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Milton Lodge and Charles S. Taber:
The Rationalizing Voter
New York 2013: Cambridge University Press, 300 pp.

The ability of humans to reason, judge, and decide plays a key role in our understanding of social interactions and is a cornerstone for any conception of democratic rule. In this book, Milton Lodge and Charles S. Taber, two Stony Brook political psychologists, present a new perspective regarding the ways attitudes and behaviours are constructed in political and social contexts. The main argument, thoroughly presented, is that unconscious spontaneous feelings impressively condition subsequent conscious deliberative processes. In the authors' own words: 'This is a book about why the first 100 milliseconds of thought matters.'

The opening chapter presents the main argument. Political behaviour and judgement are driven by unconscious spontaneous affective reactions that condition consequent memory retrieval and reasoning. The authors review findings in psychology and neuroscience which attest to the strong effects of unconscious primes. Given that consequent reasoning only rarely and partly shapes decisions, its main function is to rationalise an existing judgment, rather than determine it. In the second chapter the authors present their theory—the 'John Q. Public' (JQP) model. Their starting point is the limited capacity of our working memory (conscious thought), which requires a highly selective retrieval process of information from long-term memory (LTM). This process is determined by the associative organisation of LTM. Their model rests on 'seven postulates'. The first proposition, 'automaticity', draws on the affect-driven, dual-process modes of thinking and reasoning [Evans 2008] that have crystallised over the recent three decades in cognitive and social psychology and in the neuroscience literature. Central to such dual-process models is the distinction between unconscious (system I) and

conscious (system II) processing. Automaticity pertains to the spontaneous and unconscious processes in which affective associations guide the retrieval and processing of information and considerations. Repeated association of thought and feeling leads concepts to be affectively charged. Once such evaluative associations are formed, they can be activated spontaneously, without conscious consideration of their validity, rendering attitude change difficult at best.

The second postulate, 'hot cognition', suggest that concepts (e.g. an idea, group, politician) are instantly and without intentional control classified as either good or bad, based on the integration of thoughts and feelings associated with one's conscious and unconscious evaluations. The valence of concepts is thus recorded as an associated affect, and is 'viscerally embodied' (3rd postulate), allowing the brain 'to use affect as real-time information to promote quick, efficient, spontaneous responses' (p. 48). These processes include 'affect transfer' (6th postulate), in which current affective states become associated with currently activated objects, and 'affect contagion' (7th postulate)—influencing reasoning and behaviour by means of the affectively congruent retrieval of considerations. An important source of the strong influence of spontaneous affective reactions on thought and judgement is their temporal primacy (4th postulate)—within the first 200–300 milliseconds from exposure, well before conscious considerations. The 5th postulate pertains to the adaptive mechanism of the JQP model. Beliefs and attitudes are constructed in real time, by extracting the affective value of a concept and instantly integrating its appraisal into prior evaluations. This online (OL) tally is restored to long-term memory and appears to resist memory decay, while recall of the specific facts involved in the evaluation is subject to exponential decay.

In the remaining chapters Lodge and Taber present experimental findings that support many of the empirical expectations derived from their model and locate it within an existing model of public opinion and political psychology. They begin by demonstrating that many political concepts (chapter 3) and group cues (chapter 4) are hot cognitions whose affective tags—or snap judgments—are activated on mere exposure. These implicit cues carry 'downstream' effects on political information processing (affect transfer), leading to observable variation in conscious deliberative judgment (chapters 5 and 6). Importantly, contrary to most assumptions in the literature but in line with the JQP model, politically sophisticated individuals, and more deliberation lead to greater downstream effects (chapter 5). Chapter 7 focuses on a fundamental tension between the drive for accuracy and the belief perseverance that underlies all human reasoning. The authors establish that prior attitudes condition the time and cognitive resources spent on attitude-congruent versus incongruent arguments, the evidential strength they attribute to such arguments, and their selective choices in seeking information. The cumulative effect of these processes over time is enhanced opinion polarisation. In chapter 8 the authors formalise and test the JQP model, and in the concluding chapter Lodge and Taber discuss the relationships between the JQP model and three alternative theoretical perspectives.

This book provides an important contribution to our understanding of social judgments and behaviours at the individual level. The central ideas are well grounded in existing findings in the cognitive sciences, and the empirical evidence from the field of political psychology demonstrates their relevance to sociology, political science, and economics. On page 60, Lodge and Taber summarise the implications of their theory: 'feelings drive thinking more than vice versa; conscious experience always follows and is a product of unconscious processing; and behavior is often propelled by feelings through processes

we do not consciously control'. Echoing Freud's century-old claim that people's judgements are driven by unconscious motives and feelings, prior to being rationalised with publicly acceptable reasons [Freud 2008/1900; see also Haidt 2001] this recent scientific understanding of human reasoning challenges the way most social scientists think about, measure, and interpret social beliefs and attitudes. One particular implication of this challenge is the weakness of measures that rely on eliciting attitudes and behaviour in dispassionate ('cool') settings, as opposed to situations that involve the attendant emotional state ('hot'), documented in the 'hot-cold empathy gap' [Niedenthal, Halberstadt and Innes-Ker 1999].

The Rationalizing Voter concludes: 'Maybe *JQP* is as rational as we *homo* sapiens can be.' Lodge and Taber's substantive findings can be received as disconcerting, or even 'depressing' [Nyhan 2014], for those believing in people's ability to address social and political problems in reasonable, just, and peaceful ways. I suggest carefully acknowledging the importance of Lodge and Taber's findings for our understanding of how individuals judge and behave in social settings and reserve our (possibly uncontrollable) judgement as to their normative implications. As to the latter, two points are in order. The first is that, notwithstanding the merit of their work, Lodge and Taber concentrate strictly on individual-level processes. For example, their finding that opinion polarisation increases with political sophistication and deliberation may indeed seem depressing, yet given that human history does not seem to suggest that we are monotonically increasing in polarisation, some other processes *must* account for de-polarisation. A possible answer may lie in social interactions that require individuals to obtain the support and cooperation of others, with diverging opinions, preferences, and interests. Recent experimental findings indeed

suggest that low political efficacy reduces ideological polarisation of policy preferences [Sulitzeanu-Kenan and Halperin 2013]. The second point calls for caution in inferring the quality of judgement from its process. Recent studies suggest that heuristic processing under some conditions is superior to comprehensive analysis [Gigerenzer and Brighton 2009], and that affective reactions may guide advantageous behaviour well before forming conscious reasons for it [Bechara et al. 1997] namely, on facts pertaining to premises, options for action, and outcomes of actions that embody the pertinent previous experience. An alternative possibility was investigated: that overt reasoning is preceded by a nonconscious biasing step that uses neural systems other than those that support declarative knowledge. Normal participants and patients with prefrontal damage and decision-making defects performed a gambling task in which behavioral, psychophysiological, and self-account measures were obtained in parallel. Normals began to choose advantageously before they realized which strategy worked best, whereas prefrontal patients continued to choose disadvantageously even after they knew the correct strategy. Moreover, normals began to generate anticipatory skin conductance responses (SCRs. Mapping the effectiveness of these processes in a social context is admittedly difficult (due to the absence of objective criteria to judge choices/behaviours), but it is a potentially important and fruitful research agenda for the future.

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Cas Mudde (ed.): *Youth and the Extreme Right*
New York 2014: IDEBATE Press, 224 pp.

In this anthology, Cas Mudde has curated a collection of articles providing a multi-disciplinary lens into the relationship between youth and their involvement within extreme-right political parties, social movements, and subcultures. Essays are by scholars from anthropological, political science, psychological, sociological, and social work backgrounds. From the start, the reader is reminded that often the media, mainstream politics, and the general public tend to oversimplify and stereotype extreme-right group members as 'young men, heavily tattooed, heads freshly shaven, with a fanatic stare and, preferably, their right arm in the air (to make a fascist salute)' (p. 1). The purpose of this book is, at least in part, to debunk such stereotypes. Recognising the importance of adolescents and young adulthood within the socialisation process, this anthology explores the nuances of extremism and its allure for youth. The book is divided into three thematic sections addressing the initial priming and appeal of extreme-right groups, prejudice and violence associated with extremist movements, and extremist prevention and intervention programmes. Chapters vary in breadth and depth, ranging from close proximity case studies to larger European-wide comparative analyses.

Chapters included in Part I of this anthology explore causal factors driving youth attraction to extreme-right groups and ideas. The authors address socialising agents that influence the radicalisation process, targeting the role of families, employment, extremist organisations and cultural male rites of passage. 'Youth, Unemployment and Political Marginalization', by Ann Helén Bay and Morten Blekesaune, gives a comparative political analysis based on Eurobarometer survey results about the impact of unemployment on political marginalisation, considered a factor in priming interest in extreme-right groups. Generally, trends of unemployment are shown to positively correlate with individuals lacking political confidence. Unemployed youth also have a slightly higher rate of holding revolutionary ideas, which can be linked to a higher willingness to join in more alternative ideologies, such as extremism. Thomas Gabriel's chapter 'Parenting and Right-Wing Extremism: An Analysis of the Biographical Genesis of Racism among the Youth' tracks the influence of the family in the development of racist attitudes using a Swiss case study. Cultural coding, handed down from parent to child, including the impact of immediate social circles, is shown to have a large influence on attitudinal development and can precondition far-right motives and actions. Exposure to domestic violence, parental conflicts, and intra-familial experiences as a young person are also discussed as affecting behavioural predispositions.

Stéphanie Dechezelles provides a chapter on 'The Cultural Basis of Youth In-