

## Notes from the Editor

### IN THIS ISSUE<sup>1</sup>

Conflicting clichés about money abound. Everybody “knows” that “Money can’t buy happiness,” but in the 1970s the Swedish pop group ABBA sold millions of records celebrating the eternal sunniness of “the rich man’s world.”

So which is it? In the lead article of this issue of the *Review*, “Does ‘Bettering Our Condition’ Really Make us Better Off? Adam Smith on Progress and Happiness,” Dennis C. Rasmussen highlights the tension between happiness and economic progress in contemporary society. Exploring Adam Smith’s paradoxical endorsement of commercial society and his recognition of the pursuit of wealth as an impediment to happiness, Rasmussen sheds new light on this classic dilemma. Although the tension has been explored by many other thinkers over the years, Rasmussen’s novel take on it makes for fascinating reading.

This issue’s monetary focus continues in John Zumbrennen’s application of political theory to a current social issue in “Fantasy, Irony and Economic Justice in Aristophanes’ *Assemblywomen* and *Wealth*.” Noting the persistence of economic inequality in the U.S. as well as the growth of demands for cultural recognition that often challenge the importance of economic reforms, Zumbrennen contends that Aristophanes’ plays, *Assemblywomen* and *Wealth*, can foster a more sophisticated understanding of the possibilities for redistribution in contemporary democratic politics by compelling a reconsideration of the meaning of “recognition.” Attending to the relationship between fantasy and irony in Aristophanic comedy, Zumbrennen argues, will help resolve the current recognition-redistribution debate by clarifying the structures of sentiment and motivation that could sustain economic justice.

Pondering the proposition that “the rich are different from you and me,” Ernest Hemingway famously pinpointed what he took to be the key distinction: “They have more money.” Something like Hemingway’s point is at the core of Dennis Chong and Dukhong Kim’s “The Experiences and Effects of Economic Status among Racial and Ethnic Minorities.” Insofar as perceptions of equal opportunity and discrimination are concerned, Chong and Kim argue, wealth per se does not matter. Instead, what matters is the interaction of material and social factors, not either element in isolation. This consideration of the socioeconomic determinants of racial consciousness is a worthy addition to prior treatments of racial attitudes and minority politics.

Income and wealth matter not just for individual citizens but for nation-states as well. In “Presidentialism, Electoral Identifiability, and Budget Balances in

Democratic Systems,” José Antonio Cheibub draws on the experiences of 98 democracies during the post-World War II era to determine whether different kinds of democracies spend differently. Cheibub finds that on the whole, presidential systems have produced better fiscal balance than parliamentary democracies. Underlying this difference, he contends, are the higher levels of electoral identifiability and greater personal accountability found in presidential systems.

A key determinant of national differences in wealth is trade policy. In “Optimal Obfuscation: Democracy and Trade Policy Transparency,” Daniel Kono notes that in some areas democracy leads to more liberal trade, but in others, to less liberal trade. Accordingly, the real question is not why democracies practice free trade but rather under what conditions they do so. Kono shows that the influence of democracy varies along with the transparency of protectionist measures. His account based on asymmetric information in trade policy seems destined to emerge as required reading for scholars interested in the effects of regime differences as well as for those more specifically interested in trade policy.

In Stephen Skowronek’s “The Reassociation of Ideas and Purposes: Racism, Liberalism, and the American Political Tradition,” the focus of this issue shifts away from economics to another issue of long standing in the U.S. and around the world: race. Skowronek dissects the evolution of racism and liberalism, fundamental constitutional issues within American political science, in order to raise serious questions about how these ideas have related to the purposes that various political actors pursue. Previous treatments, he contends, have obscured the distinctively “American” character of racism and liberalism by creating a false opposition between the two instead of focusing on how they have intertwined in ways that are “culturally formative.”

James Adams and Samuel Merrill, III follow by inquiring into the effect of third parties in a traditional two-party system. In “Why Small, Centrist Third Parties Motivate Policy Divergence by Major Parties,” Adams and Merrill construct a formal model that supports the intuitively appealing idea that once a new center party has been introduced, the established major parties will gain more leeway to shift toward their preferred right and left positions because the votes they lose as a result will then go to the centrist party instead of to their main rival, as would have happened under two-party competition. Adams and Merrill’s model also suggests that a strategic move by the third party makes both major parties move in tandem in the direction opposite the third party’s move – a non-intuitive result that conveys new insights into both historical occurrences and future possibilities.

Rather than future possibilities, it is past realities that command Erik J. Engstrom’s attention in “Stacking the States, Stacking the House: The Partisan Consequences of Redistricting in the 19th Century.”

<sup>1</sup> Drafted by Editorial Assistant Elizabeth Franker.

Capitalizing on the great variation in redistricting practices in the latter part of the 19th century, Engstrom uses history as a laboratory in which to address contemporary questions about redistricting. His analysis provides valuable knowledge about the development of American democracy in its middle years and potential insights into the current, highly polarized political environment.

The most extreme manifestation of a highly polarized political environment is civil war. Whether by design or not, civilians are often the victims in such conflicts. In "Handling and Manhandling Civilians in Civil War," Macartan Humphreys and Jeremy M. Weinstein set out to determine why the level of suffering visited upon civilian populations varies so markedly from one civil war to the next. Taking Sierra Leone as a case in point, Humphreys and Weinstein find that differential levels of abuse are best explained by the internal structure of the warring factions, with abuses resulting from internal fragmentation and poor enforcement mechanisms. This analysis not only advances our understanding of civil war but also has important implications for theories of collective action and organization.

Whether in civil wars or other conflicts, mediation is a common strategy for conflict resolution. An obvious and recurrent issue in any attempt at mediation is mediator bias, the subject of Andrew H. Kydd's "When Can Mediators Build Trust?" Kydd brings a new level of analytical rigor to this issue by breaking down the concept of bias and identifying impediments to trust-building between conflicting parties. Using a formal model, he demonstrates that mediators who simply want to avoid conflict will encounter serious credibility problems and may therefore be incapable of facilitating peace. The importance of these results resonates beyond civil wars and international conflict, as they lend insight on a more personal level as well.

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