Preference, Principle, and Political Casuistry

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You can't be the President unless you have a firm set of principles to guide you as you sort

through all the problems the world faces.

—President George W. Bush, December 20, 2007, press conference

POLITICS, n. A strife of interests masquerading as a contest of principles.

 —Ambrose Bierce, *The Devil's Dictionary*

Most Americans, like former President George W. Bush, value men and women "of principle."

We want our teachers, parents, bosses, and leaders to be such people. In politics, debates often

center on whose candidate or party (yours or mine) is the more principled. Hence, right-leaning

editorial pages argued during the 2008 U.S. Presidential election that candidate Barack Obama's

"flip-flops" over the Reverend Jeremiah Wright created a "visible crack in his public image as a

man of principle" (Obama flips, 2008), while more liberal outlets contended that John McCain's

"wildly irresponsible choice" of Sarah Palin for vice president diminished his reputation as "the

honest, seasoned, experienced man of principle" (Vice-presidential, 2008). Similarly, Democrats

may question the principles of Republicans who, after years of supporting George W. Bush's

deficit-ballooning foreign wars, now decry President Obama's economic stimulus proposals as

fiscally irresponsible, just as Republicans might challenge the principles of Democrats who, after

doubting the efficacy of the troop surge in Iraq, were eager to bolster the military's presence in

Afghanistan. The question of principle—who has it and who does not—carries a great deal of

cultural and moral weight, and our assessments of whether opinions or policies are grounded in

principle both drive and express our evaluations of others.

To say that someone is a person of principle is a high compliment, and to declare that he is unprincipled a damning critique. Yet the attribution of principle or its absence is more than an evaluative stance; it is also a lay-psychological hypothesis concerning the causes of another's behavior. When we praise a person as principled we locate the causes of her judgments and actions in general moral or intellectual commitments. Thus, we assume that the actor selected those judgments and actions not simply because she preferred their outcomes but because adherence to her principles required them. When, on the other hand, we accuse a person of lacking principle we chalk his actions up to a preference or "bias" for a particular outcome. Depending on why we believe the actor prefers his favored outcome, we may call him "self-interested," "partisan," "hypocritical," "Machiavellian," or just "weak."

The tendency to categorize human actions as principled or unprincipled, so apparent in American culture and political life, is also evident in social-psychological research. Psychological analyses of a number of moral and political attitudes hinge on whether those stances are viewed as principled or not. Do whites who oppose affirmative action see it as violating basic principles of fairness (Bobocel, Son Hing, Davey, Stanley, & Zanna, 1998; Sniderman, Piazza, Tetlock, & Kendrick, 1991; Sniderman & Tetlock, 1986b)? Instead, do they prefer to see their group maintain its access to jobs and education (Bobo, 1983, 1998, 2000; Bobo & Kluegel, 1993) or to deprive outgroups of economic assistance (Bobo, 1983, 1998, 2000; Bobo & Kluegel, 1993; Federico & Sidanius, 2002; Haley & Sidanius, 2006; Sidanius, Pratto, & Bobo, 1996)? When it comes to basic judgments of right and wrong, do people (educated adults, at least) reason dispassionately from abstract moral principles (Kohlberg, 1969), or do they offer principles as rationalizing cover for their emotion-based intuitions (Haidt, 2001)?

In this chapter, we argue that the question of whether a particular political or moral judgment is "principled" has no easy answer, and that the preference-principle dichotomy so prevalent in both lay and scientific discourse oversimplifies human psychology. Instead, a wealth of research on motivated reasoning supports a rather Biercian[1] view of moral and political judgment, in which people selectively recruit principles to justify self-based, group-based, and ideologically derived interests. This "masquerade" is effective, we contend, because preferences affect the judgmental process in subtle, implicit, and intuitive ways, such that this influence is disguised even from the individual herself. Consequently, our political and moral choices may be experienced as principled—as arising from general intellectual commitments not linked to our interests or preferences—while simultaneously being shaped, if not determined, by those very forces.

I. The Preference-Principle Dichotomy

In a May 8, 2008, letter to her then-rival Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton urged that the results of the Florida and Michigan presidential primaries—previously nullified by the national Democratic Party—be counted toward the nomination. Her argument was high-minded: "One of the foremost principles of our party is that citizens be allowed to vote and that those votes be counted. That principle is not currently being applied to the nearly 2.5 million people who voted in primaries in Florida and Michigan." (Obama to declare, 2008). Six weeks later, Barack Obama officially rejected public financing for the general election, opting to rely exclusively on private fundraising. He explained this decision by invoking the principle of political self-defense, writing in an e-mail to supporters that "the public financing of presidential elections as it exists today is broken, and we face opponents who've become masters at gaming this broken system" (Whitesides & Bohan, 2008).

Both announcements sparked immediate outrage from critics who saw the candidates' ostensibly principled stances as thin veils for political expediency. Clinton, critics observed, made no complaint about the treatment of (and, in fact, had agreed not to campaign in) Florida and Michigan until it became clear that she would need her victories in those states to overcome Obama's delegate lead (Clinton steps up, 2008). Pundits lodged similar criticisms against Obama, who, they noted, broke a pledge to use public financing only after the stunning success of his private fundraising machine became abundantly clear (Obama flips, 2008).

These events helpfully illustrate two fundamentally different ways of explaining a given policy stance—ways differentially favored by political actors versus observers. Those explanations diverge in their identification of the causal factors underlying political positions, and therefore in the moral weight and legitimacy they confer on those positions. The first type of explanation, usually offered by observers, especially those critical of the actor or his position, attributes an actor's political views to an emotional preference for one conclusion over another. In the instances above, for example, critics of Clinton and Obama ascribed the candidates' stated positions on delegate counting and campaign finance to each actor's simple desire to advance his or her personal self-interest. According to this preference-driven account, Senator Clinton favored honoring the Florida and Michigan primary results because counting those delegates improved her chances of securing the presidential nomination of her party, and Obama decided to forgo public financing because of the monetary advantage it provided his campaign for the presidency.

Self-interest is a particularly common source of preference, and thus one that people in general may be particularly likely to recognize when someone makes a decision or statement that aligns with it (Kennedy & Pronin, chapter 12, this volume). But preferences can derive from

other sources as well. Thus, Republican opposition to the Obama administration's economic stimulus plan is characteristically seen by Democrats as driven by a simple desire to oppose President Obama's policies—or even to see the President "fail" (Allen, 2009). They might attribute this oppositional desire to partisanship (group-based interest), or less charitably to Obama's race, but the key is that these Democratic observers perceive Republican opposition not as derived from broad intellectual or moral concerns but, rather, as motivated by an affectively based preference to oppose the plan. A similar type of preference-based account is offered by researchers who explain the roots of conservative attitudes about school busing or affirmative action as driven by antipathy toward African Americans (McConahay, Hardee, & Batts, 1981). In each case, the actor's position is seen as "biased" by the fact that he or she finds one conclusion more affectively palatable than another.

Contrast this causal account with a second type, typically offered by political actors and their supporters, that frames a political position as deriving from general intellectual or moral principles. Thus, Senators Clinton and Obama describe their respective positions as driven by dispassionate principle, not self-interest. Republicans opposed to the Obama stimulus plan do not explain their opposition as motivated by partisanship or racism but, rather, as a well-reasoned intellectual position derived from core conservative principles emphasizing fiscal responsibility, small government, and market-based solutions to economic problems. On this account, personal feelings about oneself or one's group are treated as irrelevant to the judgment process; the particular conclusion ostensibly flows logically and inevitably from more fundamental intellectual commitments. A very similar, principle-driven interpretation can be found in social-scientific defenses of conservative attitudes toward race-related policies. According to some scholars, for instance, these attitudes stem, not from racism or racial self-interest, but from

concern for broad principles of fairness and the desire to promote color-blind public policy (Sniderman & Tetlock, 1986a). From the perspective of actors and their supporters, it is adherence to principle—not the whims of emotion or prejudice—that typically underlies their policy positions.

This analysis presents an obvious question: Why do opponents of a political position tend to view it as driven by affective preferences, while the position's supporters prefer to explain it as flowing from principle? We see at least two potential sources of this explanatory asymmetry.

The first source has to do with the well-known actor-observer bias in interpersonal perception (Jones & Nisbett, 1971). In its original form, the actor-observer bias referred to the tendency of actors to see their own behavior as responsive to situations, but for observers to see the same behavior as reflecting the actors' dispositions (for instance, personality traits). More recent work has eschewed the disposition-situation dichotomy in favor of the distinction between *beliefs* and *desires*. According to Malle, Knobe, and Nelson (2007), actors tend to trace their own behavior to personally held beliefs, whereas observers tend to attribute the same behavior to the actors' desires. According to these researchers, this asymmetry occurs in part because actors and observers possess different levels of access to the mental states underlying the actors' behavior. As observers who lack privileged access to the actors' internal states, we easily default to the simplest plausible explanation for their behavior. Desire attributions—including attributions to affective preferences—have an uncomplicated structure (*A* did *x* because *A* wanted to) and thus neatly fit this bill. As actors interpreting our own behavior, however, we have access to a much richer and more elaborate range of explanations. Beliefs—including principled ones—are part of this larger set of explanatory possibilities. For purely epistemic reasons, then, people tend to attribute others' behavior to desires and their own behavior to principle.[2]

Yet this epistemic factor is not sufficient to explain why a political actor's supporters and opponents will tend to trace her positions to different sources. Both supporters and opponents are observers and thus, based on Malle and colleagues' (2007) reasoning, ought to attribute the actor's position disproportionately to desire. Hence, the explanatory asymmetry necessarily has another source, which we suggest is rooted in perceivers' motivations. From this perspective, the preference-principle asymmetry is powerfully reinforced by individuals' desire to hold a positive view of themselves, as well as of others who share their attitudes and group memberships. Part of a positive self-view is the belief that one's attitudes and behaviors are reasoned and free from bias (Malle et al., 2007; Pronin, Gilovich, & Ross, 2004). Research suggests that most people are "naïve realists" (Ross & Ward, 1996) who prefer to think (erroneously) that they have objective, bias-free access to the truth about the world. When we attribute our own or others' attitudes to desires or preferences, then, we imply that those attitudes fail the test of objectivity—and are therefore inaccurate, illicit, or even immoral. For instance, when Democrats explain Republican opposition to President Obama's policies in terms of a partisan desire to obstruct, one party traces the other's attitudes to emotional bias and a lack of rational deliberation. This is not an image that most people want to embrace—at least not about themselves, their ingroup, or the politicians they support.

Compared to preference-based explanations, attributing an attitude to a principled belief is a much more flattering characterization. When we say that an attitude is principled, we regard it not as an emotional reaction to a specific individual or opinion but, rather, as a stance grounded objectively and dispassionately in a more general intellectual foundation. Thus, if an individual subscribes to the principle that deficit spending hurts the economy, and he observes that President Obama is proposing deficit spending, then he ought logically to oppose Obama's

deficit-spending proposal. This kind of principled reasoning is held in high esteem by philosophers and intellectuals more generally; indeed, Kohlberg (1969) viewed principle-based reasoning as the hallmark of mature ethical judgment (see also Kohlberg, Levine, & Hewer, 1983).

We suggest that laypeople, too, find principled reasoning persuasive because it suggests objectivity and integrity. Explaining one's views in terms of principles confers an air of objectivity by omitting the self and all of its many preferences. Whereas preference-based explanations are inherently subjective, in that they always involve a person (for example, "because *he* wanted to win the election" or "because *she* wanted to score the promotion"), principle-based explanations make no reference to a subject (for instance, "because it is wrong to lie" or "because life is sacred"). Thus, when we claim that our own or another person's position derives from principle, we chalk this position up to a consideration that lay outside the self. Because it suggests reasoning agnostic to the individual's self-interest, group-interest—or any other variety of emotional allegiance or utilitarian concern—principled explanations represent a sought-after type of situational attribution. In this sense, preferences *impel* behavior, while principles *compel* it.

Of course, principled reasoning loses much or all of its objective shine if individuals "cheat" by invoking principle only when the conclusion happens to align with their affective preferences. The same general rule that can provide justification for a desirable course of action in one case (a Democrat attacking President Bush's military spending as fiscally reckless) will often compel a less desirable course in another (when Obama proposes similar levels of spending on domestic issues). Tempting though it may be, mustering a principle only when consistent with self- or group-interest opens the door wide to charges of hypocrisy or partisanship, and the

normative status of the principle as justification for any specific claim is correspondingly weakened. Conversely, when an individual makes a principled stand that works against her own interests (or preferences more generally), she may be rewarded with a reputation for personal integrity. This plays out in politics when individuals express positive feelings about political "mavericks"—politicians who buck their party to vote their conscience—even when the politician is a member of perceivers' own party (Ditto & Mastronarde, 2008).

We have argued that people view principle-driven judgment more positively than preference-driven judgment, and that this may help explain why individuals prefer to attribute their own (but not others') attitudes to principle, and others' (but not their own) attitudes to preferences. Which of these causal stories is usually valid? That is, when a political actor characterizes her position as a matter of principle, but her political opponent views it as driven by pure preference, who is more likely to be right? We turn to this question in the next section.

II. A Hybrid View: Intuitionism and Casuistic Reasoning

The question of whether political attitudes are driven by affective, preference-based processes or by the rational dictates of principle is reminiscent of a meta-theoretical battle that has simmered for many decades in social psychology (coming to a boil from time to time) between motivational and cognitive explanations for psychological phenomena (Bem, 1967; Haidt, 2001; Tetlock & Levi, 1982). In recent years, however, this idealized debate about whether judgment processes are best thought of as "hot" (rooted in motivations and emotions) or "cold" (rooted in cognitive operations) has been replaced by the realization that they are necessarily both, and that motivational and cognitive factors interact to determine attitudes, beliefs, and behavior (Ditto, 2008; Kruglanski, 1996). This "warm" view of human reasoning recognizes both that judgments about the things we care about most are seldom made dispassionately and that affective and

motivational factors can influence judgments only by shaping the cognitive processes that underlie them.

A crucial implication of this view is that cognitive processes constrain and shape affective influences on judgment. People do not believe whatever they want believe simply because they want to believe it. Many of us, for example, would like to imagine that we could fly merely by flapping our arms, but few of us actually hold such a belief. It is hard to imagine how any organism could survive, much less effectively negotiate, its environment if it simply ignored information that it did not wish to believe, disregarded concerns about belief plausibility or the principles of rational thought, and proceeded through life merrily believing that the world that it wanted was the world that was (Baumeister, 1989; Ditto, Scepansky, Munro, Apanovitch, & Lockhart, 1998). We are clearly sensitive to the plausibility of our beliefs and work to maintain what some researchers call an "illusion of objectivity" about the nature of our judgments (Kunda, 1990; Pyszczynski & Greenberg, 1987).

It is important to recognize that maintaining an image of objectivity is essential if motivated reasoning processes are to affect genuine belief. Explicitly, most people, most of the time, desire an accurate view of the world. As discussed above, most people are naïve realists (Pronin, 2007; Ross & Ward, 1996) who believe that truth exists and that our senses and intellect are the conduits through which truth reveals itself. If we approached our judgments like an attorney with an explicit goal of reaching a particular conclusion, or even recognized that our judgments were inadvertently biased by our preferences, the illusion would be lost, as would our (false) confidence that our assessments accurately reflect the true state of the world.

This does not mean, of course, that motivational forces have no influence on how we process information. In fact, a wealth of research suggests that such forces affect judgments and

beliefs by influencing cognitive processes in subtle ways that tend to tip judgments toward the most palatable construction that manages not to offend our logical sensibilities (Ditto, 2008; Kunda, 1990; Pyszczynski & Greenberg, 1987). That is, unlike many attorneys, most of us approach judgments without an explicit sense that we are trying to construct a justification for one conclusion over another. But even when an individual's conscious motivation is accuracy, one conclusion may still be preferred over another because it supports a desired view of the self or others, or of the validity of a cherished belief. In this case, we use the term "preference," not in the sense of a stable, explicit judgment goal but, rather, as an implicit affective contingency underlying the processing of information related to the judgment—that is, that the person would be happier if the conclusion were true than if it were false. Consequently, as people consider information relevant to a judgment where they have a preferred conclusion, they experience positive affect if that information seems to support this conclusion and negative affect if it seems to challenge it (Ditto, Munro, Apanovitch, Scepansky, & Lockhart, 2003; Ditto et al., 1998; Munro & Ditto, 1997). Such affective reactions are quick, automatic, and ubiquitous (Winkielman, Berridge, & Wilbarger, 2005; Zajonc, 1980) and can exert a host of subtle organizing effects on the processing of preference-relevant information. A number of studies have shown, for example, that people are more likely to perceive ambiguous information in preference-consistent ways (Balcetis & Dunning, 2006) more likely to generate alternative explanations for preference-inconsistent than preference-consistent information (Ditto & Lopez, 1992; Ditto et al., 1998), and weight most heavily decision criteria that support preference-consistent conclusions (Dunning, Leuenberger, & Sherman, 1995; Norton, Vandello, & Darley, 2004; Uhlmann & Cohen, 2005).

This last set of findings is particularly relevant to our current discussion because it suggests that one subtle—but effective—way that people skew judgments toward preferred conclusions is by "shifting the standards" by which a preferred conclusion is defined. Dunning and colleagues (1992, 1995), for example, showed that if people are asked to identify general criteria of excellence in a given domain, they typically endorse standards that put their own idiosyncratic credentials in the best possible light. Studies examining mock hiring and admission decisions have similarly shown that evaluators inflate the value of general decision criteria that favor preferred conclusions (Norton et al., 2004; Uhlmann & Cohen, 2005; Cohen, chapter 11, this volume). In one illustrative example, male subjects faced with a decision about whom to hire for a stereotypically male job (in the construction industry) were found to rank education as a more important hiring criterion than job experience when making decisions about applicants of unknown gender, but reversed this ranking if faced with a decision in which a male applicant had less education but more experience than a competing female candidate (Norton et al., 2004). Notice that both education and job experience are plausible candidates for the top criterion by which a successful job candidate might be judged, and thus by simply choosing to favor one plausible criterion over another, participants were able to reach a desired conclusion in a way that seems perfectly justifiable to any observer (including the participant) who is not privileged (as we are) to see both instances of the scenario play themselves out.

Conceiving of reasoning processes as often guided and shaped by a priori affective preferences is quite consistent with the intuitionist view of moral judgment, described most explicitly by Haidt (2001, 2007) The canonical work in moral psychology, most of which was conducted or inspired by Kohlberg (1969) and Kohlberg et al. (1983), proceeds from the idea that moral judgment, at least as carried out by mature, properly educated adults, involves the

dispassionate application of abstract rules and principles to ethical questions. Kohlberg's theory has undergone well-known attacks based on the normative character of its developmental (Gilligan, 1977) and cultural (Miller, 1994) assumptions, but Haidt's (2001) critique strikes directly at its mechanistic underpinnings. Building on the philosophy of Hume (1740/2007) and the psychology of Zajonc (1980), Haidt argued that moral evaluations typically arise through an intuitive—and generally affective—process. Certain acts just "feel" wrong to us, and this realization comes in a form more akin to aesthetic judgment than reasoned inference. Haidt's point is not to say that reasoned moral analysis never occurs or cannot ever override intuitive moral reactions (Haidt, 2007; Pizarro & Bloom, 2003) but, rather, that in sharp contrast to the Kohlbergian view, the primary sources of our moral evaluations are automatic and affective as opposed to thoughtful and cognitive. According to this view, the primary role of moral reasoning (as opposed to moral intuition) is to provide post hoc intellectual justification if one's initial intuitions are challenged by others.

So what does this view of reasoning as motivated and intuitive, but still responsive to the constraints of reasoned discourse, suggest for our distinction between preference-driven and principle-driven judgment? What it suggests most generally, we believe, is that neither "pure" view captures the nuances of the relationship between people and their principles. It is neither the case that we simply ignore principled reasoning to endorse whatever attitude position is most affectively satisfying, nor that we routinely use universal principles in an a priori fashion to derive attitude positions untouched by the contaminating influence of preference. Rather, the picture that emerges is one in which people value and utilize principle-based reasoning, but go about the process in a biased fashion such that certain principles are "favored" in a given

judgment context because they are consistent with, and provide intellectual support for, the conclusion that is most preferred in that context.

Stated another way, when we reason about issues where we have a clear preference for a conclusion, our reasoning often resembles a form of casuistry (Norton et al., 2004). Casuistry, which we define as reasoning that is case-based rather than principle-based, has a controversial philosophical reputation (Jonsen & Toulmin, 1990). At one level, casuistic reasoning, in the form of extrapolation of a guiding principle from precedent cases, is an important and accepted basis of common law. Casuistry's pejorative reputation comes from historical episodes (particularly involving Jesuit priests absolving the sins of wealthy parishioners in the 16th and 17th centuries) in which opportunistically selected principles were deliberately misused as a way to justify morally questionable behavior. Our view of casuistry as a psychological phenomenon, however, once again falls between these two extreme perspectives. We focus, not on instances in which people deliberately misuse principles in order to influence others, but on circumstances in which individuals unwittingly select principles that happen to provide intellectual justification for preferred conclusions. That is, we are arguing for a kind of implicit causuistry in which affective preferences operating in a particular case guide reliance on general principles in such a way that selectiveness of the choice of principle is obscured from the reasoner. In this sense, casuistry is a species of motivated reasoning, a kind of intuitionist sleight of mind that permits a person to perceive preference-based opinions as grounded in principle. We argue that this kind of implicit casuistry plays a crucial role in shaping a host of attitudes about controversial social and political issues.

The following sections review anecdotal and research evidence suggesting that casuistic reasoning is, as a psychological strategy for disguising the role of preference, common in political, legal, and moral judgment and discourse.

A. *Casuistic Reasoning about Life and Death*

Former President George W. Bush is well known for his vigorous defense of the sanctity of human life. In the summer of 2006, for example, he exercised his presidential veto power for the first time to stop legislation that would have dramatically expanded federal funding for embryonic stem cell research. In a statement explaining his decision he said, "This bill would support the taking of innocent human life in the hope of finding medical benefit for others. . . . It crosses a moral boundary that our society needs to respect, so I vetoed it" (Babington, 2006).

Philosophers would recognize Mr. Bush's statement as a classic deontological justification, in which an act is judged to be wrong "in and of itself," irrespective of any positive consequences it might generate. In this case, President Bush is articulating a position held by many political conservatives who maintain that the potential lives saved through any technology generated by embryonic stem cell research cannot justify the sacrificing of innocent fetal life, even when the embryo would otherwise be discarded at some point as medical waste. This type of deontological reasoning is perfectly respectable, with deep and venerable roots in philosophical thought (Kant, 1785/1998), and these same individuals stake out a similar principled position in their beliefs about abortion and (somewhat less consensually) about the withdrawal of life-sustaining medical treatment near the end of life.

But there are notable exceptions to conservatives' black-and-white defense of the sanctity of human life. In opinions about the use of capital punishment, for example, conservatives often view life in consequentialist terms, arguing that sometimes lives must be sacrificed to realize a

greater good. In *A Charge to Keep*, George W. Bush's 1999 campaign hagiography, the former

president provides this classic consequentialist rationale behind his support for capital

punishment: "I support the death penalty because I believe, if administered swiftly and justly,

capital punishment is a deterrent against future crimes and will save other innocent lives" (Bush,

1999, p. 147). Granted, there is a defensible distinction that might be made here between the

sanctity of innocent versus noninnocent human life. Yet this distinction does not help us

understand Bush's moral acceptance of the Iraq invasion's startling civilian death toll, which he

and other conservatives justified in decidedly consequentialist terms.

Of course, objective observers will recognize that on each of those issues, where

conservatives embrace a deontological position, political liberals swing consequentialist, and

where conservatives rely on consequentialist reasoning, liberals favor a less-forgiving

deontological stance. Our point is not to ridicule one side or the other in the culture wars.

Although the intuitive "triggers" that motivate liberals and conservatives certainly differ (Haidt

& Graham, 2007), there is little reason to believe that any particular political ideology is more or

less conducive to casuistic reasoning (Munro & Ditto, 1997; but see Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, &

Sulloway, 2003 and Jost, chapter 2, this volume, for a different view). Instead, our view is that

human beings are highly selective in their use of principles to defend moral positions concerning

life and death, with each side willing to invoke whichever ethical theory—deontological or

consequentialist—best supports the position it finds affectively and ideologically preferable.

The distinction between deontological and consequentialist reasoning has occupied a

central role in philosophical thought over the last several centuries, and it is now receiving a

great deal of attention in the burgeoning field of moral psychology (Greene, 2007). The

attention is little surprise given that many real-life moral dilemmas present individuals with

conflicting choices of action that are commonly framed within either of the two moral ethics (including modern dilemmas such as embryonic stem cell research and the use of "enhanced" interrogation techniques on suspected terrorists) (cf. Sood & Carlsmith, chapter 16, this volume). The distinction is also psychologically interesting because relatively small variations in dilemma structure can lead to substantial differences in people's reliance on one type of reasoning over the other. That tendency is helpfully illustrated by the various incarnations of the so-called trolley problem (Foot, 1967; Greene, Sommerville, Nystrom, Darley, & Cohen, 2001; Thomson, 1976), in which one has to decide whether it is morally justified to sacrifice the life of one individual to stop a runaway trolley car that will otherwise kill five others. If respondents are told they can simply pull a switch to redirect the trolley such that it kills one bystander instead of five, most believe this consequentialist choice to be the morally preferable act. If, however, respondents are told they must push a large man off a footbridge where his body will prevent the deaths of the five others, most favor the deontological response where the single death cannot be justified.

These results make clear that people harbor intuitions consistent with both deontology and consequentialism, which they can draw upon flexibly to support desired conclusions. That is, people sometimes act as though they believe the ends justify the means, and at other times as though they think the ends *can never* justify the means. Both intuitions seem reasonable under some circumstances, and having access to multiple plausible intuitions is essential to casuistic reasoning. With a menu of principles at the ready, people may comfortably select the one capable of justifying the conclusion they find most emotionally satisfying—while at the same time preserving the view of self as a logical and well-meaning thinker.

Admittedly, the real-life anecdotes that open this section are a weak basis upon which to draw inferences about motivated inconsistency. However, a number of empirical studies have demonstrated this kind of motivated reliance on consequentialist versus deontological principles in hypothetical decisions about life and death. Issues like stem cell research and collateral war casualties, although arguably comparable in general moral structure, differ in ways that could form a legitimate basis for what might superficially seem to be inconsistent and motivated moral assessments. Consequently, Uhlmann, Pizarro, Tannenbaum, and Ditto (2009) conducted a number of controlled laboratory studies comparing the judgments of political liberals and conservatives to scenarios that were expected to evoke differing moral intuitions and casuistic reasoning.

The first study presented students with a modified version of a trolley dilemma in which subjects assessed the morality of pushing one man onto the tracks to save the lives of many others. The key modification was that the scenario included extraneous information about the race (and class) of the characters. Specifically, half of the participants were faced with a decision about whether to push a man named "Tyrone Payton" onto the tracks to save "100 members of the New York Philharmonic," while the other half had to decide whether to push a man named "Chip Ellsworth III" onto the tracks to save "100 members of the Harlem Jazz Orchestra." The purpose of this information was to lead subjects, without using actual racial labels, to infer that their choice implicated racial groups: in the first case the decision involved whether to sacrifice one African American to save a large group of people, most of whom were white; in the second case the choice involved whether to sacrifice one white person to save a group consisting mostly of African Americans. After reading the scenarios, participants completed a series of scales measuring their endorsement of consequentialism as a general moral

principle (e.g., "It is sometimes necessary to allow the death of an innocent person in order to save a larger number of innocent people").

There is, of course, a strong disdain among most American college students, particularly those who are politically liberal, for harboring feelings that may be considered prejudiced (Monin & Miller, 2001; Norton et al., 2004; Plant & Devine, 1998; Tetlock, 2003). The study's designers, therefore, expected that politically liberal college students would be especially reluctant to invoke a consequentialist justification for sacrificing the life of an African American to save a group of white musicians. The results confirmed this prediction. Liberal college students were significantly more likely to endorse consequentialist principles when the trolley dilemma involved Chip rather than Tyrone, whereas conservative students showed no hint of that effect. A second study replicated those results using a different moral dilemma, and a more politically balanced community sample.

Taken together, the results of these studies provide good evidence of motivated recruitment of moral principles, at least among political liberals. But why were the effects limited to liberal participants? One explanation is that egalitarian considerations, especially those relevant to race, play a greater role in influencing liberals' judgments compared to conservatives. A recent meta-analysis by Jost and colleagues (2003; chapter 2, this volume) indicates that one of the fundamental differences between liberals and conservatives lies in conservatives' greater tolerance for social inequality. Research on the moral foundations underlying liberal and conservative ideologies also suggests that fairness concerns are particularly acute for political liberals (Haidt & Graham, 2007), and race is likely the key symbol evoking these concerns in contemporary America. This particular situation, therefore, likely held more motivational power for liberals than conservatives. The Chip-Tyrone manipulation presented liberals with choices

sure to trip their inequality alarm, and they likely experienced more negative feeling when asked to trade a black life for white ones than a white life for black ones (especially a white person with a aristocratic-sounding name). Conservatives, on the other hand, who were less sensitive to inequality, tended to respond in a more evenhanded fashion (both affectively and cognitively). Those results are consistent with a number of recent studies (Norton et al., 2004) showing that college-student samples (which often skew liberal) tend to show what might be called a "political correctness" bias in racial issues.

In another experiment, however, Uhlmann and colleagues (2009) examined a different (and more realistic) life and death dilemma designed to push conservatives' motivational buttons. The dilemma concerned the inadvertent killing of civilians during military combat (so-called collateral damage) and manipulated whether the perpetrators of the casualties were ingroup members or a despised outgroup. Specifically, half of the participants considered a scenario describing American military leaders deciding to attack key Iraqi insurgent leaders in order to prevent the future deaths of American troops. The other half read about Iraqi insurgent leaders deciding to attack key leaders of the American military to save Iraqi lives. In both versions, subjects learned that the attackers (whether American or Iraqi) neither wanted nor intended to cause civilian casualties, though both attacks did. The key dependent measure was again endorsement of consequentialism as a general moral principle.

As Haidt and Graham (2007) have demonstrated, conservatives' moral judgments are more influenced than those of liberals by issues of ingroup loyalty, and for many political conservatives, patriotism in general, and support for the American military in particular, takes on the quality of protected values. Conservatives should, therefore, be more likely than liberals to make a moral distinction between the acts and lives of Americans and those of a disliked

outgroup like Iraqi insurgents. In fact, this is exactly what was found. Perhaps not surprisingly, there was an overall tendency for conservatives to take a more permissive (i.e., consequentialist) view of collateral military damage than did liberals. More to the point, however, conservatives endorsed more consequentialist justifications for American-caused casualties than Iraqi-caused casualties, while liberals showed a nonsignificant trend in the opposite direction. In their final experiment, Uhlmann and colleagues (2009) replicated this effect by nonconsciously priming (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999) participants with words related either to patriotism (for example, *patriots, American, loyal*) or multiculturalism (for example, *multicultural, diversity, equal*). Participants exposed to patriotic words mimicked the pattern of judgments shown by political conservatives, endorsing a more consequentialist view of American-caused collateral damage than when the casualties were inflicted by Iraqi insurgents. Individuals exposed to multicultural words, on the other hand, tended to show the opposite pattern, consistent with the judgments made by political liberals. The experimental nature of this study, particularly its use of a nonconscious priming procedure, provides particularly persuasive evidence that selective reliance on principle can be driven by the kind of intuitive affective processing posited by a motivated reasoning account (Haidt, 2001).

In summary, the studies described in this section support our argument that even when wrestling with issues as profound as the value of human life, principle can be used selectively— that is, casuistically—to support affectively and ideologically desirable conclusions. The philosophical debate regarding the relative validity of consequentialist versus deontological moral theories has raged for centuries, at least in part because both views seem intuitively sensible under some circumstances (just as education and job experience both seem reasonable criteria on which to base hiring decisions). This dual plausibility, however, allows individuals—

both laypeople and pols—to draw upon these principled arguments flexibly in fashioning

justifications for positions that may seem contradictory or even hypocritical to outside observers

(for instance, being against stem cell research but for capital punishment, or anti-war but pro-

abortion). Casuistry thus contributes to the mutual distrust and animosity polarizing

contemporary American political culture.

B. *Casuistic Reasoning about the Law*

It was 42 minutes past midnight on March 21, 2005, when the U.S. Congress passed its first

legislation specifically designed to apply to only one individual. Terri Schiavo was a 41-year-

old Florida woman who had been immobile and uncommunicative since heart failure severely

damaged her brain 15 years earlier. Her husband, after years seeking treatment on her behalf,

had become convinced that, were Terri able to speak for herself, she would want to be taken off

life support. Multiple legal decisions had confirmed his right to make this excruciatingly

difficult decision on his wife's behalf. Terri's parents and siblings, however, vehemently

disagreed, and their cause was joined by pro-life forces in American politics. Their political

leverage was behind the early morning congressional vote to require a federal judge, upon

Terri's family's request, to order that Terri's feeding tube be reinserted and to launch a new

inquiry into the legal and medical questions surrounding her case. Hours after his normal

bedtime, then-President Bush was awakened to sign the bill into law at 1:11 A.M. on that Palm

Sunday morning.

One of us remembers distinctly his reaction to hearing that "Terri's Law " had been

passed: "This is a travesty! This case has been through the full court system, with multiple trials

and hearings. You can't just do an end-run around laws that you think are morally wrong!" This

reaction felt right, even righteous, until a few days later another reaction to a similar event came

back into memory. About one year earlier, in February 2004, San Francisco Mayor Gavin

Newsom decided to buck state and federal law to allow same-sex couples to marry. Mayor

Newsom even performed a ceremony or two himself, arguing that denying same-sex couples the

right to marry was an affront to the equal protection clause of the U.S. Constitution. This turn of

events had provoked a very different reaction: "Bravo for Mayor Newsom! Sometimes

politicians just have to take matters into their own hands to challenge laws they believe are

unjust!"

We offer this bit of self-deprecating autobiography as an apt illustration of a liberal's

casuistic reasoning, suspecting that political conservatives could be found that would report

mirror-image reactions to those described above. Principle plays a crucial normative role in

legal reasoning, but whether a particular law or judicial decision constitutes the application of

principle, or an extra-legal intrusion of preference, is often a matter of political perception. The

pattern should now be familiar. Legal decisions are almost always framed as derived from

principle, but whether that principle is accepted or rejected as a plausible account depends

crucially on whether the decision supports or challenges an ideological preference or moral

vision. An "activist judge" has been satirically defined as any judge who disagrees with you.

We would argue, however, that this humorous definition comes perilously close to the

psychological truth, and that the mechanism that underlies it is our ability to recruit principles

that support our preferred conclusions.

These anecdotes, which suggest that people often reason about legal issues in casuistic

fashion, are corroborated by empirical studies. Perhaps the most compelling work is that of

Simon and colleagues, who apply a "constraint satisfaction" framework to make sense of how

individuals evaluate evidence in a typical courtroom setting (Simon, 2004; Simon, Krawczyk, &

Holyoak, 2004; Simon, Snow, & Read, 2004). From that perspective, the process of reaching a

legal verdict (or any other kind of judgment) is essentially one of finding coherence or

consistency between one's overall evaluation and the available evidence. The method is

conceived of as bidirectional, with evidence shaping a person's initial judgment and this

judgment shaping her evaluation of subsequent evidence. The latter of these effects proceeds as

the individual recruits justifications for up-weighting certain judgment-consistent facts while

down-weighting other judgment-inconsistent facts. This coherence-based account is borne out in

the behavior of actual jurors, whose desired verdicts have been shown to influence their

evaluations of logically unrelated evidence (Simon, Snow, et al., 2004). For example, a desire to

convict an unlikable defendant can lead jurors to shift their beliefs about the accuracy of

eyewitness testimony in general, the direction of this shift depending on whether the available

eyewitness evidence is inculpatory or exculpatory in nature.

A recent series of studies by Furgeson, Babcock, and Shane (2008) suggest that reliance

on principles of constitutional interpretation can similarly be affected by one's preferred legal

conclusion (also see Furgeson & Babcock, chapter 19, this volume). Legal scholars have long

noted the tendency for political ideology to influence even the highest level of judicial reasoning

(Bork, 1990; Brennan, 1990; Sunstein & Miles, chapter 21, this volume). While judges like to

couch their specific judicial decisions as guided by broad constitutional principles (such as

originalism or expansive interpretation), it seems frequently the case that principles are favored

or ignored depending on their fit with politically palatable conclusions. Certainly the best-

known anecdotal example is the Supreme Court's 2000 decision in *Bush v. Gore* (Dershowitz,

2001). The essential decision in that case concerned whether to let stand the decision of the

Florida State Supreme Court allowing vote recounting to continue (knowing that if recounting

was stopped, George W. Bush would inevitably be awarded Florida's electoral votes and consequently the presidency of the United States). Based on an analysis of principle, one might have expected that the most conservative justices, whose previous court decisions tended to favor state-sovereignty over federal intervention, would vote to defer to the Florida State Supreme Court, while the more liberal and historically more federalism-friendly justices would favor overturning the state court's ruling. In fact, precisely the opposite pattern of voting occurred, although none of the justices had trouble offering principled reasons to support his or her vote. This interpretation of the justices' reasoning is obviously speculative and unsurprisingly controversial (Dionne & Kristol, 2001), but Furgeson and colleagues (2008) have demonstrated just this sort of politically motivated reliance on constitutional principles in a series of studies using both college undergraduates and law students (see chapter 19, this volume, for additional methodological details). Those studies suggest that individuals will shape their endorsement of constitutional principles to support politically desirable legal decisions and are more likely to see a decision that challenges their political preferences as unconstitutional even when they assert that their policy preferences are of no significance.

Finally, a study conducted by Ditto and Tannenbaum (2009) provides evidence consistent with the anecdote that opened this section. In this experiment, participants were presented with one of two different examples of professionals who chose to challenge laws that conflicted with their moral sensibilities. Both examples were based on real-world scenarios, one in which pharmacists refused to honor a law requiring the distribution of the "morning after" contraceptive pill based on their moral opposition to abortion, and one in which physicians working for the state refused to take part in executions based on their moral opposition to the death penalty. After reading one of the two scenarios, participants were asked to indicate the

extent to which they endorsed the general principle that it is morally permissible to violate laws that one believes to be unjust. The two scenarios were designed, of course, to differentially appeal to (and offend) liberal and conservative moral intuitions, and this was expected to affect their endorsement of the justifying principle. As expected, liberal participants more strongly endorsed the principle that it is permissible to violate unjust laws after reading about the anti-death penalty physician than after reading about the anti-abortion pharmacist; conservative participants showed the opposite pattern.[3]

In sum, we suspect that casuistic reasoning is particularly prevalent in public opinion about legal issues, in part because the strategic deployment of principle is such a well-accepted aspect of our adversarial justice system.   In a very real sense, it is an attorney's job to think casuistically—to utilize legal principle creatively to build as compelling an argument as possible for whatever conclusion best serves his or her client's interests. But while attorneys often leverage principle with some understanding of their tactical goals, the rest of us are apt to be less cognizant that the principles we invoke seem compelling to us precisely because they support a preferred outcome. Presented with a different legal context in which the very same principle supported a less desirable judicial outcome, we might well reject the principle and decry its proponents as "activists" seeking to impose their personal preferences on the legal process.

C. *Casuistic Reasoning about Race*

In *The Mismeasure of Man* (1981), renowned paleontologist and historian of science Stephen Jay Gould exposes the manner in which early anatomical, anthropological, and psychological research was routinely distorted in order to justify preexisting notions of racial superiority and inferiority. "Scientific racism" came in many strains, which together offer a clear testament to

the role of casuistry in the history of scientific thought. In case after case, theories were concocted and data construed in ways that painted certain human groups (especially blacks and aboriginal peoples) as biologically inferior to whites. A prime example is the theory of polygeny, developed largely by American scientists during the era of slavery. Polygenic theory held that different races actually constitute wholly different species, thus implying that whites need not respect the rights of blacks and Native Americans any more than those of nonhuman animals. Gould (1981) attributes polygeny to Americans' a priori preferences concerning race: "It is obviously not accidental that a nation still practicing slavery and expelling its aboriginal inhabitants from their homelands should have provided a base for theories that Blacks and Indians are separate species, inferior to Whites" (p. 43). Like other manifestations of casuistry, such theories use general principles to obscure the influence of preferences on judgment. The particular persuasive power of scientific racism owes to the fact that most people implicitly trust and respect the principles it claims to represent—namely, those of intellectual and empirical objectivity.

Scientific racism underscores the important historical role of selectively applied principles in intellectual justifications of racial prejudice. But what sort of account best describes current thinking about race? Is the everyday racial thinking of contemporary Americans as casuistic as that of the scientists Gould exposes, or does their reasoning instead reflect raw preference or, perhaps, unalloyed principle? In the sections that follow, we explore debates within social and political psychology concerning the nature of racial attitudes, and how those debates have hinged on the dichotomy between principle- and preference-driven judgments. We then examine research suggesting that this dichotomy once again is inadequate to describe the actual psychology underlying such judgments. Research into everyday judgments

concerning race instead suggests that preferences—whether derived from perceived self-interest or sheer animus toward outgroups—guide seemingly principled reasoning. As we will see, casuistry appears to be a quite general component of everyday racial thinking, deployed in order to justify preferences that advantage *or* disadvantage members of historically subordinated groups.

       1. Racial attitudes seen through the preference/principle lens.

       The preference-principle framework figures prominently in an ongoing debate concerning the determinants of individuals' racial policy attitudes—in particular, whites' opposition to policies designed to reduce racial inequality. One such policy, affirmative action, garners significantly less support among white Americans than among African Americans and other minorities (Jones, 2008). Why? One camp, drawing from a long tradition of research in realistic group conflict (Blumer, 1958; Sherif, 1966), argues that policy attitudes generally—and white opposition to affirmative action in particular—is ultimately rooted in a real or perceived clash of interests (Bobo, 1983, 1998, 2000). According to that view, members of the dominant racial group see affirmative action as a threat to their group's (and, by extension, their own and their children's) access to valued social resources, such as jobs and education. The group- and self-interested desire to ward off threats, then, are what lead many whites to oppose affirmative action, school busing, and other redistributive social policies.

       In sharp contrast to that camp is a group of social scientists who explain policy attitudes in terms of a clash, not of interests but, rather, of principles. These researchers, known as "principled opposition" or "principled conservatism" theorists, argue that, much of the time, whites' opposition to affirmative action reflects their opinion that such policies violate important principles of fairness (Bobocel et al., 1998; Sniderman & Carmines, 1997; Sniderman & Piazza,

1993; Sniderman et al., 1991; Sniderman & Tetlock, 1986b). According to this perspective, many people oppose race-conscious social policies because such policies contravene standards of procedural fairness and group neutrality, which require that decisions concerning resource allocation be made in a principled, unbiased, color-blind fashion (Clayton & Tangri, 1989; Crosby & Franco, 2003).

The principled-opposition and realistic-group-conflict camps make competing claims concerning the genesis of individuals' racial policy attitudes. Despite much research, however, the issue of what drives individuals' policy positions is far from settled. Proponents of the principled-opposition perspective can point to evidence that whites' affirmative action attitudes vary as a function of adherence to values such as individualism (Sniderman et al., 1991) and meritocracy (Bobocel et al., 1998; Davey, Bobocel, Son Hing, & Zanna, 1999). For their part, researchers sympathetic to the group-conflict view can point to data showing that whites' attitudes are sensitive to perceptions of zero-sum intergroup competition (Bobo, 1998, 2000) and assumptions about the harmful impact of specific policies on the ingroup (Lowery, Unzueta, Knowles, & Goff, 2006). It may, however, be that such findings only appear to contradict one another if researchers are forced to choose between principles or preferences. The illusion of contradiction may fade if one adopts a casuistic-reasoning model in which principles are frequently brought to bear dynamically in support of preferences. We turn next to research supporting such a hybrid approach to racial judgment.

2. Casuistry in racial decision making.

Research into everyday social judgment reveals a paradox. On one hand, individuals make near-constant use of social category information—knowledge of others' group memberships—in order to reach quick and efficient inferences in ambiguous situations (Macrae

& Bodenhausen, 2000; Macrae, Milne, & Bodenhausen, 1994). Social-cognitive evidence

suggests that information about race, in particular, is encoded unavoidably and almost

immediately during social interaction (Ito & Urland, 2003). On the other hand, most of us have

internalized norms against the use of just such information (Tetlock, 2003). Judgments made in

whole or in part on the basis of a person's race risk exposing the individual to accusations of bias

or discrimination; thus, we typically frown on such judgments in favor of "color-blind" (i.e.,

race-neutral) thinking (Apfelbaum, Sommers, & Norton, 2008; Knowles & Peng, 2005).[4]

What is a social actor to do when he or she is both inescapably disposed toward, and

motivated to avoid, race-based thinking? As Michael Norton and his colleagues have shown,

casuistry provides individuals with a way out of this dissonance-inducing predicament (Norton,

Vandello, Biga, & Darley, 2008; Norton et al., 2004; Sommers & Norton, 2007). Across a

variety of contexts, individuals generate race-neutral justifications for judgments demonstrably

influenced by race. Illustrating this, Sommers and Norton (2007) had college students, law

students, and lawyers play the part of a prosecutor in the mock trial of a black defendant accused

of robbery and aggravated assault. Participants could use peremptory challenges to exclude

potential jurors, one of whom was black and one white. Although the black and white panelists

were equally likely to possess features that would provide a race-neutral rationale for challenge

(for instance, being a journalist critical of the police, being an executive skeptical of forensic

evidence), all three participant populations were markedly more likely to challenge the black

panelist than the white panelist. Revealing casuistry, almost none of the participants mentioned

juror race when asked to justify their peremptory use, instead tending to identify whichever race-

neutral attribute might justify exclusion of the black juror.

The study just described reveals the use of casuistry to justify decisions that disfavor members of a racial minority. However, casuistry is not merely used to conceal anti-black bias. Rather, because bias *in favor* minorities might equally be seen to violate norms of color-blindness, casuistry is also a tool by which these judgments are rationalized. In one series of studies, Norton and his colleagues (2004) had Princeton students review the resumes of white and black applicants as part of a mock university admissions exercise. The candidates varied in terms of two qualifications: grade-point average (GPA) and the number of advanced placement (AP) classes taken. All else equal, participants selected the black candidate for admission the majority of the time; judgments were thus clearly sensitive to applicants' race. Yet participants betrayed casuistic thinking when asked to report the relative importance of GPA and AP classes in their decisions. When the white candidate had the higher GPA, roughly half (56%) of participants rated GPA as being more important than AP classes to their decisions. However, when the black candidate had the higher GPA, a full 84% of judges deemed GPA the more important selection criterion.

These studies illustrate how individuals engage in casuistic reasoning in order to mask the influence of race on specific judgments. But can a hybrid perspective help understand how people develop broader ideological outlooks? In fact, a number of classic views of contemporary racial attitudes and race-relevant ideological positions can be understood as examples of casuistic thinking.

3. Symbolic and aversive racism.

Scholars of racial prejudice in the United States often observe that the nature of American racism has changed over the last several decades (Dovidio, 2001; Dovidio & Gaertner, 1991; McConahay et al., 1981; Sears, Henry, & Kosterman, 2000). Overt animus toward blacks and

other racial minorities is on the decline, along with crude stereotypes of subordinate-group members as biologically inferior to whites. According to the prevailing view, however, racism has not disappeared; it has gone underground. New forms of racial prejudice now hold sway, including "implicit" (Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998), "aversive" (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986), and "modern" (McConahay et al., 1981) or "symbolic" (Sears, 1988) variants.

Racism in its modern or symbolic form illustrates the manner in which preferences can find expression through principle. According to symbolic racism theory (Kinder & Sears, 1981; McConahay et al., 1981; Sears, 1988), contemporary American racism is a cocktail of anti-black affect and traditional, conservative political values. Consequently, measures of symbolic racism have included items tapping both negative feelings toward racial outgroups (e.g., Bobo, 1983; Sears, Lau, Tyler, & Allen, 1980) as well as traditional values (for example, self-identified liberal or conservative political orientation; Sears et al., 1980). Although the precise relationship between anti-black affect and adherence to traditional values is subject to debate (Henry & Sears, 2002; Sniderman et al., 1991), one plausible reading of the theory is that prejudicial affect emerges first, through early childhood socialization, and subsequently causes adherence to conservative principles. That is, conservative principles coalesce around prejudicial affect in part because they provide a socially acceptable (that is, principled) basis for rejecting policies, such as affirmative action, that run afoul of symbolic racists' negative preferences concerning blacks. The relationship between conservative values and prejudice owes to the ability of those values to rationalize anti-black affect itself. In a time when naked prejudice is socially unacceptable, principles that are in themselves nonracial, but which provide intellectual justification for negative feelings toward blacks, can act as "affect laundering" tools.

Another account of racism's modern incarnation is Dovidio and Gartner's (2004) theory of aversive racism. Unlike symbolic racism theory, aversive racism posits no special affinity between anti-black affect and conservative or traditional values. Instead, aversive racism's core premise concerns the modern psychological tension created by widespread negative sociocultural information about blacks (e.g., ubiquitous media portrayals of African Americans as criminal, threatening, or morally defunct) and the near-universal cultural disapprobation of anti-black prejudice (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004). Thus, in today's society, it is difficult for whites (and, to a lesser extent, non-whites; Greenwald & Nosek, 2001) to avoid internalizing negative affect toward blacks. Influenced by modern mores, however, many will find these attitudes quite aversive. Aversive racists, who regard themselves as holding egalitarian beliefs, therefore strive to avoid perceiving their own behavior as reflecting prejudice.

Because aversive racists wish to avoid appearing prejudiced, to others or to themselves, they tend not to make racially biased judgments when prejudice is the only plausible explanation for their behavior. When the situation affords a race-neutral justification for their behavior, however, aversive racists will exhibit bias. In one demonstration, white participants took part in mock hiring decisions for a peer counselor job (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000). The experimenters manipulated both the race of the applicants (white or black) and the applicants' qualifications (strong, moderate, or weak). Participants exhibited no preference for white over black candidates when the applicants' qualifications were strong or weak. In such cases, exhibiting bias by hiring a weak white applicant or refusing to hire a strong black applicant would be suspect. However, when applicants' qualifications were middling, bias emerged: participant-judges picked the white applicant significantly more often than the black applicant. It thus appears that, consistent with our notion of casuistic reasoning, white participants rejected the

black candidate only when doing so could be rationalized in terms of a race-neutral principle (for instance, "His qualifications do not meet an appropriate threshold for this position").

Aversive racism, like symbolic racism, undermines the simple preference-principle dichotomy in treatments of contemporary racial attitudes. In the selection decisions study (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000), white participants who rejected a moderately qualified black candidate almost certainly experienced their decision as driven by race-neutral principles. Moreover, the proximate cause of this decision was indeed a race-neutral consideration concerning the appropriate qualifications for the job in question, even if this same principle was not invoked in the case of the white candidate. And yet it seems inappropriate to call this racial double-standard truly principled; it clearly reflects white participants' implicit desire not to hire a black applicant, and illustrates well how principles seemingly unrelated to race can be the conduits through which racial biases are expressed.

4. Legitimizing ideologies.

No social-psychological construct better demonstrates the manner in which principle conveys preferences than that of "legitimizing ideologies" (Chen & Tyler, 2003; Jost & Major, 2001; Sidanius, Levin, Federico, & Pratto, 2001). Developed to help explain why intergroup inequality—that is, patterns of group dominance and subordination—is so historically and geographically ubiquitous, the idea of legitimizing ideologies has old roots in Marxist thought (Gramsci, 1971; Marx & Engels, 1846/1970). More recently, social dominance theory (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Sidanius, Pratto, van Laar, & Levin, 2004) has made extensive use of the construct.

Social dominance theory (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999, 2004; Sidanius et al., 2004) postulates that individuals with a strong desire for intergroup inequality (especially members of the

dominant group, who have a group- and self-interested stake in preserving the hierarchy) attempt to justify, or rationalize, their motives in terms of socially acceptable principles. That justification role is fulfilled by a menagerie of sociopolitical ideologies that together potently reinforce the status quo. These ideologies include free-market capitalism (Sidanius & Pratto, 1993), meritocracy (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994), sophisticated forms of racism (Pratto et al., 1994), ostensibly race-neutral objections to affirmative action (Federico & Sidanius, 2002), and color-blindness (Glaser, 2005; Knowles, Lowery, Chow, & Hogan, 2009), among others. What unites these ideologies is their "hierarchy-enhancing" potential—that is, their tendency to preserve, rather than undermine, social arrangements marked by group dominance and subordination.

Can a person who prefers hierarchy embrace a hierarchy-enhancing ideology, such as free-market capitalism, and then claim to reach economic judgments in a principled manner? Or does his judgments instead reflect the simple preference for intergroup inequality? As with the modern racism frameworks, we believe the preference-principle dichotomy cannot provide a faithful portrait of the psychology of legitimizing ideologies. Indeed, a core premise of social dominance theory (Sidanius & Pratto, 2004) and related perspectives (Jackman, 1994; Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost & Major, 2001) is that social systems achieve their highest degree of stability under conditions of widespread "false consciousness"—that is, when dominant and subordinate groups alike come to believe in culturally palatable principles that bolster a preference to maintain the status quo. In other words, legitimizing ideologies are so powerful precisely because they represent freestanding, sincerely held moral and intellectual commitments that drive a wide range of judgments. Such ideologies lend credence to the hybrid, casuistic view of

moral and political judgment advocated here, in which principles and preferences interact in complex ways.

Research on legitimizing ideologies highlights the manner in which preferences (for example, the desire for intergroup hierarchy) can steer people toward principles congruent with those preferences. Recent work suggests that individuals do not merely select ideologies and principles that match their preferences; they also actively construe the content of ideologies in a manner consistent with those preferences (Knowles et al., 2009). On this view, the agreed-upon meanings of sociopolitical principles often underdetermine their effects on the social system (see also Levy, West, Ramirez, & Karafantis, 2006). Such "malleable" ideologies are neither inherently hierarchy-enhancing nor hierarchy-attenuating, and thus can be marshaled to bolster or to undermine the status quo.

Knowles and colleagues (2009) examined how the desire to bolster or undermine the existing racial hierarchy influences whites' construal and endorsement of a cherished American ideology: color-blindness (Dyson, 2000). The authors argue that color-blindness has both a widely agreed-upon core meaning and flexible content. The core meaning of color-blindness is the general humanistic admonition that a person's racial group should not enhance or undermine his or her life outcomes. Beyond that meaning, however, the ideology is up for grabs. For example, color-blindness can be construed as a principle of either distributive or procedural justice (Blader & Tyler, 2003). As a distributive ideology, color-blindness is a principle of "macro-justice" (Clayton & Tangri, 1989; Murrell, Dietz-Uhler, Dovidio, Gaertner, & Drout, 1994) requiring that people receive long-run outcomes consistent with their individual merit. As a procedural dictate, on the other hand, color-blindness flatly prohibits institutions from making judgments (such as college admissions or hiring decisions) that are conscious of individuals'

race. Crucially, these construals of color-blindness have antithetical implications for race in America: distributive colorblindness supports the use of redistributive racial policies, such as affirmative action, whereas procedural color-blindness constitutes a potent argument against such policy (Crosby & Franco, 2003; Crosby, Iyer, & Sincharoen, 2006).

Knowles and colleagues (2009) found that, depending on individuals' level of desire for intergroup hierarchy and perceived threats to the status quo, dominant-group members (that is, whites) construed color-blindness in accordance with their intergroup motivations. Specifically, anti-egalitarian whites under threat actively interpreted color-blindness as a procedural principle prohibiting hierarchy-attenuating social policies. Upon construing the ideology in this manner, these participants went from rejecting color-blindness to strongly endorsing it. These findings suggest that color-blindness is a malleable sociopolitical principle, capable of being used either to bolster or to undermine the status quo. Which meaning, and thus role, the principle assumes depends on the preferences of the person wielding it (see Cohen, chapter 11, this volume, discussing related research on color-blind ideology).

In sum, a variety of theoretical perspectives and empirical studies underscore the casuistic, or hybrid, nature of racial thinking in the contemporary United States. There is little question that overt forms of racial bigotry are no longer culturally acceptable—either to express publicly or, for most people, to entertain privately (Plant & Devine, 1998). The suspicion of many social scientists, however, is that negative affect toward African Americans and other racial minorities lingers in more socially acceptable forms. In order to avoid the appearance of prejudice, individuals employ casuistic reasoning in small and large ways. People utilize casuistry (writ small) when they mask individual decisions with race-neutral rationalizations (e.g., Sommers & Norton, 2007). Moreover, casuistry (writ large) contributes to the

development of broad ideological positions, such as symbolic racism (e.g., Sears, van Laar,

Carrillo, & Kosterman, 1997) and an array of legitimizing ideologies (e.g., Pratto et al., 1994).

Finally, evidence suggests that preferences not only guide our selection of principles but also

shape our very construal of ideological meanings (Knowles et al., 2009).

III. Preference and Principle Revisited

A recurring bit on *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* juxtaposes video clips of well-known

political figures making conflicting public statements. Almost invariably, the clips involve an

individual giving a principled argument to support a given political position at time one, only to

reject that very argument in favor of a different political conclusion at time two. In one recent

episode, for example, Stewart played tape of conservative political pundit Karl Rove touting the

"executive" experience of then Republican Vice Presidential candidate Sarah Palin (as a mayor

and governor), and followed it with a footage of Rove disparaging the very similar experience of

Democratic Virginia Governor Tim Kaine when he was considered a top candidate to be Barack

Obama's running mate.

In many ways, Jon Stewart's trenchant eye for political hypocrisy is the intellectual

inspiration for this chapter. What our version lacks in humor, we have attempted to make up for

with empirical and theoretical support. We have argued that, despite its ubiquity in cultural and

social-scientific discourse, the dichotomy between preference-driven and principle-driven

judgment oversimplifies human psychology. Attitudes about social issues seldom reflect only

naked preference or dispassionate principle. Instead, the evidence suggests that those attitudes

are wrapped up in casuistic reasoning, in which individuals' choice or construal of principles or

ideologies is shaped by their affective preferences. We reviewed evidence for casuistic

reasoning in judgments about life and death, the law, and various aspects of racial equality and

related ideologies, and we suggested that this work supports our hybrid view of the relation between preference and principle.

Yet much of the evidence reviewed here might be seen to make a different point altogether: that principled judgment is an illusion, and that preference is the "true" cause of people's attitudes and choices. At one level this criticism strikes us as fair, and we would embrace the Biercian point that principled explanations are often little more than a front for the expression of self-based, group-based, or ideologically based preferences. Nonetheless, even preference-biased reasoning frequently bears some of the constraining features of principled judgment, and thus it should not simply be fully reduced to preference-based thinking. We close by identifying two such features.

A. Principles Can Constrain Preferences

By definition, casuistic judgments invoke—as a proximal cause—a commitment, rule, norm, or consideration more general than the specific case at hand. The power of casuistic reasoning is that we experience it as guided, or perhaps even demanded, by adherence to a broader principle. Thus, once a principle is invoked, even in the service of justifying a specific affective preference, it has the potential of influencing other judgments that are subjectively relevant to the principle.

Stated another way, the generality of principles recruited during casuistic reasoning is reflected in the fact that such principles often possess a "half-life." Once an individual has selected a principle that "works" for her in one situation, this commitment will likely influence subsequent judgments for as long as it is accessible to the individual. This idea is quite consistent with the bidirectional nature of reasoning posited by the constraint satisfaction model discussed above (Simon, 2004; Simon, Krawczyk et al., 2004; Simon, Snow et al., 2004). As a rule, the more general the principle invoked, the longer and more extensive its half-life.

In some cases, an invoked principle may be narrowly tailored and short-lived. For example, it seems unlikely that participants in the college admissions and jury selection studies described above recruited a generalized preexisting conviction that people who doubt the validity of forensic evidence make worse jurors than those who write news stories about police misconduct (Sommers & Norton, 2007), or that having a high GPA is more important to success in college than taking lots of AP classes (Norton et al., 2004). In such cases, the justifying "principle" is evoked by specific details in the judgment context, and thus is likely narrow in scope with few implications for other judgments. Once the needs of the moment subside, such rationalizations may be quickly forgotten.

Sometimes, however, the principle employed in casuistic judgment is broader in scope, and thus should have a broader and longer-lasting influence on subsequent judgments. Consider, for instance, a judge applying the right to free speech to justify a decision allowing a civil rights rally, who then feels obligated to allow a Nazi rally based on the same principled reasoning. In fact, Uhlmann and colleagues (2009) showed just this kind of "carry-over" effect using a within-subjects version of their Chip and Tyrone study. For their first scenario, half of the participants received the Chip version and half received the Tyrone version. The pattern seen in the original between-subjects study was replicated. Liberals gave more consequentialist justifications for sacrificing Chip than Tyrone, while conservatives showed little difference. When participants then received the alternative scenario to evaluate immediately afterward, their responses remained remarkably consistent (in fact, the correspondence between consequentialism endorsement in the two scenarios was nearly perfect). This effect produced the most striking pattern for liberals, as it led to a reversal of their initial bias. Whereas liberals were more consequentialist toward Chip than toward Tyrone in the first scenario, they were more

consequentialist toward Tyrone than toward Chip in the second. Participants seemed to perceive a strong constraint to remain consistent in their use of moral principles across the two scenarios, even when their initial choice of principle was evoked by motivational factors.

This finding is important because it reveals that people can experience motivationally invoked principles as "real," with the same judgment-constraining implications as any other intellectual commitment. Indeed, theories of cognitive consistency are predicated on the notion that people do not wish to contradict themselves, even when their behavior is induced by temporary situational demand (Cooper & Fazio, 1984; Festinger, 1957).

Of course, this empirical example presented individuals with two highly similar judgments in close temporal proximity, and thus the pressure to remain consistent, both intrapsychically and interpersonally, was considerable. An interesting empirical question regards the conceptual and temporal reach of motivationally invoked principle. Would an individual who recruits the principle of consequentialism because it supports her preference to see condemned killers put to death then feel a temporary increase in sympathy for consequentialist arguments in another context (for example, funding for embryonic stem cell research) even if her preferences dispose her in the other direction?

At the extremes of generality, motivationally invoked principles might even be able to achieve a kind of functional autonomy, becoming detached from the motivations that produced them. Thus, to symbolic racism theorists, political conservatism is rooted in racial animus, and to social dominance theorists, free-market ideology reflects the desire for intergroup hierarchy; yet these ideologies come to have lives of their own, influencing judgments quite apart from the motives that spawned them. Moreover, it is entirely plausible that—regardless of their genealogy—conservative and market ideologies possess internal consistency, philosophical

support, and substantial validity. Thus, if a preference-masking principle is able to become a coherent and freestanding moral, intellectual, or political commitment, it misses the mark to say that all judgments made on the basis of that commitment are "unprincipled."

B. Preferences Can Reveal Principle

As mentioned at the outset, a hallmark of principled judgment is legitimacy. Decisions or opinions based in broad moral or intellectual commitments are seen as more credible and respectable than judgments based in one's affective stance toward a particular state of affairs. Hybrid or casuistic judgment, in which principles are selected because of their affective implications, would therefore seem to be of questionable legitimacy as well.

It is important to remember, however, that casuistic judgments are only as illegitimate as the preferences that precede them. We question the legitimacy of principles adduced to justify self-interested decisions because we tend to regard preferences based in self-interest as suspect. Similarly, historical critiques of casuistry flowed from its use to justify morally questionable behavior (Pascal, 1657/2004). When utilized with more legitimate motivations, casuistry can be construed in a more respectable normative light (Jonsen & Toulmin, 1990).

The idea that our intuitions about fundamental moral questions are at least as (if not more) "valid" than the principles available to justify them has a long history in moral philosophy (e.g., Hume, 1740/2007; Hutcheson, 1769). Hume, for example, believed that our affective reactions revealed an underlying "moral sense" that could be used like a moral compass to divine truly ethical behavior, and psychologists have recently developed empirical arguments that resemble this view (Haidt, 2007; Hauser, 2006). In particular, Haidt (2001, 2007) makes the case that moral intuitions reflect adaptive insights accumulated over the course of human evolution. Thus, the compassion we feel upon seeing another person physically injured—even a

complete stranger—is more than merely an emotional reaction awaiting post hoc justification in

terms of a moral principle. It is a moral perception that proved adaptive as our primate ancestors

were learning to live and cooperate in larger and larger social groups. Likewise, the anger we

feel toward cheaters, which we may render intelligible in terms of principles of fairness, is itself

a moral insight derived from the evolutionary demands of social living (for example, reciprocal

altruism).

  This view is consistent with the more general notion that intuitive thinking should not be

equated blindly with bias or irrationality (Dijksterhuis, Bos, Nordgren, & van Baaren, 2006;

Gigerenzer, 2006). Although there are clearly times when our affective reactions derive from

sources most would deem nonnormative (for instance, our desire to view ourselves in a positive

light or to believe that our ideologically based view of the world is correct and morally justified),

in other cases intuitions may reflect an implicit wisdom, or at least an unarticulated but

understandable underlying principle. For instance, the reluctance of political liberals to invoke

consequentialist justifications for sacrificing an African American may reflect the value they

place on social equality. These individuals would not deny the intuitive value they attach to

racial equality, and might even view the resulting judgmental inconsistency more with

bemusement than with compunction. Similarly, the tendency of political conservatives to apply

different standards to American than foreign militaries might reflect their unrepentant belief in

American exceptionalism, a principle they would happily acknowledge and readily defend.

  Thus, it is important to end this chapter by noting that the kind of casuistic reasoning

highlighted here is not necessarily illegitimate simply because of its post hoc nature (although it

certainly can be). Intuitionism, casuistry, and motivated reasoning are complex and multi-

faceted phenomena, and the most interesting and provocative topics for future research will almost certainly lie in the uncharted theoretical territory where preference and principle interact.

Notes

1. Ambrose Bierce was an American journalist and social commentator known for his sardonic view of human nature. See the second epigraph for Bierce's satirical definition of *politics*.

2. This claim does not speak to principles' actual validity as determinants of behavior (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977).

3. Little did Kohlberg know that promoting Stage 6 thinking (that of "universal principles) was such a partisan affair.

4. Given the results of the Chip/Tyrone study described above—in which liberals, but not conservatives, exhibited a racial preference in the trolley problem—it might seem that the tendency to use racial information in decision making is an exclusively liberal phenomenon. However, given the robustness of automatic racial categorization effects (e.g., Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000; Macrae et al., 1994), we suspect that scenarios could be crafted that trigger conservatives' racial preferences; indeed, identifying such ideological triggers is an interesting empirical question.

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