them more likely to communicate with each other and less vulnerable to official propaganda. It provides them with counter-information and helps them mature judgements and assess new circumstances with the support of epistemic peers. Without such peers, activists might be unaware of the involvement of new members in the organization, or of episodes of repression and resistance in particular areas, and be more easily defeated when the costs of participation increase. These facts play a crucial role in their epistemic assessment of the risks associated with joining an insurgent movement. From a motivational perspective too, being aware of others who share the revolutionaries' political commitments may have an important role to play in reshaping incentive structures. In the presence of partisan associations, emotions experienced collectively, such as resentment or anger at the regime's injustices, or positive feelings such as courage or empathy, may be enhanced and allowed to shape individual judgements. A citizen's decision to be involved or to abstain from revolutionary activities will be informed by her knowledge of others' principles and purposes. Her perspective on what is in everyone's interest and in her own will then be dynamic rather than static.

Consider for example one influential account of the impact of partisan structures on the rebellion of peasants against French colonial rule in Vietnam. Here, as has been widely noted, local partisan actors (communists and religious groups) played an essential catalyzing role in taking the initial steps to construct episodes of resistance, thereby gaining the trust of local communities and convincing peasants who had previously remained on the sidelines to join insurgent activities.[38] Without such partisan catalysts, it would have

[38] See Samuel Popkin, *The Rational Peasant* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979); for an extension of these ideas to the post-1989 East European context, see Roger D. Petersen, *Resistance and Rebellion: Lessons from Eastern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

been difficult for local peasants to see the benefits of rebellion and to assess the virtues of joining a general movement without a clear programmatic commitment to seizing power. They would have been without an agent able to capitalize on small-scale victories and turn them into a wider platform for transformation. But in the presence of a partisan association, the burdens of participation were broken into smaller tasks displaying a clear division of labour and assignment of responsibilities, which in turn made local participants aware of the degree of others' commitment and the possibility of benefiting from participation in the course of resistance. This in turn decreased hostility to insurgent projects and increased confidence in their success. In other words, assurance both about a reciprocal commitment by others to risky projects and about the overall likelihood of success was supplied by associative structures to which individuals could connect and increase the participatory base of the movement.[39]

A second advantage of an account of partisanship that does not reify the division between spontaneous movements and rigid party structures is found when we turn to the problem of the creation of legitimate political structures once a revolutionary process has been successful. We noted earlier the challenges associated with changing the legal and political order of society and establishing public reasonability constraints to which it can be subjected. As emphasized then, it is important to understand how the difficulties faced by both spontaneist and centralist accounts have to do with the adversarial nature of every revolutionary project and the necessity of political compromise once those who have resisted power face the task of exercising it in a way that is legitimate and acceptable to all, including their adversaries. In the alternative we advocate, the choice between preserving the spirit of revolutionary partisanship in the context of institutions that require political compromise and forgetting the partisan roots of the revolutionary project need not be so strong. When partisan associations are open to both parties and movements, in view of the different role they play in the revolutionized legal and political framework, activists can appreciate better the value of partisan compromise while continuing to exercise pressure on parties to preserve their potential for innovation and resist bureaucratizing tendencies. Partisan associations that make space for dialogue with movements, rather than seeking to suppress, direct, or co-opt them, preserve the ambition to radically challenge and criticize institutions when they no longer adequately capture the concerns and commitments of those who helped develop them.

[39] For a discussion of the difficulty of assurance about reciprocal motivations and scepticism about overcoming it relating to individual motivation to join revolutionary struggles, see Buchanan, 'Ethics of Revolution', p. 300.

Conclusion

We have examined the meaning and contribution of partisanship in revolutionary circumstances, where the main task is the construction of—rather than the mere contribution to—political institutions shaping the constraints on political justification. We reflected on two distinct issues: the problem of fighting oppressive structures to establish norms that would render the exercise of power justified to those previously excluded, and the problem of consolidating such norms in a legitimate legal and political order that has overcome revolutionary divisions and identifies the source of its institutions in 'we the people'. In examining the difficulties this poses for partisans who must both be central to the revolutionary transformation *and* conceal the partisan nature of their foundational projects once successful, we looked at two contrasting models of activism. We analysed how both a spontaneist account that tries to do without parties and a centralist model that seeks to subject all manifestations of revolutionary activism to the leadership and disciplining force of the party encounter distinctive problems in coping with exactly these tensions.

As we acknowledged, there is a persistent risk that the clarity, programmatic consistency and energy of the revolutionary project becomes compromised when revolutionary partisans, who come to power only through the efforts of a group, face the challenge of ruling in the name of all. In other words, the loss of revolutionary spirit, as Arendt puts it, is a danger in both cases. Moreover, as the last part of the chapter argued, to the extent that we seek political forms less vulnerable to this tension, a model of partisanship that relies both on the organizational capacity and associative rules of the party *and* on the energy and moral support of spontaneous movements is to be preferred. As Gramsci understood, it is difficult to develop a theory of partisanship in opposition to the 'spontaneous sentiments of the masses'. The difference between the two, he argued, is a 'quantitative difference—of degree, not of quality', and 'this unity of "spontaneity" and "conscious leadership" or "discipline" is precisely the real political action [...] in so far as it is mass politics and not a mere adventure by groups that appeal to the masses'.[40] A mixed account of partisanship, which emphasizes the virtues of parties when they remain connected to spontaneous movements rather than defined in opposition to them, has greater potential to contribute to the construction of legal and political structures that can consolidate revolutionary principles whilst preserving the potential to critically scrutinize and challenge them if and when they reach bureaucratic stagnation.

[40] Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, Vol. II, p. 51.

Of course, the mixed model advocated also raises a host of complicated issues, both organizational and normative, which have not been examined in detail. From an organizational perspective, more empirical analysis is required concerning how the relation between party and movement should look in revolutionary circumstances, how associative rules should be adapted to contribute to the success of partisan struggles, how means and ends may be reconciled in light of the constraints of a politics of dirty hands, and how to preserve the partisan principled stance and integrity of commitments in deeply unjust institutional conditions. But none of these further analyses can be conducted in the abstract without looking at the political context in question and the nature of the partisan projects in play. From a normative perspective, the problem for partisans is more general: how to articulate their principled claims in the name of the whole people in a context where the very identity of the people is contested. For here both civic interpretations (the people as all those with a share in political office)[41] and cultural interpretations (the people as all those who share certain linguistic affinities or cultural conventions) may seem too narrow to capture the subjects over which power is exercised.[42] On the other hand, strongly expansive conceptions of the people (e.g. the entire human race, present and future), whilst in principle more compatible with how partisan claims need to be generalizable and reciprocally justified to all affected by certain power structures, may be too indeterminate to allow meaningful political justification. At the very least this idea needs to be given a more concrete political interpretation, something which might itself be a matter of partisan dispute.

In the next chapter we reflect further on this issue by examining a concrete field of activity in which the people is interpreted—both created and contested—in the course of partisan activity that challenges the boundaries of the political community and the conventional legal and political structures associated with it. This is the field of transnational partisanship.

[41] This was Aristotle's definition: see our discussion in Jonathan White and Lea Ypi, 'The Politics of Peoplehood', *Political Theory* (2015), doi: 10.1177/0090591715608899.

[42] For a critique of the latter, see the discussion of political community in Ypi, *Global Justice*, Chapter 6.

9

Transnational Partisanship

Almost since the first emergence of the party as a political form, there have been partisans wanting to project their activities across borders. Routinely they have appealed to the transnational to describe the scale of their ambitions and unity of purpose, coupling their claims with practical efforts to coordinate with the like-minded abroad. For much of the twentieth century, France's socialists organized under the banner of the 'French Section of the Workers' International', a name that clearly stated an unwillingness to equate partisanship with the processes of representative democracy in the nation-state setting. A certain restlessness towards the domestic political stage has been characteristic of many a partisan tradition.

That such actors have often had limited success in their transnational designs has encouraged the larger portion of observers to meet these efforts with a mixture of scepticism and disregard. An outstanding question is whether transnational partisanship is a genuine proposition, something with an historical pedigree perhaps, or whether partisanship in any meaningful sense depends on conditions peculiar to the nation-state. While difficult to settle, the problem permits greater dissection than it has so far received. For those who can be convinced that transnational partisanship is feasible, perhaps the key question concerns its make-up. Are there distinctive tendencies one can expect it to display, as a function of its institutional, cultural, and social universe? And how might these influence the normative value one can attach to it?

Building on the conception of partisanship we have developed over the course of the book, we may define transnational partisanship as when an imagined community of commitments and the activities it inspires overstep the boundaries of a nation-state.[1] This would occur when those involved see themselves (and act as though) they form one single supranational

[1] The implication is that these boundaries persist in some form, not that they are effaced altogether.

community of commitment, or when they consider (and act as though) the intra-national community of commitment to which they retain affiliation is nested alongside others within a larger community. In this way the agents involved may form a single, self-standing organization, or be divided across multiple organizations that seek to harmonize activities.[2] Coordination of the first kind fits conventional understandings of a *transnational party*; coordination of the second kind can be regarded as a looser version of the same, to the extent it is grounded in shared commitments and therefore amounts to something more than a merely pragmatic arrangement based on temporarily convergent interests.

The suspicion that cross-border ties of this kind have been underacknowledged points to some of the empirical reasons to reflect on the character and conditions of transnational partisanship. Possibly there is more of it than is commonly supposed, or possibly there will be more of it to come. The flurry of interest in the early 2010s in the 'Merkozy'[3] phenomenon apparently reflected that thought, however much some commentators may have overstated the novelty of what they described. The figure of the partisan offers a reframing device rich in potential—a way to approach international relations using categories additional to the more familiar ones of the state, international organization, or non-governmental organization (NGO), and thereby to track some underexplored truths of the international realm.

But the prospects for transnational partisanship are worth exploring also because of the normative issues at stake. Chief amongst these is the challenge of shaping power structures beyond the nation-state. Whether in the form of

[2] The context of emergence is likely to be relevant: e.g. whether transnational partisanship takes shape as an incremental extension of existing national partisan traditions—a coalescence model—or whether it emerges unmediated by existing activities, in response to a one-off transnational shock or as part of the evolution of a transnational epistemic community without ties to existing parties.

[3] The term 'Merkozy' was coined by the European press in 2011 to describe the increasingly close cooperation between French President Nicholas Sarkozy and German Chancellor Angela Merkel as they crafted a response to the Euro crisis. The expression suggested a personal tie: *Bild Zeitung* referred to them as a 'power couple' (Nikolaus Blome et al., 'Merkozy: sieht so das neue Europa aus?', *Bild*, 1 December 2011), while the *Daily Telegraph* evoked a 'marriage of convenience', visualizing it with a composite image of their faces (Rachel Cooper, 'Merkozy: Marriage of convenience between French and German leaders becomes internet search term', *Daily Telegraph*, 7 December 2011). Despite the mass media's tendency to individualize the connection, some observers saw the makings of something deeper. Here, they suggested, was an alignment of political forces grounded in shared outlook: two Centre-Right governing parties coordinating to advance a shared conception of how the EU's future should look. When Merkel announced she would actively assist Sarkozy's re-election campaign in the spring 2012 French elections, it seemed clear the ties were political rather than personal and there were suggestions this might be the beginning of a sustained period of transnational partisanship (Ulrike Guérot, 'Merkozy: transnational democracy in the making?', *European Council on Foreign Relations* blog, 13 February 2012, http://ecfr.eu/blog/entry/merkozy_transnational_democracy_in_the_making; John Palmer, 'EU voters may finally be given some real choices', *OpenDemocracy*, 22 March 2012, http://www.opendemocracy.net/john-palmer/eu-voters-may-finally-be-given-some-real-choices).

economic structures, relations of interdependence, or transnational decision-making institutions, a range of cross-border structures exercise power over the modern-day citizen. Rather than accept such power as a brute fact or denounce it ineffectually, people have reason to want to shape it so it coheres with ideas they find acceptable. Only then, runs the thought, will there be the prospect of rendering these structures legitimate.

Transnational partisanship presents itself as a potentially valuable means to achieve the necessary democratization of power beyond the nation-state. While contemporary political philosophy has much to say on desirable goals, it generally has less to say on the real-world practices that might deliver them. Even in the rich literature on transnational democracy, partisanship is little discussed,[4] despite its distinctive qualities. The access of partisans to political institutions at the national level gives them a foundation of power and authority unavailable to other would-be politicizing agents such as social movements, allowing them to create and reshape transnational governmental institutions.[5] Their visibility in national politics gives them an influence over public debates unmatched by judicial elites. Furthermore, actors who define themselves in terms of programmatic goals promise a normative intelligibility to their actions, in contrast to those of technical experts. In all these respects, and in the right hands, transnational partisanship represents a potentially important pathway to progressive change.[6] The extent to which it can deliver on this promise is one of this chapter's guiding concerns.

To speak of transnational partisanship is to draw attention to the potentially contingent relation between partisanship and the nation-state setting. Aside from the political challenges we shall examine, this reminds one of a conceptual challenge. The philosophical defence of partisanship has often relied on the concept of the national interest to distinguish party from faction—Burke's classic definition being a case in point.[7] Yet when one puts the national frame in question, and raises in so doing the boundary problems so familiar in political theory today, the national interest ceases to be an adequate lodestar for partisanship: a different point of orientation becomes necessary. In this book we have preferred to speak of partisanship as guided by generalizable principles and aims, and of the public good as something

[4] See, e.g. Koenig-Archibugi in Daniele Archibugi et al., (eds.), *Global Democracy: Normative and Empirical Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 177–8: partisanship is not amongst the pathways to transnational democracy discussed, and cannot be assimilated to intergovernmentalism in general if, as we have suggested, the partisan tie goes beyond a mere pact of expedience. A rare volume on transnational partisanship in this literature is Katarina Sehm-Patomäki and Mark Ulvila (eds.), *Global Political Parties* (London: Zed, 2007).

[5] Cf. White and Ypi, 'The Politics of Peoplehood'.

[6] This is in addition to whatever it might contribute to a transnational democracy once established.

[7] Cf. Chapter 1.

spatially unsettled, so as to retain some open-endedness here. But it remains the case that what is plausibly generalizable or public is partly a function of the level of analysis at which the question is posed. What can bear this description at the national level may start to look rather more parochial and sectoral when approached from a transnational perspective.

One may be tempted to say that a choice becomes necessary at this point: *either* one retains the party/faction distinction, in which case the very concept of transnational partisanship becomes suspect, or one embraces the latter as a possibility, in which case the party/faction distinction must be reviewed. In our view the choice is not quite so stark. What the transnational context usefully reminds is that the party/faction distinction is critical rather than taxonomical in focus. Exactly by treating the distinction as indeterminate in scope, one recalls that there is an inevitably political dimension to it. Though some groupings at the national level may make a partisan claim more credibly than others, they remain susceptible to denunciation from outside as something *less* than partisan. The lines of demarcation must be treated as controversial and provisional. While transnational partisanship is conceptually possible, its empirical identification, like that of partisanship more generally, will require the observer at some point to take a position on the partisan claim advanced.

Partisanship and Scope: Is the Nation-State Arena Special?

If we understand partisanship as an associative practice necessary to sustain and enhance political commitments, then the *scope* of partisanship will be set by the extension of those who recognize each other as belonging to the same association and the extension of their coordinated activity.[8] In this section we examine whether that scope might plausibly extend beyond the boundaries of the nation-state, or conversely whether—leaving now aside the conceptual challenge noted—this arena is somehow special.

In debates concerning the possibility of transnational democracy, it is asked whether democracy has necessary conditions.[9] The same question can be posed of partisanship.[10] We shall consider three sceptical theses: first, that

[8] Empirically these two circles may not overlap: it may be that the former (partisans-as-sympathizers) is wider than the latter (partisans-as-agents), or conversely, that the former (the 'true believers') are a narrower set than the latter (those 'going through the motions'). Our discussion focuses on where the circles overlap.

[9] Mathias Koenig-Archibugi, 'Is Global Democracy Possible?', *European Journal of International Relations* 17 (3) (2011).

[10] In some ways the debates are dissimilar: no one argues global democracy has existed, whereas later we shall give instances of what we take to be transnational partisanship. But because such instances are contestable and the phenomenon not widely recognized, it seems useful to proceed

partisanship requires an enabling institutional environment; second, that it requires the existence of generalized social ties; and third, that it requires cross-spatial continuity in the structure of political division. Such conditions have been present in the nation-state, the sceptic will argue, but are absent in the transnational realm. To probe them to the full, one must look beyond the venues potentially most hospitable to transnational partisanship—the contemporary European Union, for example, where supporting institutions are already partially formed—to consider the less favourable contexts that pose a critical test.[11]

In the following discussion we assume, like the sceptic, that conclusions can be drawn for transnational partisanship from partisanship in the nation-state. However, the conclusions we draw are different. Not only must one not overstate the importance of certain features of the nation-state, but one must avoid an idealized conception of it that exaggerates the peculiarities of the transnational realm.[12]

1. An Enabling Institutional Environment

Several institutional features are conventionally associated with the modern state, including a decision-making structure governed by the principle of sovereignty, a generally accepted executive authority, and a bounded territorial space.[13] The *democratic* version of the state is furthermore generally said to include a powerful legislature and a constitutional framework providing institutional rules that give voice to political opposition.

This is the type of institutional framework some would argue is partisanship's necessary condition. An executive body able to make authoritative demands for a given territorial space, backed by coercive power, would appear the indispensible means by which partisans can shape public life in line with the commitments on which they are agreed.[14] Without the authority of office and a jurisdiction coextensive with partisan activities, the effort to make commitments socially binding would seem to require untold resources of

in the same manner as thinkers of global democracy, examining fundamental questions of possibility rather than simply pointing to empirical instances.

[11] For a longer discussion of the tension between cosmopolitanism and sovereignty as applied to the European Union, see Lea Ypi, 'Sovereignty, Cosmopolitanism and the Ethics of European Foreign Policy', *European Journal of Political Theory* 7 (3) (2008).

[12] Cf. Adrian Little and Kate MacDonald, 'Pathways to Global Democracy: Escaping the Statist Imaginary', *Review of International Studies* 39 (2013).

[13] Gianfranco Poggi, *The State: Its Nature, Development and Prospects* (Cambridge: Polity, 1990), Chapter 2; Charles Tilly, 'Reflections on the History of European State-making', in Tilly (ed.), *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975).

[14] Cf. Heikki Patomäki, 'Towards Global Political Parties', *Ethics & Global Politics* 4 (2) (2011). This point is important, even if one avoids, as we have done, a definition of partisanship in terms of office-seeking.

coercion. A parliamentary arena would likewise seem indispensible, offering partisans not only legislative power but a public setting in which to justify their actions and engage opponents, resources by which to retain their corporate identity when out of office, and an electoral process coextensive with the scale of their operations by which they can make an authoritative claim to represent a constituency. These institutions, it may be said, are either absent at the transnational level, or under-developed to the extent they preclude these possibilities.

This view well captures some favourable conditions for partisanship: that they are necessary conditions is less clear. True, an historical pattern might suggest so. The eighteenth- and nineteenth-century emergence of parties in Europe and beyond typically depended not only on a pre-existing centralized institutional framework inherited from the monarchical age, but also on emerging processes of parliamentarization and suffrage expansion.[15] Democratic institutions generally came first, at least before parties as organizations.[16] Yet the history of state formation also tells us partisanship was sometimes crucial exactly to these processes of democratization.[17] Whether one looks to the Jacobins, the Federalists, or Mazzini's Young Italy, one finds cases of partisans leading the transformation of political institutions, weakening attachments to the old order and refashioning it in line with declared commitments. To be sure, they were not yet embedded in anything one might call a party system and belonged to an age when few endorsed ideas of legitimate opposition.[18] They were not democratic actors by the standards of later history, but indicate that partisan communities of commitment may emerge even in the absence of the favourable conditions described.

One will doubt the relevance of this analogy if one sees the transnational realm as lacking not just democratic institutions but executive institutions more generally. The context then becomes quite different from the early modern setting. But just as one should reject a view of the modern state as offering partisanship a readymade institutional environment, the contemporary transnational realm can hardly be pictured as an institutional vacuum. Certainly there are few structures bar the European Parliament designed to be arenas of transnational partisanship. There are though, of course, numerous intergovernmental forums of diverse kinds,[19] which for the partisan offer possibilities for contact-formation as well as opportunities to wield executive

[15] Scarrow, Susan (2006), 'The Nineteenth-Century Origins of Modern Political Parties', in *Handbook of Party Politics*, ed. Richard S. Katz and William J. Crotty (London: Sage, 2006).

[16] On the 'schools of partisan thought' that preceded institutional change, see Scarrow, 'Nineteenth-Century Origins', p. 19.

[17] Cf. Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels*, pp. 92ff.

[18] Hofstadter, *Idea of a Party System*, Chapter 2; Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*, Introduction.

[19] Robert E. Goodin, 'Global Democracy: In the Beginning', *International Theory* 2 (2) (2010), p. 201.

power. Institutions exist, even if those of representative democracy are absent or weak. Moreover, transnational institutions exist in parallel with national ones. At critical moments, as the next section explores, these latter offer a significant basis for transnational partisanship, including opportunities to establish cross-border institutions. National institutions also mean that while, in the absence of transnational electoral mechanisms, partisans cannot claim authorization from a transnational constituency, they are by no means deprived of procedural sources of legitimacy.

It may be said that precisely the institutional pluralism characteristic of the transnational realm is what poses the problem. Would-be partisans find themselves pulled between competing sites of action: they will need to prioritize among them and will typically concentrate on the national arena given existing electoral incentives. Is institutional pluralism a better reason to doubt the feasibility of transnational partisanship?[20] Such an argument would require us to view allegiance to a wider community of commitments as necessarily incompatible with activities on the scale of the state. The claim seems too strong. Certainly there may be occasions when the two collide—for instance, when the alignment of political forces is such that operations on a transnational scale might jeopardize the advancement of goals domestically. But there may also be occasions when the opposite holds: when the commitments to which a set of partisans adheres can only adequately be advanced by working with like-minded parties abroad. We return to this point in the next section. For now, let us hold the thought that the institutional barriers to transnational partisanship are significant but not necessarily decisive.

2. Strong Social Ties

A second line of scepticism towards transnational partisanship centres on the social ties said to underpin viable political associations of all kinds. Some see these as rooted in shared culture: a combination of locally valued markers to do with territory, language, ritual, history, and descent that establish a sense of unity amongst individuals.[21] For others, they take the form of dispositions to show trust and solidarity, not necessarily grounded in a sense of cultural

[20] This pluralism includes not only the parallel presence of national and transnational institutions but diverse forms of both (e.g. within the latter category both intergovernmental and supranational institutions). That partisanship requires a certain concentration of decision-making power was the intuition of the American Federalists, who advocated the separation of powers and a strong judiciary partly as a means to obstruct such activities.

[21] David Miller, *Citizenship and National Identity* (Cambridge: Polity, 2000); Will Kymlicka, *Politics in the Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism, and Citizenship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

belonging.[22] In both cases such ties are considered typically shared by most members of a nation-state, and typically not shared, certainly with anything like the same intensity, with those across borders.

In the well-rehearsed debates on the socio-cultural preconditions of democracy, broadly two kinds of significance are ascribed to these social ties: functional and ethical.[23] Arguably the former poses the less demanding challenge for transnational partisanship, for in principle it permits a technical solution. Partisan coordination, on this line of thinking, requires a widely shared medium of communication, plus opportunities for person-to-person interaction. Multilingual and geographically extended contexts might therefore seem unsuited. However, insofar as we treat these only as functional challenges (and not as proxies for ethical ties), remedies can be imagined, centred on communication technology or a lingua franca.[24] Such remedies may be highly imperfect,[25] but they affect the *character* of transnational partisanship—its inclusiveness, for example—rather than its very possibility (also see below). Importantly, no-one has reason to resist such solutions if they work, because no value is accorded to the social divisions that produced the 'problem' they aim to solve.

It is where social ties are given ethical significance that the real test for transnational partisanship lies. The argument might be as follows: only those already sharing an extensive set of social norms and dispositions to show trust and solidarity will be willing to come together as a partisan community of commitment. Social ties precede this form of political association. The same foundation might be considered necessary for partisans credibly to claim the support of a constituency. In the absence of such social bonds, potential constituents might be thought unlikely to be moved by partisan efforts to build unity, perhaps even liable to reject their claims as the claims of foreign agents. Such arguments are typically invoked to explain the failure of the pacifist strands of early twentieth-century socialist parties to sustain cross-border mobilization against war, and ultimately to account for the collapse of the Second International.[26] Partisanship, one infers, depends on the kinds of social tie only typically displayed by those who are fellow nationals.

[22] Claus Offe, 'How Can We Trust our Fellow Citizens?', in *Democracy and Trust*, ed. Mark Warren (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); for critical discussion, see Veit Bader, 'Building European Institutions: Beyond Strong Ties and Weak Commitments', in *Identities, Affiliations and Allegiances*, ed. Seyla Benhabib et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

[23] Jonathan White, 'Europe and the Common', *Political Studies* 58 (1) (2010b).

[24] Philippe van Parijs, *Linguistic Justice for Europe and for the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[25] Daniele Archibugi, *The Global Commonwealth of Citizens: Toward Cosmopolitan Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), Chapter 10.

[26] Michael S. Neiberg, *Dance of the Furies: Europe and the Outbreak of World War I* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), pp. 102ff. There is much historical research to suggest the limits of

That such a view rests on an idealized conception of national society seems clear. In its image of bounded homogeneity, one detects a major simplification.[27] The conditions of national partisanship were never so tidy: partisans have always contended with cross-cutting social divisions. But even if we embrace the need to stylize, it can equally be argued strong social ties have been the *consequence* of partisanship as much as its precondition. In parts of nineteenth-century Europe, socialist parties were not so much undercut by nationalist sentiment as one of the driving forces in its production.[28] The social integration of the United States has likewise been narrated as driven significantly by partisan efforts to expand the scope of their activities from the local to the national level so as to further their political goals.[29] Conversely, there are instances of partisans coordinating to truncate social ties: Czechoslovakia, in the years between the fall of communism in 1989 and the state's dissolution in 1993, stands as an interesting case of this.[30] Even a partisanship that presents itself as devoted to the protection of existing ties—a conservative nationalism, for example—may involve successful efforts to redefine the scope of social ties, and indeed may rely on coordinated action that oversteps the boundaries of the nation-state to achieve this end: the granting of passports to minorities in other countries has been one way ruling parties in Central and Eastern Europe have imprinted themselves on the social landscape in recent years.[31] In such ways the special ties that fellow nationals are typically thought to share can be regarded, sometimes at least, as endogenous to partisan activity.[32]

3. *Continuity in the Structure of Political Division*

The partisan community is a community of shared commitments. This points to a third line of scepticism towards transnational partisanship. Commitments, it may be said, are contextual. They, and the lines of opposition they

this reading: see, e.g. Julius Braunthal, *History of the International, vol. I, 1864–1914* (New York: Praeger, 1960), Chapter 21.

[27] Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick-Schiller, 'Methodological Nationalism and Beyond: Nation-State Building, Migration and the Social Sciences', *Global Networks* 2 (4) (2002).

[28] Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 124ff.

[29] E. E. Schattschneider, *The Semisovereign People: A Realistic View of Democracy in America* (Hinsdale: Dryden Press, 1975).

[30] The unmaking of popular attachments to Czechoslovak nationhood in this period can be linked directly to the efforts of the Czech ODS and Slovak HZDS parties to generate public support for the state's dissolution once it became clear neither would be able to impose its economic programme on Czechoslovakia as a whole (cf. Jonathan White, 'When Parties make Peoples', *Global Policy* 6 (S1) (2015)).

[31] Zsolt Körtvélyesi, 'From "We the People" to "We the Nation"', in *Constitution for a Disunited Nation: On Hungary's 2011 Fundamental Law*, ed. Gábor Attila Tóth (Budapest: CEU, 2012), pp. 138ff.

[32] Cf. Little and MacDonald, 'Pathways to Global Democracy', pp. 800ff.

inspire, emerge in specific socio-political settings. While a stable and agreed structure of political division may develop within the confines of an integrated order such as the nation-state, there may be quite limited continuity of structure from one such setting to another. Hence one has little reason to expect a genuine convergence of commitments at the transnational level.

Such an argument can take several forms. For some, the structure of political division is a function of social structure, for example of class or religious cleavages.[33] While structurally similar cleavages may recur across space, their precise content and their modes of interaction will differ from one site to another, due to the historical contingencies of state formation and socio-economic development. Nation-states taken individually may exhibit a class structure, but these will not aggregate to form a transnational class structure. Hence if political divisions reflect class divisions, the commitments endorsed in one setting may have little resonance elsewhere. Alternatively, the argument may focus on political culture: the ideological traditions from which commitments emerge, even if not derivative of social facts, nonetheless develop within a context. What counts as conservatism, socialism, liberalism, or environmentalism will differ across space, not least because these traditions take shape in the context of struggles with local adversaries. Not only the meaning of specific traditions but the structure of the field as a whole—what is Left, Right, and Centre—may vary considerably.[34] Again, without commensurate structures of political division, the possibility of transnational partisan communities of commitment may be doubted.

It is important to question whether cross-national differences are actually so sharp. A sizeable literature in the comparative politics of Europe suggests the opposite: that 'the compatibility of national party systems is relatively pronounced'.[35] The same has been said of politics globally: that the continuities are sufficiently strong as to permit the universal application of the Left-Right scheme.[36] Such authors do not deny local variation and cross-cutting divisions, but dispute their primacy. To sustain the idea of transnational partisanship, it should be emphasized, does not require endorsing the strongest claims for isomorphism. It may be that some political traditions are less transnationally coherent than others (a point discussed below). As long as there are *some* traditions—perhaps even just one—for which cross-border continuity exists, transnational partisanship remains on the cards.

[33] Lipset and Rokkan, 'Cleavage Structures'.

[34] Stefano Bartolini, *Restructuring Europe: Centre Formation, System Building, and Political Structuring between the Nation-State and the European Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[35] Peter Mair and Jacques Thomassen, 'Political Representation and Government in the European Union', *Journal of European Public Policy* 17 (1) (2010), p. 29; cf. Luciano Bardi et al., 'How to Create a Transnational Party System' (Brussels: European Parliament, 2010), pp. 7ff.

[36] Alain Noël and Jean-Philippe Thérien, *Left and Right in Global Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

Furthermore, as always, one must avoid overstating the simplicity of the nation-state. A measure of disagreement on the structure of political division is apparent at this level too.[37] The notion that political divides are an unmediated reflection of social or political-cultural structures has been well criticized.[38] What constitutes an ideological tradition, and how it relates to others, has always been to some degree a matter of interpretation—a point that leaves scope for partisan creativity in how the contours of the political landscape are drawn.[39] Political traditions depend on a necessarily precarious claim to unity. Transnationally as well as nationally, there may be discontinuities which turn out to be too great to bridge. The limits to political creativity are real, but where exactly these lie is an open-ended question that resists being determined *ex ante*.

Tendencies in Transnational Partisanship

We may conclude from the preceding discussion that none of the three factors considered, concerning institutional structures, social ties, and the structure of political division, can be treated as a necessary condition of partisanship.[40] Partisans have navigated their way around them. Yet to discount these issues altogether would be rash. Each claim, we suggest, captures a truth about the pressures to which transnational partisanship is subject.

The present section builds on the preceding analysis to identify a series of influences on the forms transnational partisanship takes. It highlights the *tendencies*[41] to which the latter is prone. Specifically, it is suggested (1) that the absence or incompleteness of an enabling institutional environment tends to produce an episodic form of partisanship; (2) that the absence of strong social ties inclines it towards the structure of a low-density network;

[37] Jonathan White, 'Left and Right as Political Resources', *Journal of Political Ideologies* 16 (2) (2011b).

[38] Michael Gallagher et al., *Representative Government in Modern Europe* (McGraw-Hill, New York, 2006), Chapter 9.

[39] Jonathan White, 'Community, Transnationalism and the Left-Right Metaphor', *European Journal of Social Theory* 15 (2) (2012).

[40] It may be said that while partisanship is possible in the absence of one such condition, it is not possible in the absence of several. Equally these conditions may be linked to further ones, with the suggestion the former become necessary conditions in the presence of the latter. Basing arguments from necessity on the interaction of conditions has much to commend it as a theoretical move, but the potentially relevant combinations quickly become too numerous for empirical analysis. The challenge is sizeable enough when approached retrospectively, i.e. by looking at the historical record; it is complicated further when one seeks to anticipate what the relevant interactions are. One does not have to deny their existence to view the possibility of predicting them as negligible.

[41] John S. Mill, *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive: Being a Connected View of the Principles of Evidence and the Methods of Scientific Investigation* (London: Longmans, Green, 1904), pp. 585ff.

(3) that the persistence of discontinuities in the structure of political division points towards a partisanship which is ideationally delocalized. This section develops each point in turn. The implications for the kinds of political good one can expect of transnational partisanship are examined in the final section.

For these observations, the implied point of contrast is national partisanship. Clearly there are pitfalls here. Political scientists emphasize the diversity of forms taken by national partisanship and often work with a typology that accentuates historical change.[42] How can something so varied be a benchmark? The problem affects all work using abstract political concepts, especially those that combine empirical and normative dimensions: studies of democracy, citizenship, and the law face similar challenges. Our assumption is that the tendencies described here differentiate transnational partisanship from most of its national incarnations, however varied the latter may be. We do not exclude however that there may be contemporary forms of national partisanship which, partly because they too are exposed to transnational influences, bear some of the same patterns.

1. Episodic Partisanship

We have suggested that the transnational domain departs from the institutional arrangement of the modern state, not due to the absence of state-like features altogether, but due to their existence in plural form. Institutional pluralism is a fact of the international sphere. While this need not inhibit the formation of cross-border partisan communities and practices of coordination between them, it does, we propose, encourage the latter to appear at quite uneven levels of intensity, creating a distinctively episodic partisan form.

Whereas in the modern state the executive and the legislature provide a permanent focal point for parties of government and opposition, in the transnational setting partisans must control multiple institutions simultaneously if they are to wield something approaching equivalent power. Representation of the like-minded in several governments at once is crucial, particularly if they must contend also with powerful non-governmental actors and non-majoritarian institutions. Partisan coordination is therefore likely to be an irregular phenomenon, strongest when a temporary alignment of political forces creates a window of opportunity to influence policy-making. Of course, not all partisan coordination is geared to executing authority: there may be ongoing coordination of a low-level kind, designed to build contacts, share knowledge with counterparts further afield, and cultivate the partisan

[42] Katz and Mair, 'Cartel Party Thesis'.

community of commitment.[43] Efforts in conjunction with other actors of civil society to challenge hegemonic ideas and reshape political commonsense, along the lines of Gramsci's 'war of position',[44] also belong to this category. Non-governing parties can do much to politicize problems and to project themselves as a cross-border unity.[45] The twentieth-century experience of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Syria, and Jordan shows as much: but it also suggests that without a basis in institutional power the extent of their practical coordination may be limited.[46] Intense transnational partisanship is likely to be intermittent, comprising a series of momentary achievements based on favourable political alignments.

An instructive example can be found in 1950s Europe, when Christian Democratic parties came to power in a number of states simultaneously. At this time there was no transnational institutional framework of the kind later known as the European Union: on the contrary, it was this alignment of political forces which *produced* the early steps of European integration. Cross-border Christian Democratic cooperation had existed for some time, with individuals attached to national parties founding several transnational partisan organizations, notably the Secrétariat International des Partis Démocratiques d'Inspiration Chrétienne (1925), the Nouvelles Equipes Internationales (1947), and Geneva Circle.[47] When, from 1950, Christian Democratic parties were in power in France, Germany, Italy, and the Benelux countries, a favourable conjuncture existed for the intensification of cross-national activity. Growing tensions with the Soviet Union and the outbreak of the Korean War added urgency. Over the following years, a highly consequential form of transnational partisanship developed, personally in a structure of informal networks amongst elites, and ideologically based on a mix of 'traditional confessional notions of occidental culture and anti-communism and broadly

[43] This is one way to understand Europe's transnational party federations—those extra-parliamentary counterparts to the European Parliament's party groups and to national parliamentary parties.

[44] Gramsci, Vol. III, *Prison Notebooks*.

[45] Indeed, the internationalist impulse may be strong where like-minded parties experience the common predicament of exclusion from power: on internationalism as the response of early twentieth-century European socialists to the national dominance of conservative parties, see David Hanley, 'Parties, Identity and Europeanisation: An Asymmetrical Relationship?', in *The European Puzzle: The Political Structuring of Cultural Identities at a Time of Transition*, ed. Marion Demossier (Oxford: Berghahn, 2007), p. 150.

[46] Barry Rubin, 'Comparing Three Muslim Brotherhoods', in *The Muslim Brotherhood: The Organization and Policies of a Global Islamist Movement*, ed. Barry Rubin (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 9ff.

[47] Michael Gehler and Wolfram Kaiser, 'Transnationalism and Early European Integration: The Nouvelles Equipes Internationales and the Geneva Circle 1947–57', *The Historical Journal* 44 (3) (2001); Peter Pulzer, 'Nationalism and Internationalism in European Christian Democracy', in *Christian Democracy in Europe since 1945*, ed. Michael Gehler and Wolfram Kaiser (London: Routledge, 2004).

liberal economic ideas'.[48] Several features of early European integration—including federalist ambitions and protection of the politically important agrarian interest—have been ascribed to Christian Democratic concerns.[49] This centre-right transnational partisanship lasted until the 1960s, when Christian Democratic parties lost power at the national level. It was episodic in character, able to overcome the absence of formal institutions at the transnational level for as long as there was an alignment of political forces at the national level.

While Christian Democratic transnationalism provides a particularly clear illustration, this episodic tendency is detectable more widely. Recent Latin American history provides an instructive example. Elections in the late 1990s and 2000s in Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador brought to power leftist partisans united by a common set of political commitments centred on anti-neoliberalism, social justice, and mass participation.[50] Under the banner of 'twenty-first-century socialism', they went on to coordinate actively amongst themselves and with sympathetic parties in Cuba and Nicaragua to revive the transnationalism of the Socialist Internationals.[51] Amongst the institutional achievements of this socialist alignment have been the formation of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA, 2004), the establishment of a virtual regional currency known as the SUCRE (2010) and, in cooperation with more moderate centre-left parties in Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay, the creation of UNASUR (the Union of South American Nations, 2008).[52] A highly consequential form of transnational partisanship was thus possible given a favourable alignment of political forces.

[48] Wolfram Kaiser, *Christian Democracy and the Origins of European Union* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 10.

[49] Kaiser, *Christian Democracy*, pp. 228ff.; Stathis N. Kalyvas and Kees van Kersbergen, 'Christian Democracy', *Annual Review of Political Science* 13 (2010), pp. 195–6.

[50] Steve Ellner, 'The Distinguishing Features of Latin America's New Left in Power: The Chávez, Morales, and Correa Governments', *Latin American Perspectives* 39 (1) (2012); Francisco Panizza, *Contemporary Latin America: Development and Democracy beyond the Washington Consensus* (London: Zed, 2009), pp. 183ff. While these groups often style themselves as 'movements', they clearly fit the description of partisanship offered: groups seeking control of governing institutions so as to pursue an ongoing project designed to shape decision-making in line with shared commitments. In this sense they have acted de facto as a party (Morales's Movement for Socialism in Bolivia), incorporated existing parties (Correa's Alianza PAIS in Ecuador), or slowly transformed from a coalition of parties into a single party (Chávez's Fifth Republic Movement became the leading element of the new United Socialist Party in 2007). See Jeffrey Webber and Barry Carr (eds.), *The New Latin American Left: Cracks in the Empire* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013), Chapters 7–9; Kirk A. Hawkins, *Venezuela's Chavismo and Populism in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). This is not to deny their important differences with the more organizationally established parties of Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay (cf. Panizza, *Contemporary Latin America*, p. 193).

[51] Venezuelan President Chávez called in 2009 for a 'Fifth International' (Ellner, 'Distinguishing Features').

[52] Ellner, 'Distinguishing Features', p. 104; Luis F. Angosto-Ferrández (ed.), *Democracy, Revolution and Geopolitics in Latin America: Venezuela and the International Politics of Discontent* (London: Routledge, 2013). A further institutional development was the creation in 2011 of the

As further examples one might point to a political alignment of the New Right in Europe and the US in the 1980s,[53] and of the Third Way Left in the 1990s,[54] which saw like-minded governing parties similarly coordinating to pursue common agendas, again leaving their mark on the course of European integration.[55]

One of the important implications of this episodic tendency is that only occasionally can one expect to see multiple partisan formations existing in a relationship of adversarial confrontation. When one speaks of a 'party system' in the context of the state, one tends to picture relatively enduring structured oppositions.[56] The institutions of the state facilitate this, offering semi-permanent representation to parties of government and opposition, and various timetables and cycles to choreograph their encounter. While transnational partisan formations *may* arise simultaneously, this is unlikely to be the norm—not least since being in government at the national level is both a major advantage and one not all can share. Transnational partisanship will generally be asymmetrical, in other words: there is little reason to expect coordinated conflict between more than one formation—it will typically be partisanship without a party system.[57]

Over the long term, however, these episodes of transnational partisanship may leave enduring structuring effects. A transnational partisan community may depend on a favourable political alignment at the national level for its emergence, but it is likely to leave traces that considerably outlive that alignment. Episodes of intense coordination generally leave behind residual organizational structures which, even if they lack the original dynamism, can be a focal point for future activities and the symbolic expression of a transnational community of commitments.[58] Those who mobilize once may find it easier

Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC): potentially a major step in regional integration, it remains embryonic at the time of writing.

[53] i.e. the rise to power, in a distinctive ideological form, of the US Republicans, the British Conservatives, and the German CDU.

[54] In Europe, composed notably of Britain's New Labour, the French Parti Socialiste, the Red-Greens in Germany, and a centre-left coalition in Italy (George Ross, 'European Center-Lefts and the Mazes of European Integration', in *What's Left of the Left: Democrats and Social Democrats in Challenging Times*, ed. James Cronin et al. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 334).

[55] In the first case, the market-building, labour-weakening measures of the Single European Act (1986); in the latter, the EU's Lisbon Agenda (2000), which in its original guise showed Third Way influence, though which was later recast, as the moment passed, with a liberal-economic focus on growth alone: cf. Ross, 'European Center-Lefts'.

[56] Cf. Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*.

[57] Via a different argument to do with the structure of electoral competition, the same conclusion is reached in Bardi et al., 'How to Create a Transnational Party System', p. 97.

[58] The legacy of the Christian Democratic moment was the European People's Party (cf. Kaiser, *Christian Democracy*, p. 317); today's Party of European Socialists is the descendant of the Socialist Internationals (Kay Lawson, 'The International Role of Political Parties', in *Handbook of Party Politics*, ed. Richard S. Katz and William J. Crotty (London: Sage, 2006); Hanley, 'Parties, Identity and Europeanisation'). Arguably the Third Way's legacy was the think-tank-based 'Progressive

to mobilize again: incrementally, a more permanent configuration may emerge.[59] Insofar as they embed certain commitments in institutions with coercive powers (cf. the 'social market' ideals that attached to the EC/EU long after the demise of Christian Democracy as a transnational force), their influence may again be lasting. Transnational partisanship may be conjunctural, but its effects are anything but transient.

2. *Partisanship with a Low-Density Network Structure*

It was suggested above that, contra certain understandings of the nation-state, the transnational social field can hardly be conceived in terms of generalized ties knitting individuals together in a society of even density. This image of bounded homogeneity does not apply, yet partisanship of a kind remains possible. We may develop this thought by borrowing some of the language of network theory.[60] Transnational partisanship will tend to exhibit the structure of a low-density network, where this entails a series of fairly discrete social clusters, bridged by a few nodal individuals.[61] It may furthermore display fuzzy boundaries and indistinctness of form, and low public recognition or 'entitativity'—points we may consider in turn.

Transnational partisanship must generally contend with a number of social divisions, notably language. These divisions will be less pronounced amongst certain clusters of individuals: partisans of the same locality or nationality can be expected to display a relatively dense set of ties, thus forming integrated groups. But the links between these groups may depend on a relatively small number of individuals, or 'nodes', whose activities bridge what would otherwise remain separate spheres. For instance, multilingualism will be needed for transnational partisan coordination, but is a capacity only a minority of partisans may possess. The same holds of personal contacts with counterparts in other countries, or detailed familiarity with their history and traditions. Only a minority will be in a position to cultivate direct communicative links spanning the whole of the transnational partisan community. Segmentation is the norm. Such a description fits well the transnational partisanship of Christian Democracy described in the previous section.[62] The larger

Governance Network' (1999). Such legacies tend to be more or less strong depending on how successful the parties involved continue to be at the national level.

[59] Goodin, 'Global Democracy', pp. 197ff.

[60] Charles Kadushin, *Understanding Social Networks: Theories, Concepts, and Findings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[61] High-density networks by contrast are such because many of the possible ties between nodes are present, thus knitting together the whole more evenly: cf. Kadushin, *Understanding Social Networks*, pp. 29ff.

[62] This may be explained partly by Christian Democracy's paternalist streak: partisanship guided by a participatory ethic might conceivably have differed.

community of commitment tends to be a largely imagined one for the majority of partisans—though 'weak ties' may be highly consequential nonetheless.[63]

One possible conclusion is that transnational partisanship will therefore tend to be elitist, dependent as it is on a relatively small number of crucial individuals. While its component parts (national and local partisan groups) may be participative—as in the case of Latin-American socialism—the coordination pursued transnationally may be less so. Such a phenomenon has been observed both for yesterday's Internationals and today's NGOs.[64] Still, while transnational partisanship may start as an elite phenomenon, one should not exclude that over time it may become more participative, for instance as a consequence of exchange programmes and other concerted efforts to cultivate the community of commitment (the Latin-American example is instructive again).

There are two other implications of the network structure of transnational partisanship. One is that the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion in partisan activity may be blurred. In the context of the nation-state, these boundaries have typically been associated with organizational membership. The image of a bounded (*socio-centric*) network does not fit transnational partisanship: it is better conceived as *open*.[65] Such a network lacks sharp borders: it takes only a single tie to draw an actor into the network, and the network may already be dependent on monads at key interfaces. In practical terms this means a range of actors who are not party members may be entwined in the activities of transnational partisanship: NGOs, social movements, public intellectuals, the media, and so on. While the boundaries of partisanship may be increasingly blurred at the national level too, this is likely to be the norm when we encounter transnational partisanship. The partisan community—both as imagined by partisans and as practically expressed—will generally display an indistinctness of form.

A further, related implication is that it may tend to have low public recognition beyond the partisan community itself. A network of the kind described is formed of a series of personal relationships, not necessarily underpinned by such structural abstractions as offices and roles, or generalized systems of communication. It is likely to lack 'entativity',[66] that is the public perception that it is an entity more than the sum of its parts. This follows also from the institutional points already considered: the lack of a parliamentary arena and electoral process, and partisanship's corresponding episodic character.

[63] Mark Granovetter, 'The Strength of Weak Ties', *American Journal of Sociology* 78 (6) (1973).
[64] Archibugi, *Global Commonwealth*, p. 255.
[65] Kadushin, *Understanding Social Networks*, p. 17.
[66] Donald T. Campbell, 'Common Fate, Similarity, and other Indices of the Status of Aggregates of Person as Social Entities', *Behavioural Science* 3 (1) (1958).

Instances of transnational partisanship such as those already touched on—post-war Christian Democracy, the activities of the New Right and Third Way, even twenty-first-century socialism—fit this pattern of limited public recognition. Of course, sometimes low visibility may be deliberately sought, sometimes deliberately avoided. The tendency can be managed, but it seems real nonetheless.

3. *Ideationally Delocalized Partisanship*

It was suggested that transnational partisanship is likely to run up against differences in the structure of political division. While it may be too demanding to posit continuity of structure as partisanship's necessary condition, nonetheless partisans face a challenge in carving sufficient continuity to understand themselves as part of a transnational community of commitments. Frequently that challenge may not be met. The difficulty of reconciling differences of tradition may encourage partisans to push commitments to the margins so as to focus on pragmatic cooperation.[67] But where the challenge is met and transnational partisanship is real, it will tend to be *ideationally delocalised* in character.

By this we mean the commitments advanced transnationally will have no more than a loose relation with a particular geographical setting. This is true partly in a genetic sense: they will be significantly detached from the contexts in which they were originally conceived. While programmes associated with conservatism, social democracy, liberalism and the like can be articulated at a transnational level, they will necessarily be abstracted from the local circumstances (conflicts, problems) in which they emerged and developed. Delocalization will apply also to the constituency to whom these commitments are promoted: less and less are they likely to correspond to a locally defined social group. It has been suggested delocalization is one of the important processes affecting contemporary ideologies today, and one liable to destabilize them, dilute them, and weaken their popular resonance.[68] Delocalized can mean deracinated: much of the partisanship in the European Parliament would seem to bear out that thought.

Yet delocalization need not be destructive. It may enrich a set of commitments by adding to their diversity.[69] This, after all, is one of the advantages

[67] The limited success of the Third Way coalition of the late 1990s can be ascribed to persistent programmatic differences between Third Way parties (Ross, 'European Center-Lefts').
[68] Michael Freeden, 'Confronting the Chimera of a "Post-Ideological" Age', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 8 (2) (2005), pp. 257–8.
[69] Freeden, 'Confronting the Chimera', p. 258.

typically associated with a low-density network: its weak ties allow new ideas to spread far and quickly.[70] It may also be the occasion for partisans to exercise creativity, developing narratives by which to translate and bridge divergent traditions, reframing them without negating them so as to comprehend them as part of a larger unity. This is one way to understand the intellectual activity of Latin America's 'twenty-first-century socialists', who sought to resituate nationally-formed understandings of community, solidarity, and exploitation within a larger framework by drawing on ideas of a shared pre-Spanish indigenous culture, the common experience of colonialism and rebellion, the iconography of pan-regional figures such as Simón Bolívar and Antonio José de Sucre, and cross-border adversaries in the form of neoliberalism and US power.[71] Political claims thereby come to be reformulated in generalizable terms rather than with reference only to the interests of a national group.

Whether all political orientations *can* be reframed in transnational terms is an interesting secondary question. Arguably there are forms of nationalist thought which will always struggle to do so, for example because they define themselves against their neighbours.[72] Conversely, political traditions such as Christian Democracy, socialism, or forms of Islamism, however divergent nationally, do at least aspire towards being a transnational community of commitments.[73] Equally, the kind of enlightened nationalism articulated by Mazzini in the nineteenth century, in which freedoms are sought not just for one nation but for many under a common principle of collective autonomy, is potentially the stuff of cross-border mobilization. There may also be traditions which, though universal appeal is claimed of them, turn out to be more closely tied to the viewpoint of a particular constituency than is acknowledged (some forms of liberalism may fit this description). The transnationalization of partisanship arguably tends to filter out the more parochial orientations which cannot credibly articulate themselves in generalizable terms.

[70] Granovetter, 'Strength of Weak Ties'.

[71] Ellner, 'Distinguishing Features', p. 107; Benjamin Goldfrank, 'Neoliberalism and the Left: National Challenges, Local Responses, and Global Alternatives', in *Beyond Neoliberalism in Latin America?: Societies and Politics at the Crossroads*, ed. John Burdick et al. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 46; Hawkins, *Venezuela's Chavismo*, pp. 56ff.

[72] This is not to suggest that parties generally classified as 'far right' are unable to mobilize transnationally—in contemporary Europe there have been several successful instances (cf. Andrea Mammone et al., *Mapping the Extreme Right in Contemporary Europe: From Local to Transnational* (London: Routledge, 2012)). They generally succeed however only to the extent that they can generalize their concerns, e.g. by evoking transnational threats such as Islam or European integration.

[73] Similar claims are possible for the libertarianism of the Pirate Party and its delocalized ideas of digital culture.

The Normative Point of Transnational Partisanship

It has been suggested that transnational partisanship will tend to be episodic, characterized by the structure of a low-density network, and delocalized in its ideational content. In this final section we offer some remarks concerning what this implies for the goods it can be expected to deliver. As previously, it is assumed that nothing closely resembling the socio-political structure of the nation-state exists at a global or regional level. Should the background conditions discussed in the first section of this chapter change—with the emergence of strong transnational representative institutions, with the deepening of cross-national social ties, or with spontaneous convergence in the structure of political division—then the tendencies discussed in the second section would have to be reappraised. We do not exclude that, in certain parts of the world at least, some such changes may be underway, but assume they remain in embryo.

The argument advanced is that, under these conditions, transnational partisanship retains some distinctive merits. Amongst the goods it may serve are the reshaping of existing power structures and the creation of new institutions, possibly including those of transnational democracy. Importantly, it connects such projects to the actors and processes of national politics. But given the tendencies to which it is prone, it will generally produce such goods in a way that escapes systematic contestation, often with limited public visibility and participation. It cannot be considered a satisfactory end-state in itself, but should be defended in terms of the transformations it may yield.

The analysis of the preceding section on tendencies underscores some of the distinctive qualities of transnational partisanship. Its dependence on political alignments at the national level, though this inhibits its continued expression, ensures the pursuit of transnational projects is rooted in national political processes.[74] Transnational partisans derive a degree of procedural legitimacy unmatched by other would-be agents of the transnational realm, including social movements or scientist-advocates, whose democratic credentials have often been questioned.[75] The underpinning of state power, even if temporary, furthermore adds effectiveness: acting in coordination at critical moments, transnational partisans can use governmental authority to significantly alter existing arrangements and to create lasting transnational institutions. The Christian Democrats of 1950s Europe and the leftists of 2000s Latin

[74] On this point see also Ypi, *Global Justice*; Lea Ypi, 'Cosmopolitanism without IF and without BUT', in *Cosmopolitanism versus Non-Cosmopolitanism: Critiques, Defences, Reconceptualizations*, ed. G. Brock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013a).

[75] e.g. Jonas Tallberg and Anders Uhlin, 'Civil Society and Global Democracy: An Assessment', in *Global Democracy: Normative and Empirical Perspectives*, ed. Daniele Archibugi et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

America amply show this capacity. One may doubt whether those committed to non-state approaches can be effective to the same degree.[76]

That transnational partisanship tends towards the structure of a low-density network is also the source of certain advantages. Though the connections between national parties may be limited to a few individuals, they serve to link what would otherwise remain separate political spheres. These networks expose partisans to the unfamiliar, linking them to counterparts whose knowledge and experiences are different to theirs—the classic argument for the strength of weak ties.[77] Whether one sees this in terms of mutual learning and information sharing—one of the purposes of the Socialist Internationals—or as the condition of decisive intervention in international affairs, it represents one of the assets of cross-border partisanship. Parties at the national level provide the established channels of communication and organization by which to disseminate and maintain these influences.

We have also noted the tendency in transnational partisanship towards ideational delocalization. This too is normatively significant. As partisans develop narratives by which to understand the cross-border unity of their activities, they must find ways to reframe national political traditions in terms outsiders can find meaningful. That the structure of political division is not sharply discontinuous is the condition of their succeeding; that it is not perfectly continuous is a stimulus to their creativity. By locating familiar commitments in a wider scheme, transnational partisans engage in a process of de-parochialization.[78] With its combination of appeals to national and indigenous tradition with socialist universalism, Latin America's 'pink tide' expresses this well. If such a process filters out perspectives which do not permit generalization, it exercises a deliberative function.

We have emphasized the positive qualities of transnational partisanship, ones which should enhance its standing relative to other forms of transnational activism as well as partisanship in the nation-state setting. They deserve emphasis as they are generally overlooked by theorists of democracy and transnational democracy alike. But the analysis also alerts us to problems. Consider, for instance, the further implications of episodicity. That cross-border political alignments are transitory inhibits the formation of a stable opposition, and hence the organized contestation of decision-making. The transnational sphere lacks institutional mechanisms for enabling partisan formations to appear in plural and adversarial form. It is not that transnational partisanship will necessarily go uncontested: it may be opposed, but in a

[76] Katz, 'Socialist Strategies in Latin America', pp. 45–6.
[77] Granovetter, 'Strength of Weak Ties'.
[78] Discussing 'avant-garde political agents' analogously, see Ypi, *Global Justice*, pp. 161–2; on the concepts of 'Left' and 'Right' as ways to decouple political claims from localized groups, see White, 'Community, Transnationalism'.

disorganized and asymmetrical fashion (e.g. by national parties acting alone). It is unlikely to be systematically contested by opposition organized to the same scale; hence some of the arguments for partisanship's debate-enhancing qualities do not apply. Its tendency to adopt a network structure likewise qualifies its appeal. While transnational partisanship offers some potential as a mechanism of popular participation, broadening access to sites of decision-making power, its direct links to the citizen are generally weak. Unlike at the national level, one struggles to see it as the source of a democratic ethos.[79] Its delocalized schemes of self-understanding also risk weakening the tie to the citizenry, insofar as an esoteric politics may follow. The party risks detaching itself from its followers when it should remain 'only one step in front'.[80]

Under the conditions described, transnational partisanship is best conceived as a transformative mechanism rather than an intrinsically desirable state of affairs. It is a potential pathway to progressive change, including transnational democracy, without itself being an adequate democratic form. Through its activities may emerge the institutions that allow a more organized contestation of decision-making to take place.[81] Not unlike the first parties of the eighteenth century, in this sense it would have a revolutionary aspect, changing the background conditions under which it emerged. If we accept there is a paradox of founding, such that democracies are never established by wholly democratic means, its imperfect democratic credentials would hardly be a departure. Indeed, as a transformative mechanism, it is probably more democratic than most.

To be sure, there will be instances of transnational partisanship whose programmatic goals are suspect. Undesirable transformations of global politics, including ones in no sense geared to transnational democracy, can be achieved by this means too—arguably the message of 'Merkozy'. Transnational partisanship deserves to be thematized for its dangers as well as its potential. In the last instance, though, one may doubt whether desirable transformations can be achieved adequately without it. Such is the activity's rationale.

Conclusion

Partisanship describes the sense of belonging to a community of shared commitments and the active steps taken to advance these in coordination

[79] White and Ypi, 'Rethinking the Modern Prince'.
[80] Lukács, 'Vanguard Party'.
[81] For a blueprint of transnational democracy, see Archibugi, *Global Commonwealth*. Only some partisans can be expected to hold such goals: it is in their appeal to the few, as well as in the logic of unintended consequences, that the normative interest lies.

with others. It can be said to be *transnational* when these attachments overstep the boundaries of a nation-state. Is transnational partisanship purely conjectural? As we have highlighted, there are at least three sceptical lines of argument. The transnational realm may be regarded as an inhospitable environment for partisanship on account of its not being coextensive with (1) enabling political institutions; (2) strong social ties; (3) continuity in the structure of political division.

None seems to capture a necessary condition. Partisans have long negotiated situations in which these conditions were unfulfilled. But each thesis does capture certain facts about the transnational realm relevant to the forms transnational partisanship is likely to take. The lack of strong institutions coextensive with the field of partisan activity means partisanship will tend to be episodic. The irregularity of social ties is likely to favour partisanship taking the structure of a low-density network. Irregularity in the structure of political division means it will depend on a delocalized ideational frame to evoke its programmatic unity.

These tendencies are important for how we identify the normative point of transnational partisanship. Of necessity it will be tightly bound to the procedures of national politics, deriving from these a significant quantity of both legitimacy and power. Its structure is conducive to the communication of ideas and practices across hitherto disconnected political arenas, and to speed and decisiveness of coordinated action. Its delocalized programmatic thrust contributes to the resituating of national political traditions in a wider normative scheme. In all these respects it can make a valuable contribution to reshaping the international realm, advancing projects aimed at remedying injustice, and establishing new institutions. Yet equally it is an imperfect democratic form. One struggles to see it as a desirable thing in itself. It should be valued rather as part of a process of change, a pathway to a more satisfactory order.

While transnational partisanship has been the focus of discussion, let us conclude with the observation that partisanship at the national level in some respects increasingly resembles its transnational variant. It too has to contend with the weaknesses of political institutions, including the marginalization of legislatures before executive power, and shows traces of an episodic tendency as its activities intensify around electoral campaigns and recede at other moments. It too has to contend with uneven social ties—the often-observed weakening of collective identities in post-industrial societies and increasing levels of cultural diversity—and displays tendencies towards an elitist structure. It too has to contend with the redrawing of lines of political division and the need to develop bridging narratives of wide appeal—witness the challenges posed by electoral de-alignment. Thinking about transnational partisanship is one way to think about the future of national partisanship,

not least because of the many ways cross-border currents intrude on the domestic. Pursuing the transnational parallel further, perhaps it is not an exaggeration to suggest that one of the major challenges facing national partisanship in coming years will be the remaking of democracy's institutional and social conditions. If so, what is pursued at the transnational level need not be thought of as coming at the expense of existing achievements at the national, since the latter are in no sense assured.

10

The Shape of a Party

We began this book by distinguishing partisanship, as a mode of associating and acting politically in coordination with others, from the political party, as the organizational expression of these activities. The point was to retrain focus on the logic of a practice—its distinctive political objectives, the rationale it offers participants, the virtues and obligations that attend it, and the diverse institutional contexts in which it may be appealed to—so as to recapture some of its character as a normative endeavour. In an intellectual context where political scientists have focused largely on parties themselves—their social foundations, their systemic relations, and of course their political failings—and where philosophers have generally been reticent on questions of political agency and their practical forms, the tendency has been to lose sight of partisanship as a distinctive activity. One has learnt to be attentive to the travails of parties, and unlearnt how to see the inspiration behind the partisan stance.

As we come to the book's conclusion, it is important to revisit the party as organization in the light of the arguments we have made. Whether acting in a national or transnational setting, whether part of a long-standing association or a new one, and whatever their political complexion, partisans face important decisions concerning the mechanisms by which to coordinate their activity. Only through a measure of organization does the association become visible to partisans and the wider public, and only then can it interact with other institutions such as the state. The association needs a party at the centre of it—but what kind of party? To what extent do our reflections on the nature of partisanship point to a particular *kind* of organization as the best means to uphold this practice? Having restored over the course of our analysis an appropriate focus on partisanship as a normative practice, we may now return to this more familiar dimension of partisan activity.

Our account has highlighted a number of defining features of partisanship, features which the prime function of organization is to realize and maintain. We have emphasized common allegiance to a set of principles and aims

irreducible to sectoral interest—the essence of the *partisan claim*—and the effort to shape public decision-making in accordance with these. To be a partisan is, at the most basic level, to associate oneself with a community of the like-minded as defined by such a claim, and to be able to account for one's activities by recourse to the commitments expressed in this claim. The collaborative effort to turn individual beliefs and interests into generalizable principles and aims that are defined, proclaimed, and pursued in association with others is valuable from a democratic perspective, we have suggested, as it contributes to the processes of political justification without which the exercise of political power is arbitrary. From the partisan's own perspective, it is equally valuable for the contribution it makes to reinforcing conviction in one's views and enabling them to be pursued consistently across time. By inserting themselves into a framework of commitments jointly shaped, partisans may gain epistemic and motivational advantages while improving the feasibility of the projects they pursue. They also incur obligations, with the resulting association shaped by the ethical ties they accrue as they coordinate in the present and as an intergenerational collective. Their association must navigate the demands of an institutional setting that requires compromise of them without this eroding a core of principled commitments. Further, they must avoid dependency on this institutional framework: the flexibility to work outside it may be needed to overcome the structural deficiencies of the status quo.

In considering what makes for a desirable form of partisan organization, one is tempted to say: whatever kind is able to maintain these qualities in a given time and place. Organization is ultimately a means to achieve the visibility, effectiveness, and continuity of the partisan claim, and to enable discharge of the obligations that arise in its collective pursuit. A detailed prescription of means is to be avoided, since they may vary according to context. Differences in political and social structure invite different organizational responses, and exploring the most appropriate forms is a matter for the practical knowledge of partisans. If one adds to this the distinctive challenges faced by *transnational* partisans as discussed in the previous chapter, as well as the fact that variations in the substance of partisan ends may have implications for the kinds of organizational structure they deem acceptable, it is clear that an approach to organization must be open-ended and receptive to experimentation. In a largely theoretical book such as this, there can be no thought of concluding with a manual for partisan organization.

Are there guiding principles though to be distilled from the account of partisanship we have given? Is there a core of features, an 'organizational minimum', that is necessary for a party to deliver on the normative ideas we have discussed up to this point?

Such questions assume, of course, a level of control over party structure that some would consider illusory. A sceptical argument holds that organization is less a matter of agential design than an autonomous set of demands partisans are largely powerless to resist. Michels's formulation of an 'iron law of oligarchy' is a compelling statement of this position.[1] Even partisans sincerely committed to generalizable principles and aims must, on Michels's account, face the 'substitution of ends' that inevitably accompanies efforts to organize as party leaders become estranged from their followers and largely indifferent towards their programmatic commitments. Organization means division of labour, hierarchy, and specialization, and thus the fragmentation of the partisan association into competing interests. 'The party becomes increasingly inert as the strength of its organization grows; it loses its revolutionary impetus, becomes sluggish, not in respect of action alone, but also in the sphere of thought.'[2] On this view, organization *overtakes* the partisan association and in doing so tends to eclipse partisanship as sustained commitment to a cause.

One can acknowledge the force of these observations while retaining the view that, at critical moments at least, partisans can make consequential choices concerning the kind of structure they wish to adopt. Organization entails relations of power, but the structure of power is not wholly unauthored.[3] A long-standing objection to Michels's disenchanted account is that it overlooks the possibilities for organizational innovation and renewal, as well as the persistent pressure on partisans to make use of these opportunities to advance their political ends.[4] At key moments, notably in the early years of a party's development, we may assume that the structure of partisan coordination is susceptible to considered intervention.[5]

Recent history has seen the emergence of new parties seeking to experiment with different organizational forms, as well as debates within established parties about the possibilities for reshaping their structure. The transformation of social movements into electoral coalitions and parties in 1990s and 2000s Latin America was replicated in Mediterranean Europe in the 2010s, while movements were also a significant ingredient in the moments

[1] Michels, *Political Parties*, esp. Part 6, 'Synthesis: The Oligarchical Tendencies of Organization'.
[2] Michels, *Political Parties*, p. 371.
[3] On power in parties, see Danny Rye, *Political Parties and the Concept of Power: A Theoretical Framework* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).
[4] See, e.g. Panebianco, *Political Parties*, p. 17; Herbert Kitschelt, 'Movement Parties', in *Handbook of Party Politics*, ed. Richard S. Katz and William J. Crotty (London: Sage, 2006). On related challenges of organization in social movements, see Elisabeth S. Clemens and Debra C. Minkoff, 'Beyond the Iron Law: Rethinking the Place of Organizations in Social Movement Research', in *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, ed. David A. Snow et al. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).
[5] This point is well captured in Panebianco's 'genetic' account of organization: Panebianco, *Political Parties*, pp. xiii–xiv for the essentials of his path-dependency argument.

of expansion seen elsewhere in Europe in a number of long-standing parties.[6] At one level, the significance of these developments is simply that they express the enduring appeal of the partisan method to those seeking to effect political change. They confirm the value for political activists of two defining features of partisanship: the aim to form a permanent platform, with the attendant motivational and epistemic advantages, and the aim to control political institutions from the inside and thereby enhance the feasibility of the goals pursued. The importance of associational continuity and institutional power has been acknowledged by participants as part of the inspiration behind such moves.[7] At the same time, the question of organization—how best to structure the party so that it serves its stated goals and preserves fair relations among its associates—is particularly salient in these parties, and finds expression in concerted efforts to experiment with new forms. These developments pose sharply the issues that all partisans must face concerning the principles by which to structure their coordination.

Some Principles of Organization

Surely the usual standard against which to judge the adequacy of party organization is its capacity to secure office for its leadership. A party is as well-ordered as its effectiveness in the quest for institutional power. The salience given to this criterion follows naturally from the centrality given to office-seeking in many definitions of partisanship, as discussed in Chapter 1.

We do not wish to reject the importance of this criterion. Partisan association aims at shaping executive power in accordance with shared commitments, and an organization that does nothing to advance its principles and aims in this way is hard to view as successful.[8] Certainly, the effort to influence public institutions may start well before the point of taking up office—the shaping of public opinion and of commonsense ideas are aspects we considered in Chapter 3. But, however construed, efficacy in shaping decision-making is crucial. Rather than dispute this, we want to highlight some parallel

[6] See e.g. the Scottish National Party during and after the 2014 referendum campaign and the British Labour Party during its 2015 leadership election and its subsequent efforts to build new organizational forms. On the Labour grass-roots organization 'Momentum', see http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/elections/2015/10/meet-momentum-next-step-transformation-our-politics; http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/nadine-houghton-/momentum_b_8412306.html.

[7] Cf. della Porta and Chironi, 'Movements in Parties', p. 89, in an analysis of transformations in the Italian Partito Democratico resulting from its encounter with, and infiltration by, social movements.

[8] On the relationship of partisanship to executive power, see White and Ypi, 'Rethinking the Modern Prince'.

considerations that generally receive less attention, yet which are equally central to the realization of the partisan project.

We may state three general principles of partisan organization as follows, before looking at what might be entailed by them practically. The principles flow from the arguments we have advanced concerning the logic of partisan practice.

Principle One: Party Structure should not Mask the Partisan Claim

The tendency for a party to be dismissed as a *faction*, that is as an association oriented only to sectoral interest, has been discussed in some detail. While personal or group interest may be a legitimate component in the motivation of partisans, the distinctiveness of the partisan claim is that the association is defined by a principled position irreducible to sectoral interest alone. One of the challenges of organization is its potential to disrupt this. Even if partisans remain genuinely attached to their commitments—and a normative account of partisanship must in some measure assume this—there is the real possibility that the organizing process distorts the terms of the association, putting its principled basis in question. An adequate party structure, we may infer, is one that does not mask the normativity of partisanship, but on the contrary actively conveys it, and thus minimizes the prospect that the association becomes indistinguishable from a faction.

The prospect that structures of relation can mask the other-oriented attitudes of individuals is one that has been raised in analyses of the social effects of market exchange.[9] The argument runs broadly as follows: whereas interactions in which material reward does not figure may credibly express the extent to which individuals matter to each other (gift-giving or voluntary work are examples), interactions organized around trade render such intentions invisible. Even if individuals *are* committed in some degree to maintaining each others' welfare—and one need assume little more about their motivations than that they are not purely self-interested—an organizational structure based on profit deprives them of confirmation of this fact, with potentially deleterious effects in the long run for the solidarity of the group. Applying this argument to the political party, we may suggest that if the party organization is to convey rather than mask the normative commitments on which the association is based, it will need to minimize its dependence on material rewards.

[9] Cf. Geoffrey Brennan and Philip Pettit, *The Economy of Esteem* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 38ff; Tore Ellingsen and Magnus Johannesson, 'Conspicuous Generosity', *Journal of Public Economics* 95 (9) (2011).

That the party structure reflects the meaning of partisanship is important from at least two perspectives. It matters for the outward appearance of partisans before a general public, including in their exchanges with rival partisans. All such associations can expect to be denounced as mere interested agents by their opponents; what is crucial is that they have the internal resources to resist this. Commitment to their stated ends needs a demonstrable basis to it if the undecided are to be enlisted in support. Equally important is how the association is appraised by those who compose it. The solidarity of partisans towards their fellows and their willingness to fulfil their mutual obligations is likely to depend on their recognizing each other as responsive to their partisan commitments. Organization must be structured so it does not corrupt the meaning of their partisanship but affirms it.

Principle Two: Party Structure should give Proportionate Voice to its Partisans

The partisan association forms, we have suggested, a network of ethical ties. The density of those ties varies according to the levels and types of interaction, being strongest amongst those who have made a formal statement of allegiance (as members) or who are closely embedded in reciprocal relations of sacrifice and advantage, but extending outwards also to those more loosely aligned (see Chapter 5). The party organization, one may infer, needs to reflect this basic structure. An essential element in doing so will be to give voice to partisans in the decision-making of the party, proportionate to their position in the ethical life of the association.

The importance of voice as a form of recognition derives from the ideas-based nature of the association.[10] Partisans form ties in view of commitments placed in common. The terms of association are meaningful to the extent that those involved can influence the decisions taken in the light of those commitments and any revisions to which those commitments are subject. Where the authoritative interpretation of the shared aims and principles of the association is arbitrarily restricted to the few, the thing most central to the enterprise is taken out of the hands of its participants. The practices of justification central to the internal life of the party (discussed in Chapters 5 and 6) are moreover liable to become one-directional and insufficiently tested. Naturally, there may be prudential reasons to grant voice to the members of an association: it gives dissenters an alternative to exit, and may cultivate a favourable public reputation for the group.[11] But even were there no such

[10] It is also a form of recognition that (unlike e.g. special personal honours) is likely to be consistent with the previous injunction not to mask the partisan claim.

[11] Cf. Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*.

advantages, it is, we suggest, a requirement implied by the very nature of the partisan association.

To highlight the importance of proportionality is first and foremost to highlight that *all* partisans should have some influence over the party's affairs. To be a partisan is to rely on others and to have them rely on you. Insofar as an individual contributes something worthwhile to the activities of her peers, and that contribution is attributable to the ties they share as partisans, she deserves an opportunity to influence the organization's decision-making. At the same time, the party organization should be sensitive to the gradations of involvement displayed by different individuals. There are good reasons to grant considerably more influence to those who are active members, and within this group to those who engage in the most demanding forms of partisan practice.

Principle Three: Party Structure should Preserve the Constancy of the Partisan Project

To maintain the promise of partisanship as a continuing project that can endure beyond the lifespan of the individuals that compose it, some measure of continuity is crucial. The pursuit of the long-term ends partisans set themselves requires cumulative contributions across an extended period of time, and the avoidance of actions that cancel the positive contribution of prior actions. A third principle of organization is therefore that it should anchor the partisan association cross-temporally.

At the most basic level this is a matter of giving ongoing visibility to the association's existence. Ever-changing in terms of its individual composition, the collective needs ways to signify its enduring identity. Such rudimentary markers as a party name and a set of symbols may be adequate to this basic task. The creation of offices, formal roles abstracted from the individuals that may enact them at a given moment, is another way in which the basic continuity of an association can be fostered.[12] But also at stake is the programmatic constancy of the association. To stabilize its existence in this dimension, the party organization needs ways to authoritatively articulate the commitments partisans hold in common, manage their periodic revision, and bring them to bear on the party's decision-making.

As noted in Chapter 6, partisans should not be forced to adhere rigidly to a set of commitments articulated in the party's first days of existence. They have good reason to let these evolve over time. What is important is rather that the trajectory of the party's development be visible and something for which they

[12] Whether such offices need entail hierarchy and functional specialization is something we return to below.

must account. This helps preserve the coherence of the party as a cross-temporal project. It also reduces the chance that citizens are misled into supporting a party for commitments it no longer embraces, and ensures it is costly for partisans to voice commitments they have no intention of honouring in the long term or to voice incompatible commitments simultaneously. As we shall argue, locating their actions as part of an unfolding constitutional arrangement puts normative pressure on partisans to account for their actions in this way. A set of foundational partisan texts, combined with procedures for interpreting them and acting on them, are likely to be central to achieving constancy of programme in this way.

These three principles are neither exhaustive nor without possible tensions, but a certain interdependence between them should be clear. Preserving the normative clarity of the partisan claim implies minimizing reliance on material rewards: but what then does the partisan organization grant its associates? A degree of voice in the deliberative process by which broad principles and aims are turned into concrete proposals is a response in part to this question, especially for those deeply embedded in the activities of the party. For those more remotely involved, but also for those at odds with their fellow partisans on a particular issue and in the position of having to accept a decision they oppose, association with the party finds meaning in the advancement of a long-term project. The presumption of constancy in programme, and the justification of departures from existing orthodoxy when undertaken, is central to the preservation of such a project. Programmatic continuity thus combines with voice in giving sense to participation in an ideas-based organization. In this way the elements hang together.

Principles of Organization in Practice

There are innumerable ways in which such general principles may find expression. To some degree they can be read into existing forms of partisan organization. Without suggesting these matters can be settled in the abstract—to reiterate: context here is crucial—for illustrative purposes it is worthwhile to indicate how efforts to honour them might look in practice.

Parties are typically pictured in the empirical scholarship as offering a mix of material and non-material incentives to their adherents, where the former include such benefits as a salary or the possibility of career advancement.[13] That some partisans should be remunerated for their activities seems in many

[13] See e.g. Ware, *Political Parties and Party Systems*, Chapter 2, where non-material incentives are both those of companionship itself ('solidary') and the advancing of the party's ends ('purposive'); cf. Chapter 6 in this volume.

contexts unavoidable: parties without professionals are likely to be severely disadvantaged in their dealings with other actors. Yet excessive reliance on material incentives weakens the credibility of the party as an organization dedicated to a principled project.[14] Maximizing the number of situations in which partisans can affirm their commitment requires minimizing the intrusion of organizational features that speak to alternative motivations. This potentially has application across a wide field of partisan activity, including not just how a party organizes its campaigns (volunteering and the local organizational features that enable this), but the prominence it grants in day-to-day decision-making to those whose partisanship is unremunerated. Those who do *not* make a living from the activities of the party are those who best express the normativity of the association: to give them influence in the party is to undergird its claim to be a principled agent.[15]

Structuring the party to preserve the credibility of partisan commitment is likely also to involve giving visibility to the individual demands that partisanship makes. Where the discharge of burdens is unseen—as for instance when coordination is purely electronically-mediated[16]—then the organization does little to express its members' commitment and may dilute the sense of standing together for the sake of shared ends. Where, conversely, partisanship is visibly exacting (e.g. a time-consuming activity such as a demonstration), those who practise it signify their attachment to shared political commitments and give others reasons to be confident of their dedication. Important here is also the *distribution* of demands within the party. An organization in which membership entails considerably lighter demands for some than others, or in which individuals can extract themselves from the demands placed on them, again risks masking the normativity of the partisan association.

To highlight the merits of visibly demanding membership is not to overlook that there may be gradations of partisan affiliation. We noted in Chapter 1 the significance of partisans beyond the membership circle who do not hold formal attachments to the party but nonetheless act in coordination with it. These looser forms of affiliation count as partisanship to the extent that they involve sustained coordination with others in the name of shared commitments, but the sacrifices they entail may be considerably lighter than those of activist members. This is no reason to discount them: a larger movement of this kind may be a significant political advantage. The point is rather that the partisan association benefits from making visible more demanding forms of

[14] Cf. Panebianco, *Political Parties*, pp. 10–11, 24–5.

[15] It may be asked whether foregrounding unpaid activity is not liable to put partisanship in the hands of the well-off, thereby compounding more general societal problems of unequal demobilization. This risk is admittedly real; we judge the risks of masking the normativity of partisanship through generalized remuneration to be greater however.

[16] Cf. some of the forms discussed in Scarrow, *Beyond Party Members*.

membership at its core so as to give credibility to the partisan claim to be pursuing principled aims rather than interest narrowly defined.

The party's source of income is another major question regarding its capacity to make a credible partisan claim. The autonomy of the party as a normative agent—its demonstrable irreducibility to an interest group—is likely to be inseparable from its financial autonomy of individuals and small groups. A party's reliance on a handful of donors inevitably blurs its difference from a faction. Dependence on state funding is also not unproblematic, as the association is then easily viewed as the creature of institutions.[17] There would seem to be no substitute for a model based on volunteering and small contributions spread across the many, underpinned by a legal cap on the size of individual donations.[18] Can the many be convinced to volunteer and contribute? Perhaps only if they can be certain of some voice in party decision-making and of the constancy of the project to which they contribute.

These considerations bear on familiar debates, common in young parties especially, concerning the degree of hierarchy and coercion appropriate to partisan organization.[19] As we have already seen in our discussion of revolutionary partisanship, for the advocate of horizontal forms of organization, coercion threatens to corrupt the meaning of partisanship just as much as do material incentives. To the extent that action can be ascribed to the avoidance of censure, a normative account becomes harder.[20] Conversely, a party in which power is dispersed across the many rather than concentrated in the hands of leaders, and in which the burdens of membership are decided collectively rather than imposed from above, would seem to be one where the normativity of partisanship is most visible. This is one of the appealing aspects of so-called 'movement parties', in which hierarchy and coercion are, for a period at least, minimal. This type of 'liquid' party organization occasionally appears as the stated aim of a partisan association.[21]

What plagues such models of organization of course is the prospect that the normative ends of the party, and its capacity to act on them, become weakened by exactly this absence of coercive structure. Where there are no mechanisms for authoritatively identifying the commitments on which the association is grounded, the temptation is to avoid articulating them with any

[17] Cf. Katz and Mair, 'Cartel Party Thesis'.

[18] See e.g. the 2011 report of the UK Committee on Standards in Public Life, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/thirteenth-report-of-the-committee-on-standards-in-public-life. A good discussion of party funding is Jonathan Hopkin, 'The Problem with Party Finance: Theoretical Perspectives on the Funding of Party Politics', *Party Politics* 10 (6) (2004); see also Michael Koß, *The Politics of Party Funding: State Funding to Political Parties and Party Competition in Western Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[19] See e.g. della Porta and Chironi, 'Movements in Parties'.

[20] Cf. Geoffrey Brennan et al., *Explaining Norms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), Chapter 1.

[21] On the German Greens, see Kitschelt, 'Movement Parties'.

precision, for fear of generating disagreements that the party is ill-equipped to resolve. Such parties are moreover no less prone—indeed, potentially more so—to de facto domination by individuals than those with established hierarchies.[22] If these two concerns are to be mediated—avoidance, on the one hand, of the displacement of normative commitment by coercive intra-party rule, while on the other, the blurring of normative ends and possible tendencies to personal capture—it seems likely it will only be by an organization which is rule-based, yet whose rules are shaped with the broad participation of partisans.[23] Hierarchy and coercion may be legitimate components of partisan organization, in other words, but only to the extent they are plausibly understood as instituted by the partisan association as a whole, not the self-made hegemony of a clique. This is a model many parties of the twentieth century approximated to some degree in the form of annual conferences intended to guide the party's decision-making. It is one that certain contemporary experiments in party organization seem intent on pushing further, as they pursue intra-party democratic mechanisms in conscious rejection of the 'light' structures that leave a party without focus and prone to individual capture.[24]

Participatory structures seem especially important if we recall that a second principle of organization is that the party structure should *give proportionate voice to its partisans*. Here, in addition to participatory rule-making, configuring the party as an integrated system of communication seems essential. Again, party conferences have traditionally acted as one basis for this, bringing members together for debates concerning the articulation of normative commitments and their translation into policy proposals. In many parties, these periodic assemblies have become increasingly marginal to party decision-making—an opportunity for image management by the leadership rather than the consequential exercise of voice across the association as a whole.[25] This marks a significant loss, contributing to the detachment of the organization from the normative commitments for which it was formed.

[22] As one example, see Beppe Grillo's control over the Italian party M5S. On rejection of organization in contemporary social movements, see Marina Prentoulis and Lasse Thomassen, 'Political Theory in the Square: Protest, Representation and Subjectification', *Contemporary Political Theory* 12 (3) (2013).

[23] Recall here also our discussion of revolutionary partisanship in Chapter 8.

[24] Cf. della Porta and Chironi, 'Movements in Parties'; cf. the efforts to create democratic structures in Podemos, paired with an acceptance of limited hierarchy: see https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/04/podemos-spain-pablo-iglesias-european-left/. See also Costas Douzinas, *Philosophy and Resistance in the Crisis: Greece and the Future of Europe* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013), esp. Chapter 11, 'Lessons of Political Strategy'.

[25] See Danny Rye, 'Political Parties and Power: A New Framework for Analysis', *Political Studies* 63 (5) (2015); Florence Faucher-King, *Changing Parties: An Anthropology of British Political Conferences* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

The rise of electronic forms of communication holds possibilities for an alternative form of discursive integration. Not only do such media offer ways to build a network of interaction between members, but they also help connect the membership group to a larger, informal partisan community, as well as establish less dense network ties with other such communities of the like-minded across national borders.[26] Many of the more vital contemporary parties have relied on communication networks for these purposes, and also as ways to engage with the non-partisan public.[27] Unlike older forms of party organization, these mechanisms are continuous rather than periodic in their temporal structure, allowing interactions to track events in day-to-day politics.

But arguably they cannot substitute for face-to-face ties, nor for the more demanding forms of participation and deliberation that may depend on this. Beyond the revitalization of the existing apparatus of party debate—conferences, assemblies, local circles, and the like—one may point here to some of the deliberative forms familiar in non-partisan contexts which offer untapped resources for organizing parties, including deliberative polls, conventions, and problem-oriented forums. Recent research suggests these may be promising ways to extend the deliberative features present but often poorly served in existing parties.[28] As fairly demanding forms of partisan engagement, privileging these as key sites of influence over party decision-making means giving proportionately greater voice to those partisans most closely involved in the partisan project. These are also ways to give voice to those whose partisanship is unremunerated. Even if not all partisans can be volunteers, it seems appropriate that a party develop additional channels of influence for those who are. More than just a way to maintain a principled public profile, this respects the importance of fair relations between partisans.

What of preserving the *constancy of the partisan project*? How can the cross-temporal character of partisanship, the durability of its normative profile, be established and maintained—particularly if the involvement of large numbers of partisans in decision-making is sought? In organizational terms the answer has typically been the party constitution, by which members commit to certain long-term goals and seek to constrain their successors accordingly. Anchoring partisanship in the demands of a foundational text would seem

[26] On the political implications of blogs, see Henry Farrell and Daniel W. Drezner, 'The Power and Politics of Blogs', *Public Choice* 134 (1–2) (2008).

[27] Iglesias, 'Understanding Podemos'; in the context of the 2014 Scottish referendum, see the emergence of the SNP and its interaction with such parallel media as *Bella Caledonia*.

[28] See here especially Wolkenstein, 'Deliberative Model of Intra-Party Democracy', final section; also Fabio Wolkenstein, *Deliberative Democracy within Political Parties*, PhD Thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2016. On intra-party deliberation as a normative ideal, see Teorell, 'Deliberative Defence of Intra-Party Democracy'; on recent empirical trends, see William Cross and Richard Katz (eds.), *The Challenges of Intra-Party Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

to invite a more consistent, coherent form of partisanship. Almost all political parties have a written document of this kind, some detailed and comprehensive, others less so.[29] Such texts perform many functions, including establishing certain procedures functionally necessary to the party. Significant for our purposes is that such documents typically include a statement of the party's principles and aims, plus some rules of organization to underpin them. These can be understood as efforts by the founding generation to embed a long-term project at the party's core, and to manage the internal conflict that might detract from the party's successful pursuit of it. In some cases a constitutional text of this kind is also a legal requirement, intended to clarify to a wider public what a party stands for.[30] Such documents not only communicate the aims and principles of the party to a wider public: they commit those who associate with the party to pursuing them.

Yet the concept of constitution needs further consideration. The idea of a single document purporting to bind partisans in their choice of goals may be too rigid. If partisans are consistently to advance a set of commitments over the long term, they will need the latitude to refine the finer points of these in the light of changing social and political conditions. We suggest a party's constitution is usefully conceived as an evolving entity—what is sometimes called in constitutional thought a 'living constitution'.[31] In place of an 'originalist' emphasis exclusively on the words and meanings of a founding text, one may broaden the notion of a constitution to include a range of authoritative party texts as these emerge over the association's larger history. Key ones are likely to be election manifestos and other major policy statements issued in the party's name. Such texts and the reasoning that supports them serve to reinterpret the association's commitments in the light of changing circumstances. Those more recent in time may fairly carry more weight, as those that speak more directly to present conditions, but in principle the corpus can be regarded as spanning the party's history.[32] Rather than something fixed, as such the constitution evolves with the party, expanding as new situations arise. Partisan allegiance may be conceived of as a kind of *constitutional patriotism*:[33] allegiance to a set of founding principles and to the

[29] Little has been written on party constitutions and certainly nothing like the volume of scholarship on the US Constitution alone. A rare study is Rodney Smith and Anika Gauja, 'Understanding Party Constitutions as Responses to Specific Challenges', *Party Politics* 16 (6) (2010) which sets out some tentative observations based on a close examination of sixteen parties in the Australian state of New South Wales, 2005–8. For some remarks on the relationship between a party's constitution and its history of political success, see Smith and Gauja, 'Understanding Party Constitutions', pp. 760ff.

[30] Smith and Gauja, 'Understanding Party Constitutions', p. 766.

[31] Cf. David A. Strauss, *The Living Constitution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[32] A living constitution thereby acknowledges the contribution of many generations to the party's development, not just the contribution of the founding generation.

[33] Cf. Jan-Werner Müller, *Constitutional Patriotism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

ongoing process by which these are interpreted, augmented, and revised over the course of the association's existence.

While the constraint posed by a 'living constitution' differs from that of a constitution conventionally understood, it is a real constraint nonetheless. Though partisans of the present are not bound to the letter of their founding document, they cannot legitimately adopt whatever political aims appeal to them in a given moment. They must be able to link their decisions to precedents in the party's history, showing them to be continuous with what the association has traditionally stood for, and showing how innovations extend previously-held commitments into new domains or adapt them appropriately to new societal conditions. An advantage of seeing a party's constitution in these terms is that it sharpens the normative expectation of coherence in the party's day-to-day decision-making. If new texts emerging from the party automatically enjoy a constitutional status, how they relate to one another demands attention if partisans are to avoid a constitution riven by contradiction. The effect is a normative impediment, not to incremental change (as the evolution of common law bears out), but to the sharp shifts and unreasoned revisions associated with political opportunism.

One way to give this organized expression would be a partisan archive in which the party's programmatic texts are brought together and preserved, and to which new texts are added as they arise. The party constitution—conventionally understood—would feature prominently, but it would be augmented with a wide range of further materials. These would include past election manifestos, major party statements, and everyday materials such as press releases. Criteria for the inclusion of texts would be that they are intended for public consumption and expressed in the name of the party rather than in a personal capacity. Interestingly, Antonio Gramsci's famous discussion of the political party in 'The Modern Prince' contains suggestive remarks along similar lines, highlighting the importance of a place of record where the party's constancy of programme can be critically scrutinized.[34]

[34] Under the heading 'Continuity and Tradition', where Gramsci notes an important question 'that pertains to the organising centre of a grouping [is], namely, the question of "continuity" that tends to create a "tradition"', in addition to an emphasis on the evolving form characteristic of a living constitution, he emphasizes the process of critical reflection needed to guide this. See Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, Vol. I, pp. 69–70: 'The "juridical" continuity of the organising centre must be not of the Byzantine-Napoleonic type (that is, a code conceived as permanent) but of the Roman–Anglo-Saxon kind, whose essential characteristic consists in its method, which is realistic, always in touch with concrete life in perpetual development. This organic continuity requires a good archive, well stocked, and easy to consult, in which all past activity can be readily verified and "criticised". The most important instances of these activities are not so much the "organic decisions" as the explicative, reasoned (educative) circulars. There exists, to be sure, the danger of becoming "bureaucratised", but every organic continuity presents this danger, which must be watched. The danger of discontinuity, of improvisation, is much greater.'

That increased publicity should have beneficial effects on political behaviour and argument is a long-standing idea. Particularly relevant to our discussion is the suggestion that publicity submits actors to a *consistency constraint*,[35] such that once they openly adopt a principled position they are under normative pressure to maintain it. Those who renege on commitments publicly made will be widely condemned as opportunistic if they cannot give a principled account of their shift.[36] To publicize commitments is therefore to make them harder to abandon. This fact has some challenging implications, particularly for those who regard a willingness to revise preferences as the hallmark of reasonable politics.[37] But to the extent that enduring political commitment is desirable, as we have tried to argue it is, the link between publicity and consistency is worth seeking to institutionalize.

Within parties, one can expect efforts to give greater visibility to party constitutions to have a significant body of supporters, especially amongst those dissatisfied with their party's direction yet unwilling to abandon it outright. An archive could be a useful source of factual material on which such groups might draw to criticize wayward elites. For Gramsci, party newspapers and journals were central to the process of critically appraising the past and present.[38] Contributors to such publications would be amongst the obvious beneficiaries of an accessible party archive. More intriguing are the implications for partisans beyond the party, including those associated with like-minded parties abroad. A party archive acts as an important informational source for partisan counterparts across borders and therefore also as an aid to transnational partisan debate, as well as being the facilitator of a distinct source of normative pressure on partisans to maintain their programmatic commitments.

Strengthening a party's constitution might take the form of intra-party institutions designed to connect it with the party's decision-making—accepting of course that there may be trade-offs here in the shape of bureaucratization. A party ombudsman, or in larger parties a council, would be one way to provide ongoing evaluation of party initiatives in the light of the association's past, augmented with powers to bring a debate to party conference should concerns arise. The role of such an office would resemble that of

[35] Elster, 'Deliberation and Constitution Making', p. 104.

[36] Elster, 'Deliberation and Constitution Making', p. 104. Note however that the disciplining effect of publicity does not rely on an actor's every move being scrutinized (a point well captured in Bentham's idea of the *panopticon*). It is enough that there is the *possibility* of scrutiny and uncertainty about what is scrutinised and what is not—an important point in the present context given the volume of texts generated by a political party.

[37] Elster, 'Deliberation and Constitution Making', p. 111.

[38] Cf. Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, Vol. I, p. 70, on the place of the communist bulletin: 'Organ: the "bulletin" with three major sections: (1) articles on general policy; (2) decisions and circulars; (3) critique of the past, that is, continual reference to the past from the viewpoint of the present in order to show the differentiations and clarifications and to justify them critically.'

a supreme court in the larger political setting, providing authoritative interpretations of the party's living constitution and ensuring present-day initiatives were considered in the light of precedents.[39] In addition to forestalling decisions inconsistent with the party's existing constitution, its tasks might include assessing whether certain party statements should be rescinded and thereby expunged from the constitution. This capacity to overturn bad precedents would limit the risk, characteristic of 'living constitutions', of the collective being led astray by lapses of judgement that subsequent decisions compound. The existence of such an office could be made a condition of auxiliary state funding for the party.

Matters of leadership are equally central to the question of a party's constancy and sustainability. Partisans who allow their party to be dominated by a single individual, though they may boost its fortunes in the short term by drawing on personal charisma, put its longer-term prospects in doubt. Not only does individual domination risk displacing programmatic commitments with the politics of personality; it also ties the party closely to the individual's reputation—and is easily tarnished by it.[40] Problems of leadership succession are also accentuated in such cases. Historically some of the party leaderships to have left the strongest legacy for their successors have been relatively collegial in structure.[41] Absolute command has not been sought, or has been restrained by the efforts of partisan peers. In an increasingly mediatized environment, and especially in presidential systems, elements of personalization may be inescapable.[42] But they can be amplified or contained, and rarely are they indispensable to a party's success.[43] For the durability of the partisan project, the legacy of dispersed authority is likely to be superior to that of one-person rule.

A party structured in the way we have described would be one conducive to partisan deliberation. Centred on a process of intra-party constitutional evaluation and with the role of personality minimized, it would be one well

[39] The well-known Report of the American Political Science Association's Committee on Political Parties (APSA, 1950) advocated the establishment of a 'Party Council' with binding powers in each of the main US parties to counter their weak cohesion. The Report remains an instructive set of proposals for how to strengthen the programmatic commitments of parties, though it has less to say on cross-temporal continuity. On the role of ombudsman in the Australian Democrats, see Smith and Gauja, 'Understanding Party Constitutions', p. 764.

[40] On Labour's vulnerability, once dependent on Blair's charisma, and on the drop in party membership and support suffered once his leadership became 'toxic' after the Iraq War, see Stuart McAnulla, 'Post-Political Poisons? Evaluating the "Toxic" Dimensions of Tony Blair's Leadership', *Representation* 47 (3) (2011).

[41] On the collegiality e.g. of Labour under Atlee (pp. 114ff.) or the ANC under Mandela (pp. 183ff.), see Archibald Brown, *The Myth of the Strong Leader* (London: Bodley Head, 2014).

[42] Cf. Ian McAllister, 'The Personalisation of Politics', in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior*, ed. Russell J. Dalton and Hans-Dieter Klingemann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[43] Cf. Anthony King (ed.), *Leaders' Personalities and the Outcomes of Democratic Elections* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

placed to serve the principles and aims that define the association. The continuity of present-day policies with the party's past, and thus their contribution to an ongoing project, would become increasingly salient as a point of debate, as would the rationale for reinterpretations of this tradition and departures from it. Of course, this deliberative process would unfold within the parameters set by the party's constitution as it exists at a particular moment. It would not be the unbounded process implied by deliberation as preference-revision in response to unmediated facts. It would rather be deliberation as the interpretation and sharpening of justifications for existing commitments. In this way the party organization may be configured to underpin the constancy of the partisan project, as well as give voice to its partisans and maintain the visibility of the partisan claim.

We raise these organizational possibilities not to suggest a template of general application. There are other ways to institutionalize the principles we have discussed, and no doubt other criteria to be considered besides. The crucial point is a simple one: if we are to take partisanship seriously as a normative practice, we must approach the shape of a party in view of the underlying logic of that practice. Partisan organization complements the spirit of partisanship not just to the extent that it propels members to power, but to the extent it communicates adequately their partisan claim, actively involves partisans in the decision-making of their association, and ties their actions into an enduring and cumulative project.

Final Remarks

The contemporary world sees many established parties grappling with the prospect of decline, especially but not only in Europe. Comparative politics offers us a rich literature on the crisis of party democracy, understood both in terms of the repudiation of parties by ordinary citizens and the retreat of party elites from their fellow partisans. The longer view suggests concern at the poor condition of existing parties is long-standing, distinguished today only by its status as an increasingly mainstream observation.

But while many of the political actors habitually called parties have displayed well-catalogued failings, this reflects not just the practical challenges of political organization but the casual way 'party' is deployed in analysis, often to include groups whose basis in shared commitment is negligible. Frequently one struggles to discern anything like a partisan claim emerging from the leaders of what commonly passes for a party. In place of a principled interpretation of the political principles and aims worth pursuing, one sees the legitimation of policy by reference to functional expedience or a lack of

alternatives. Where partisanship is displaced by the logic of accountancy and technocracy, the desertion of parties by their members and supporters is little surprising: without a set of normative commitments at its core, partisanship becomes essentially meaningless. It is not glib to suggest that what is rejected in such instances is less partisanship itself than the practices that have come to substitute for it.

Typically positioned directly in opposition to such tendencies, the appearance of new political formations rather different in make-up is also to be observed in the first two decades of the twenty-first century. While some emerging actors are correctly identified as opponents of party democracy—the 'populist' description is often appropriate—others are relatively in tune with a normative conception of partisanship. They advance a partisan claim, grounded in shared commitments, and seek ways of imprinting it on political institutions. They express an intention to do so in a lasting, continuous fashion; whether they achieve this durability is yet to be seen.

There is a reasonable line of scepticism that regards an emphasis on principled political agency as wholly unsuited to a critical engagement with today's world. We have noted the doubts commonly raised about the possibility of making organizations receptive to normative ideals. More profound is the scepticism of those who see fundamental transformations in the social and economic structure of contemporary societies as ruling out the possibility of marshalling large numbers of people to a cause, or of achieving meaningful political change in the course of it. The imperatives of late capitalism, the weakness of the modern state, the strictures of transnational institutions, and the demands of social acceleration—all can be summoned to suggest the insignificance of partisan practice. (They are challenges of course to democracy and democratic theory *tout court*.) Some such concerns can be addressed by conceiving partisanship in a way that preserves space for radically transformative and cross-national mobilization. Liberal democracy as it exists need not mark the partisan's horizon of possibility: social transformation may be the enabling condition as much as the limiting factor. But for those inclined to a structural diagnosis of the major political trajectories of the moment, such features will be a minor concession, if not an escalation of the idealizing tendency. Parties, in this view, are quite simply not where it's at.

Perhaps the sceptical position has some truth in it. Perhaps this account of partisanship, encompassing as it is, is no more than the anatomy of something passed—instructive, one might argue, for the questions it raises of competing political modes, but ultimately instructive by the *via negativa*. The point is that such a conclusion must always be speculative. However firm the limits to partisanship's potential, they can only be charted through political agency. There may be determinate constraints on its prospects, but

the challenge is to separate these from the constraints that are historically contingent, those bound up in the particularities of parties as we know them. Since a separation of this kind is inherently precarious, there seems merit in persisting with a political mode both familiar and still subject to real-world innovation, and in reconstructing the stance that gives meaning to it.

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