THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CONSERVATISM, PART I: THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND THEORIES OF EYSENCK AND RAY

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The first part of a two-part review of the contemporary literature on the psychology of conservatism is presented. The main definitional and conceptual problems associated with this literature are discussed. The theories Eysenck and Ray offer to explain conservatism are outlined and critically evaluated.

The following collection of publications provides a convenient occasion for undertaking a review of certain recent attempts to account fully or partially for the conservatism of individuals and groups (Eysenck, 1971, 1972, 1975; Hicks, 1974; Lindgren, 1974; Ray, 1974; Stone, 1974; Wilson, 1973). Whatever "conservatism" is precisely taken to mean, these authors assume that it can be defined and measured with some minimal precision, that we have some confirmed generalizations about it, and that these generalizations can be inter-related to produce a reasonable account of conservatism. However, they employ definitions and strategies for coming to understand the complexities of conservatism. For example, Hicks and Lindgren use voter preference for political candidates to index or measure conservatism, whereas the other authors rely on questionnaire measures which vary considerably in both content and complexity. Further, the relationship between questionnaire measures of conservatism and conservatism in the national or international political arena is not made clear. This is typified by Eysenck's statement in his *Foreword* to Wilson (1973) that the ten authors of the book are concerned with a psychological not a political concept, that people may be left of centre politically but psychologically conservative or politically conservative but psychologically liberal, which is hardly enlightening.

One finds in dictionaries two of the simplest and most prevalent definitions of conservatism: (a) the doctrine and practice of Conservatives; and (b) the tendency to preserve or keep intact and unchanged existing institutions and values. Conservatism in these two definitions has several components. In the former it may be used to refer to the doctrine and practice of one or more of many influential groups or organizations or parties of Conservatives. In the latter it may refer to opposition to change in general or to change that affects particular individuals or groups in society or be specific to certain kinds of change. Further, a conservative person may actively practise her/his philosophy and/or actively oppose change or may simply hold beliefs, values and attitudes that resist influences for change. In addition,

which specific beliefs, values, and attitudes are considered conservative may depend on time and place unless a non-relative definition of conservatism is adopted.

There are other important conceptions of conservatism. These include a high valuation of hierarchy and social order; emphasis on authority and obedience, on law and order; a generally restrictive, rather than permissive and tolerant, orientation to behaviour; anti-egalitarianism including resistance to change which would benefit the masses or seriously disadvantaged segments of society at some expense to the advantaged segments; unwillingness to take risks, a cautiousness which may be restricted to individual behaviour or generalized to organizations and collectivities including the nation; traditional and orthodox in outlook; beliefs that human nature and the exigencies of existence inevitably lead to a good deal of inequality, suffering and misery, that all efforts at levelling are futile and lead to disappointments; realistic rather than idealistic in the popular sense of these terms; hostility to socialist ideas and aims. Each of these conceptions of conservatism has many features. Significantly, several of them directly or indirectly involve innovation and change. Though resistance to change is stressed in most formal definitions of conservatism, it is widely recognised that conservatives favour change that contributes to the maintenance of the existing order or reverses unpalatable developments. That is conservatism is not necessarily synonymous with stagnation.

With one exception, the authors of the above publications do not work with any clear definition or conception of conservatism, but rely rather on candidate/political party or personality/attitude scale criteria to anchor their thinking and research. In Wilson (1973), for example, the editor and ten contributors present a range of views on conservatism which does not lead to any clear conclusion. To the distinction between political and psychological conservatism in the *Foreword* is added a distinction between social and economic conservatism (p. 28) and a distinction between politico-economic conservatism and "resistance to change and the tendency to prefer safe, traditional and conventional forms of institutions and behaviour" (p. 4), while conservatism is equated with authoritarianism (p. 23) (yet Stone, 1974, devotes separate chapters to authoritarianism and conservatism-liberalism). Wilson himself describes conservatism as a "general factor underlying the entire field of social attitudes" (p. 3) and claims the characteristics of the ideal or extreme conservative are religious fundamentalism, pro-establishment politics, insistence on strict rules and punishment, militarism, ethnocentrism and intolerance of minority groups, preference for the conventional in art, clothing, and institutions, an anti-hedonistic outlook including restriction of sexual behaviour, opposition to scientific progress, and a tendency to be superstitious and fatalistic (pp. 5-9). He then describes four overlapping conceptualizations which delineate the nature of conservatism; (a) resistance to change; (b) a general preference for playing safe and avoiding risks; (c) quantification of the

generation gap (i.e. lesser conservatism of the young); and (d) internalization of parental prohibitions within which social phenomena and behaviour are evaluated (pp. 12-14). What holds Wilson's book together is research based on well-known scales, especially the Wilson-Patterson Conservatism (or C) Scale. And this scale reflects the alleged characteristics of the ideal conservative rather than the four conceptualizations of the nature of conservatism (p. 51).

The one exception is Ray (1974) who, following Edmund Burke, defines conservatism as a cynical or hardened view of humanity. This hardened view is consistently evident in Ray's 29 articles and in the 26 articles of other writers he selected to fill out his book (including ones by Stewart Alsop, Max Beloff, Milton Friedman and Alvin Toffler). In this book, which contains treatments of topical and more academic issues, we find a defence of French nuclear tests, US warfare in Vietnam and S.E. Asia, the genetic basis of racial differences in intelligence, the Smith regime in Rhodesia, the white Australia policy, the segregation of whites and aboriginals in Australia, monarchy, inegalitarianism, censorship, unrestrained population growth, control of prices by market forces, and the unregulated exploitation of natural resources, and we also find bitter attacks on opponents of French nuclear tests, US warfare in Asia, and apartheid in South Africa, on Australia's army of 34,000 in comparison with similarly populated Taiwan's 600,000, nationalization of private business and industry, price controls, pollution control by legislation, subsidies to the arts, the "new education", higher education that is not specifically vocational, "plastic radicals" in universitites, and all kinds of "Leftism". Ray's book is by far the most overtly political in intent of the above publications, its authors all apparently being, in Wilson's terminology, ideal conservatives.

EYSENCK ON THE STRUCTURE OF SOCIAL ATTITUDES

In *The Psychology of Politics,* Eysenck used the items of existing attitude scales, as well as items devised by himself and his collaborators, to study empirically conservative-radical attitudes, believing that attitudes range along a right-left dimension. He resolved responses to selected items into two main factors which he named "radicalism-conservatism" (R) and "tough-tender mindedness" (T), and indicated that the T-Scale has similar characteristics to the California Authoritarianism (F) Scale. The Fascist was described as a tough-minded conservative and the Communist as a tough-minded radical. Supporters of the larger political parties in Britain were assigned positions in this two-factor scheme, with the main differences being along the R dimension, the T dimension being of little discriminative importance. Eysenck claimed that the R-factor is the one fundamental dimension of social attitudes and that the T-factor is a projection on to the attitude level of the personality variable extraversion, which takes different forms in the case of conservatives and radicals. This leads to the unsurprising

conclusion that supporters of the Conservative Party are less conservative than Fascists but more conservative than Communists and supporters of the Labour and Liberal Parties. Eysenck also claimed that manual working class people are more tough-minded than people higher in the social structure.

Eysenck's (1954) two-factor theory was immediately subjected to a barrage of criticism (Christie, 1955, 1956a, b; Hanley and Rokeach, 1956; Rokeach and Hanley, 1956). Critics pointed out that the samples he used were unusual, the validity of his measuring instruments was highly suspect, and the analysis of his data misleading. Replication of his research demonstrated that the primary component of the T-Scale is moralistic religiosity and that people with religious affiliations average higher T-Scale scores (i.e. appear more tender-minded) than those without such affiliations (Green and Stacey, 1964). Investigators in several countries have consistently reported a positive relationship between religiosity and T-Scale tender-mindedness (De Fronzo, 1972; Mehryar, 1970; Oliver and Butcher, 1962; Siegman, 1963; Stone, 1974). The relatively low levels of religiosity among Communists and Fascists probably explains why they tend to obtain lower T-Scale scores than other political groups. Investigators have also failed to find a significant correlation between extraversion and the T-factor (Mehryar, 1970; Siegman, 1963; Stone, 1974). Eysenck's (1954) claim that there is one fundamental dimension of social attitudes has been questioned (Ray, 1973; Stone, 1974). In fact there is now a clear division of opinion and evidence in a number of countries as to whether there is one pre-eminent dimension of social attiudes (Axelrod, 1967, Bruni and Eysenck, 1976; Eysenck, 1975. Ray, 1973; Stone, 1974). Perhaps the most striking position on this issue is that of Kerlinger (1967), who reaches the conclusion there is one fundamental dimension which he calls liberalism-conservatism, that liberalism and conservatism are independent and measures of them are unrelated, and that all attitudes can be grouped into the broad categories of favourable to innovation versus preference for established institutions and procedures.

In a series of publications from 1971 onwards Eysenck extended the work he reported in *The Psychology of Politics,* very largely ignoring the criticisms and empirical research referred to in the previous paragraph. Eysenck (1971) outlines a large-scale survey and interprets his results as showing: (1) women tend to be more tender-minded and conservative than men; (2) the old tend to be more tough-minded and conservative than the young; and (3) comparatively, "working-class" people are more conservative and tough-minded than non-working class people on most issues, the exceptions stemming from the radicalism of working class people on economic issues. Eysenck has this to say about a working class he does not define:

> Thus working class people, in summary, are nationalistic, even jingoistic, xenophobic, antisemitic, racialist, inhumane, narrowly moralistic in sexual matters, and unconcerned with ethical or religious issues (p. 205).

34

Eysenck (1972) describes what he calls the paradox of socialism, namely that working class people who less frequently support the prevailing Conservative Party than non-working class people average higher conservatism scores on relatively non-economic scales such as his own R-Scale. He then presents a view propounded earlier by Lipset (1960)—that while conservatism generally increases down the social structure, economic conservatism increases in the opposite direction, and that dominant working class attitudes are authoritarian and conservative.

Eysenck felt there was a contradiction in his research results on class and social attitudes which suggested the existence of two types of conservatism—one anti-progressive, non-economic and opposed to advanced views, the other socio-economic; the former prevalent in the working class, the latter prevalent outside the working class. In an attempt to resolve this contradiction Eysenck (1975) carried out a survey based on the reactions of 368 subjects to 88 attitude items. Ten correlated factors were extracted from the matrix of inter-correlations. The inter-correlations between these ten factors were then analysed, and three second-order factors extracted. These "superfactors", almost completely orthogonal, were interpreted to represent: (1) general conservative-radical ideology characterized by anti-progressive attitudes; (2) socio-economic conservatism versus socialism characterized by class conscious attitudes about increasing the material well-being of people outside the working class; (3) tough-mindedness versus tender-mindedness. Eysenck concludes that there are two kinds of conservatism, independent of each other, and related in different ways to the class structure. Finally, on the basis of extremely flimsy evidence Eaves and Eysenck (1974) claim that the original R- and T-factors both have a strong genetic component, with heritabilities of about 65 and 54 percent respectively.

In Eysenck's (1975) description of the three second-order factors, among the 13 items with high loadings on tough-mindedness are: men and women have the right to find out whether they are suited before marriage (e.g. by trial marriage*); the church should attempt to increase its influence on the life of the nation (-loading*); the universe was created by God (-loading*); most religious people are hyprocrites*; religious beliefs of all kinds are just superstitions; permissiveness in our society has gone much too far (-loading); sexual immorality destroys the marriage relation, which is the basis of our civilization (-loading); there is no survival after death*; euthanasia acceptable*; life is so short than man is justified in enjoying himself as much as he can*; divorce laws should be altered to make divorce easier*. This clearly remains a factor primarily of moralistic religiosity. The items indicated by an asterisk appeared in Eysenck's earlier T-Scale and also featured prominently in the primary component obtained by Green and Stacey (1964). T-factor religiosity is even more evident in Eysenck's Italian study (Bruni and Eysenck, 1976). The sex, age

and class differences in T-Scale scores reported by Eysenck, if valid, almost certainly reflect a mixture of differences in religious and other attitudes.

Eysenck's (1971) interpretation of group differences in his research results depends upon varying shades of group agreement or disagreement with his items because, by and large, they do not distinguish between different groups in terms of agreement versus disagreement (Eiser and Roiser, 1972). For example, Eysenck's conclusion that the "working-class' is antisemitic depends upon working class endorsement of "Jews are as valuable citizens as any other group" being slightly less positive than "middle-class" endorsement (a difference of around 0.14 in a range of 1 to 5 for 2902 subjects). Eiser and Roiser (1972) show that among Eysenck's subjects there is a marked tendency for the middle class groups to give more extreme responses to his items, suggesting the items are of most salience to these groups. This suggestion appears to be applicable to Eysenck's (1975) study. Other than one item dealing with people with high incomes, there is nothing among his items dealing with earned an unearned incomes, prices, inflation, taxes, trade unions, industrial relations, unemployment, the Common Market, migration, housing, transport, Celtic nationalism, Ulster and other issues of current interest, discussion and conflict. Many of his items have a dated, abstract, jaded air about them. Among his ten primary factors the three items which load highest on the factor "Socialism" are: royalty and nobility encourage snobbishness in a country, and are not compatible with democracy; in the interests of peace, we must give up part of our national sovereignty; tradition has too big an influence in this country; and on the factor "Capitalism" are: there is no such thing as a 'class struggle' in this country today; there exists a class of people whose family backgrounds and traditions make them the most fitted to lead the country; too much is paid in tax by people with high incomes. These primary factors scarcely do justice to the emphasis Eysenck (1971) places on economic conservatism and radicalism both from a capitalist and Marxist perspective (p. 211). Eiser and Roiser's (1972) claim that Eysenck fails to sample adequately social attitudes seems fully justified. Further, any general factor of conservatism discovered from a limited set of items applied in a heterogeneous population may not be equally applicable to all segments of the population and may give a misleading impression of the social distribution of issues and concerns. And there now exists a great deal of empirical research data from different countries contradicting the view that conservatism, authoritarianism and militarism are more prevalent in the manual working class than in other social strata, and supporting the view that they are most prevalent and intense in the upper social strata (Brown, 1965; Hamilton, 1972; Korpi, 1972; Schreiber, 1973; Stacey, 1977; Wright, 1972). It is impossible to escape the conclusion that the major criticisms directed at Eysenck's work on social attitudes over the past twenty years or so are completely warranted.

36

For Australian psychologist John Ray (1974), man is innately aggressive, predominantly selfish and has a good deal of evil in him. According to Ray, the conservative recognizes man's limitations and imperfectibility and is therefore cautious about social change, even when initiated with good intentions, and also recognises that conservatives are realists and radicals are, at least temporarily, self-deluded. Ray asserts:

> What makes a person we call conservative tick is not his opposition to change but the fact that *he is emotionally able to acknowledge and deal with the aggressiveness in human nature* (p. xxvii).

Following Eysenck and Lipset, Ray claims that conservatism is an ideology most strongly held by "working-class people". He argues that working class people (without defining this social group) are strongly conservative in the *policies* they *support,* unless they are against their economic self-interest. But as ideology matters little to the average working class voter, workers *vote* predominantly for left-of-centre parties because such *parties* offer them a better deal economically. Ray sees radicalism as a middle and upper class phenomenon.

Afer reviewing a number of studies dealing with conservatism, authoritarianism, and related variables, Ray (1973) concludes "Neither conceptually nor empirically does there appear to be any ground for distinguishing authoritarianism and conservatism—except that the former may be regarded as a somewhat more particular case of the latter" (p. 33). Yet Ray (1974, chapter 43) insists there is an important distinction between conservatism and authoritarianism and also within conservatism. He states authoritarianism refers to the acceptance/ rejection of authority, general or social conservatism refers to hostility to social change, especially in a permissive/humanitarian direction, and economic conservatism refers to issues with primarily an economic impact. He also suggests there may exist a political conservatism which encompasses military activities and issues of international policy. Ray (1974) then reports a small-scale study in which: (a) his own balanced measure of authoritarianism correlates with his own attitude to authority scale (.54) and with his own social, non-economic conservatism scale (.72) among 118 subjects; (b) his authoritarianism, attitude to authority and social conservatism scales correlate -.30, -.07 and -.22 respectively with manual/non-manual occupational status; and (c) 20 business subjects appear more politically and economically but less socially conservative than 42 manual workers, with 37 professionals the least politically and socially but not least economically conservative. He concludes:

> In the broad sense of authoritarianism . . . the workers are authoritarian; in the strict sense of authoritarianism implying favourable judgments of authority as such, the workers are not authoritarian . . . workers are not authoritarian but they are socially conservative (pp. 226-7).

Shortly afterwards in his largest study, based upon a semi-accidental national Australian sample of 4554 subjects, the results lead him to conclude:

> . . . the profile which emerges of the 'social conservative' in Australia is of someone who is older, more imbued with the Protestant Ethic, more likely to be a Liberal-Country Party voter, and slightly more family oriented. . . . He is not particularly likely to be working-class, more neurotic, more ambitious, or less alienated, and he makes up almost exactly half the population (Ray and Wilson, 1976, p. 257).

In this study the social conservatism scale contains 15 items, 6 of which deal directly with sex issues and 7 of which have sexual connotations. The phrase "exactly half the population" refers to the finding that the sample mean score of 45.38 on the scale is almost exactly at the arithmetical mid-point of 45.00—which is taken to indicate Australians are "neither characteristically 'conservative' nor characteristically 'radical' in the sample of social issues" (p. 255).

Ray (1974, chapter 54) offers an explanation of political party preference as an alternative to other explanations. He suggests that a person's experience of interpersonal aggression is crucial in the development of those beliefs and expectations that later give rise to political differences. He puts forward a unitary "acceptance of aggression" trait as a major determinant of political differences. The hypothesis is proposed that beliefs about the probability of interpersonal aggression are related to beliefs about the dangers of international aggression, that is the former generalizes to the latter. Ray developed an acceptance of aggression scale and administered it to the sample of 118 subjects referred to in the previous paragraph. He found that this scale correlated .32 with political conservatism and .28 with conservatism of voting preference. Ray interprets these results as supporting the idea that the issues of international politics in Western society "turn largely on simple differences in the upbringing experiences of the people on each side" (p. 379), even though he found his own class index correlated .49 with conservatism of voting preference in this sample. Ray believes that early experience of interpersonal aggression is as extensive in one class as another, and that acceptance of aggression and social class explain different aspects of political conservatism.

Ray's acceptance of authority trait seems related to the conventionalism, submission, aggression, power and toughness, destructiveness and cynicism dispositions of *The Authoritarian Personality* (Sanford, 1973; Stone, 1974). Authoritarianism has been related to political orientations and conduct, including politico-economic-social conservatism, but observed relationships have generally been of low or moderate magnitude and attenuated by socio-economic and situational considerations (Nudelman, 1972, Sanford, 1973; Stacey, 1977; Stone, 1974).

In his cross-national analysis of research on interpersonal factors in international conflict, Haas (1974) reports that the following are

among the personality traits associated with warlike or hawkish approaches to international relations: authoritarianism, ethnocentrism, dogmatism, concern over status, cynicism about life in general, pessimism and low morale, needs for power, Machiavellism, hostility, intolerance of ambiguity, tendency to displace aggression, recollection of a happy childhood, unsatisfactory relations with parents; and the following are among the general characteristics prevalent among the warlike: politico-economic conservatism, high expectation of war in the future history of man, willingness to pay higher taxes to support national defence, willingness to enlist in the armed forces, support for capital punishment. However, Haas reports that for the variables political interest, information and political party preference, there is very little difference between the peacelike and the warlike. Haas' analysis demonstrates how complex is the role of interpersonal factors in international conflict and how limited is our knowledge of this role at present. Ray's notion of the relationship between personality traits and political orientations/behaviour is naive in the extreme (Haas, 1974, Knutson, 1973). So is his notion of political socialization (Knutson, 1973; Stacey, 1977).

It will be evident from this review that Ray's definition and use of terms tends to be inconsistent. His empirical research is very largely based upon the use of his own scales, which have low to middling reliabilities and unknown validities. His interpretation of contradictory research results is idiosyncratic and sometimes highly questionable. Like Eysenck, he largely ignores the literature critical of the concept of working class authoritarianism/conservatism, though unlike Eysenck he feels the middle and upper classes are conservative and accepting of aggression in the international sphere, possibly because of his enthusiasm for Australian and American "forward defence" or warfare in Asia. Ray's self-declared cynical, hardened view of humanity features consistently in his work. His claim to be one of the conservative realists able "to acknowledge and deal with the aggressiveness in human nature" is totally unconvincing. For example, he proposes that striking workers who defy the instructions of the Government and/or the Courts should be outlawed so that other people who so desire could use strikers "for target practice without committing any crime or fearing any legal penalty" and "not only police and army would have the right to beat up, torture, imprison and kill the outlaws but vigilante groups of enraged citizens could also do so" (Ray, 1974, chapter 17). If such a monstrous proposal were put into practice, it is obvious that threatened strikers would be forced to organize their own defences and a 'gun law' situation would be created in which needless violence would almost certainly escalate. Ray admits that people who provide leadership in the community regard his views as hopelessly outmoded, selfish and morally wrong. This awareness, however, does not encourage him to subject his own views to the highly critical examination to which he subjects all forms of liberalism and "Leftism".

In the second part of this review I shall examine the theory Wilson offers to explain conservatism, which is based very largely of findings obtained in studies where the C-scale was used as a measure on conservatism. The C-scale was devised in New Zealand, and a number of the aforementioned studies are based on New Zealand samples. I shall then consider trends in the psychological study of conservatism, taking account of the limited amount of research carried out in New Zealand.

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