

**Rethinking Horizon Theory:
Was Banfield Right?**

Submitted By:

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Scholarship on poverty and urban America tends to follow one of two seemingly exclusive paths. Some contend that there is a permanent underclass whose social dysfunctions are beyond the reach of public policy (Mead 1986; Murray 1984). Others insist that systemic defects in the design of liberal political institutions and the market economy are to blame (Katz 1989; Katznelson 1981; Piven and Cloward 1993).¹ Each path offers arguments that may be partly appealing on an intuitive level, but are ultimately incomplete. The permanent underclass argument offers the virtue of starting from ideas about human nature. The systemic defect argument is helpful as a reminder that politics by nature makes assumptions about a preferred way of life and intentionally conveys benefits on those who conform and imposes burdens on those who do not. Likewise, the systemic defect argument calls to attention the role policy can play in mitigating risk and reducing the effects of inequality, whereas the permanent underclass argument guards against utopianism by reminding one of the limits of politics. Taken together, these arguments reflect terrain very familiar to students of political philosophy. Thinkers from Aristotle to Locke offer elaborate portraits of human nature, using them to demonstrate both the need for and limitations of politics and public policy.

The philosopher's method was clearly influential on Edward C. Banfield's work, *The Unheavenly City*. He stated that "except as they are compatible with the realities of class culture in the city, the most carefully contrived efforts of public and private policymakers cannot succeed, for the mix of class cultures is a constraint as real as those of income, technology, or

¹ Charles Murray has pointed out that these paths trace back to two very important books published in 1962: Michael Harrington's *The Other America* and Milton Friedman's *Capitalism and Freedom*.

climate” (Banfield 1990, 74).² The academy reacted loudly to Banfield’s argument—but not profoundly. While controversial, the book sparked very little productive debate. Few public commentators appear to have wrestled with Banfield’s argument, engaged it, and allowed it to alter their previous opinions. There was no attempt among critics to work out aspects of Banfield’s argument that were valid, nor any attempt to convince Banfield to reconsider those parts of his argument they considered flawed. Those who agreed with the argument expressed their approval with little or no qualification. The book appears to have been either embraced or rejected by advocates and critics based more on instinct than reason. In this most important sense, Banfield’s work was less successful. Consequently, there exists an automatic suspicion toward research that attempts to understand policy in terms of human nature. If Banfield is correct that in order to be effective, policy must be designed with an understanding of human nature—an argument in the spirit of Aristotle and Locke—then our understanding of the condition of urban America is itself in poverty.

A great deal of time has passed since the publication of *The Unheavenly City*. The author is no longer alive and most of the critics are no longer active scholars. Yet the subject matter remains important and timely. In such a situation, one is tempted to call for a “reconsideration” of Banfield’s argument and the critical response. However, mere reconsideration will not do: If anything, the ideological stakes that prevented fruitful discussion at the time of the book’s publication are higher today. Simply reflecting on the argument and logic seems unlikely to lead to a different conclusion. Instead, it might be helpful to *rethink* the argument altogether, making necessary changes to the assumptions and logic based on the more robust portrait of human

² Subsequent citations by page number only. Unless otherwise indicated, all references to Banfield are to the 1990 reissue of *Unheavenly City Revisited*, originally published in 1974.

nature one finds in political philosophy. Before doing so, it is necessary to examine Banfield's original argument as well as his exchange with critics.

Banfield's Horizon Theory of Human Behavior

In Chapter Three of *The Unheavenly City Revisited* Edward Banfield lays out the horizon theory of human behavior. Drawing from a wide array of economic, sociological and psychological research, Banfield argues that "the most promising principle" for understanding social problems and analyzing public policy "seems to be that of psychological orientation toward the future" (1990, 53). Our sense of time creates certain horizons and our horizons shape our behavior.

Banfield argues that people can be arranged on a spectrum based on their orientation toward the future. The spectrum ranges from radical present-orientation on one end to extreme future-orientation on the other. Although the poles are ideal points and nobody occupies them, Banfield contends that individuals will drift toward one or the other. A person who is present-oriented "lives from moment to moment[;] he is either unable or unwilling to take account of the future or control his impulses" (57). These very limited horizons mean this person is a strict utilitarian, acting for the sake of immediate and direct benefit to himself exclusively. There is no regard for the consequences of his actions for himself or others over time. On the other hand, the future-oriented person is "confident that within rather wide limits he can, if he exerts himself to do so, shape the future to accord with his purposes" (57). This person is able to postpone gratification, recognize the value of collective action, and take account of broader, long range consequences.

As clusters of people sharing a common horizon form, Banfield organizes them into social classes. He states that "the many traits that constitute a 'patterning' are all consequences,

indirect if not direct, of a time horizon that is characteristic of a class. Thus, the traits that constitute what is called lower class culture or lifestyle are consequences of the extreme present-orientation of that class” (54). Building up from the lower class, Banfield notes that “the working class is more future-oriented than the lower class but less than the middle class, the middle class in turn is less future-oriented than the upper. At the upper end of the class-cultural scale the traits are all ‘opposite’ those at the lower end” (54). The upper class is special in that its occupants have the luxury of non-productive activity. When the future seems secure, they will focus on self-expression. However, if there is anxiety regarding the future—if they sense that their means are “not adequate enough”—members of the upper class will return to the more conventional future-oriented behavior of work and investment to build wealth and restore security (58). At the other extreme, the member of the lower class simply “lives from moment to moment” (61). This person sees the future as “fixed, fated, beyond his control: things happen *to* him, he does not *make* them happen. He is therefore radically improvident: whatever he can not use immediately he considers valueless” (ibid. emphasis in original).

Although Banfield initially describes four distinct classes, from a moral perspective they collapse into two categories. The working, middle, and upper classes have increasing capacities toward future-orientation, but all share in common an ability to resist radical present-oriented behavior—the quality that defines Banfield’s lower class. Thus, working, middle and upper classes all share the same basic kind of moral disposition and differ only in the degree to which they are so disposed. The lower class, on the other hand, has a different kind of moral disposition: present-orientation. This becomes the basis of Banfield’s most controversial argument as he uses moral difference to diagnose the urban condition and analyze public policy.

Horizons, the Urban Condition and Public Policy

Banfield was suspicious of the use of the term *crisis* to describe city life. He certainly agreed that there were undesirable aspects of city life, but he denied that they were either prevalent or permanent enough to constitute a crisis. A better conceptualization, he argued, was to think of cities as suffering various conditions. The urban crisis thesis relied on an invisible outside agent—a combination of racial and economic bigotry to create a syndrome of maladies including unemployment, poverty, criminality, and failing schools to perpetuate the crisis. Banfield contended that each condition was more complex than presumed by the urban crisis thesis. Unemployment, for example, was not a single kind of problem that affected all in the same way. The conditions were different in origin, magnitude, and duration and also different in terms of how they should be treated by public policy. There was the problem of unemployment for the working, middle, and upper classes, and there was the problem of unemployment for the lower class. For everyone but the lower class, it was usually a temporary condition. For the lower class it was more permanent (1990, 100-101; 117-24). Banfield goes on in subsequent chapters to consider the other factors commonly used to understand the urban condition: race, poverty, and a poor education system. In each case, he demonstrates that the explanatory value of each variable comes from its correlation with a concentrated lower class population. That is, poverty and unemployment are not in and of themselves to blame for the condition of urban America. Only a particular subset of each factor is worrying.

More troublesome, policy designed to treat each of these conditions is designed without taking the more complex nature of the problem into account. Since these conditions are only problematic inasmuch as they exist among the lower class, and policy as ordinarily designed is unlikely to provide adequate treatment for this subpopulation, Banfield is very doubtful that

policy can eliminate these conditions and “fix” inner cities. This leads to a difficult tension: Policy may improve the conditions for upper, middle, and working class people, but it is not necessary because their conditions are already acceptable and generally improving. On the other hand, those facing unacceptable conditions—the lower class—will not benefit from policy owing to their extreme present-orientation.

While Banfield is less hopeful about the prospect of lower class mobility, he acknowledges the possibility, and even likelihood, of mobility for the working, middle, and upper classes. However, class mobility turns out to be a double edged sword: On one hand, it raises people’s standard of living and improves the overall class composition of the city.³ On the other hand, it raises expectations and alters the way one evaluates the urban condition. This, he argues is the source of the ideology of urban crisis: as much of the population has moved to the middle and upper middle classes, people have ceased to evaluate the city by a fixed standard of acceptable vs. unacceptable based on whether people have access to basic necessities. Instead people evaluate it by the rising standards of the middle and upper middle classes—acceptable vs. comfortable. Consequently, “the city that was thought pleasant when most people were working class is thought repellent now that most are middle class, and it will be thought abhorrent when, before long, most are upper middle class” (75). Furthermore, he argues that we not only raise the minimum standards, but we change our interpretation of the source and nature of the problem: we blame society rather than individual behavior. He notes the connection between the upper middle class and the reformist politics of the Progressive Movement writing that “In the upper-middle-class view it is always society that is to blame. Society, according to this view,

³ However, if people leave the city as they rise in class, their improvement actually leads to an aggregate decline in the class composition of the city. Banfield addresses this problem in his discussion of “the imperatives of growth” in chapter one.

could solve all problems if it only tried hard enough; that a problem continues to exist is therefore proof positive of its guilt” (76). This, he contends, has negative consequences for all. Among the lower class, it absolves them of responsibility for their own actions, thereby shortening their horizons and reinforcing present-oriented behavior. Among the upper classes, it raises doubts about the legitimacy of liberal politics and institutions and invites candidates for office to build coalitions based on those doubts—not for the sake of easing them, but for the sake of electoral victory.

Although Banfield never really explains how people come to be present-oriented, he does, toward the end of the book, consider ways of preventing future generations of people from becoming present-oriented. He denies that low class behavior is genetically transmitted from parents to children. However, he does note that it is culturally transmitted as a result of their parenting style. Therefore, even if children go to school and are exposed to a more future-oriented culture, any ground they gain will likely be lost when they return home to spend the evening with their dysfunctional families in their dysfunctional neighborhoods (1990, 157-58). This becomes his strongest justification for skepticism regarding the ability of policy to solve problems. It also becomes the basis of some of his most controversial recommendations. For example, he proposes extended day care for children of lower class parents and even publicly funded scholarships to send them to boarding schools (255). While acknowledging that it would be politically impossible, he even suggests that it might be desirable to allow parents to sell their children (253). The radically present-oriented, once relieved of children, would be placed in “semi-institutions” (258).

As for the role of public policy, Banfield reveals a frustrating paradox: He explains that the only sort of policy worth supporting would have to be feasible, that is, one that “government

... could constitutionally implement” and where “implementation would result in the achievement of some specified goal or level of output at a cost that is not obviously prohibitive” (260). However, policy would likewise have to be acceptable, meaning “those who have authority in government ... are willing to carry it into effect” (260). Banfield contends, “the range of feasible measures for dealing with the serious problems of the cities is much narrower than one might think” and even more discouraging, “within this range hardly any of the feasible measures are acceptable” (261). Nevertheless, he offers several recommendations he thinks will at least reduce the social damage of present-orientation.⁴ These include: repeal of the minimum wage, allowing teenagers to leave school at 14, creating a negative income tax to reduce the work disincentive attached to typical in-cash transfers, and instituting what has come to be known as community policing. He ultimately concludes that rather than social programs, “by far the most effective way of helping the poor is to keep profit-seekers competing vigorously for their trade as consumers and for their services as workers” (275).

Banfield and His Critics

The critical response to *The Unheavenly City* covers a broad spectrum. One reviewer contemptuously remarked that “It is not enough to say that this is a bad book. It is more than that. It is irresponsible and propagandistic” (Elesh 1971, 251). Two people, evidently hoping that the book was an attempt at satire, compared Banfield to Swift (Murphy 1971, 73; Todd 1970, 51). But these are practically compliments compared to the reviewer who thought Banfield’s “monstrous ideology and images” amounted to “a prescription for American Fascism” (Agger 1971, 836). On the other hand, Irving Kristol praised it as “easily the most enlightening

⁴ Banfield seems to realize that this is more consistent with his own preference for future-oriented behavior. He says that these are the “best course of action in the long run” (259) implying that the sale of children and institutionalization of adults is rooted in present-oriented thinking.

book that has been written about the ‘urban crisis’ in the U.S” (Kristol 1970, 197) and another reviewer predicted that the book would “prove to be a wonderful candle by which we find our way into the future” (Nisbet 1970, 3).

Even the more substantive reviews are so numerous and varied as to defy easy summary. Several were critical of Banfield’s “judicious selection of sources” (Rossi 1971, 818; see also Elesh 1971, 252-6). Another noted that he “does not provide much statistical evidence” (Lockard 1971, 69). Yet, Carl Stokes, the first African-American to be elected mayor of a large city, complained that Banfield used *too much* data arguing “he deals with numbers, with graphs, with charts, with ‘Statistical Negroes.’ His figures cannot convey to him, nor to his readers, the feelings, the possibilities and the opportunities which I experience every day” (Stokes 1971, 825). A more common complaint was that he contradicted himself throughout the book (Goheen 1975, 573-4; Lockard 1971; Sennett 1970, 24). Even those who agreed that the book was offensive did not agree as to the reasons: One classified the argument as “patent racism” (Lockard 1971) while another appeared to defend Banfield’s integrity on race noting “he says he does not in any way equate lower class status with being black, and I believe him. Attacks on this book as racist miss the point.” Yet this was merely to set up a different attack as the same author continued “it’s not blacks Banfield despises, it’s poor people, whether they be white, black, or brown” (Sennett 1970, 25). Reviewers even disagreed over the likely impact the book would have on public policy. One dismissed the book’s argument and recommendations as “unlikely to be taken seriously as guides for present or future action” (Naftalin 1971, 77). Another feared just the opposite lamenting that *The Unheavenly City* “has been read eagerly and taken seriously by high government officials” (Sennett 1970, 23).

Banfield was equally harsh toward his critics. In one published response, he claimed that *The Unheavenly City* “received hardly any competent criticism.” He argued that most reviewers intentionally distorted his argument as a way of relieving themselves from confronting unpleasant facts. As for the charges of contradiction, Banfield defended himself by claiming that such criticism was the result of reviewers selectively reading the text in an effort to render his argument more easily refutable. In judgment of his accusers, Banfield writes, “scholars have no business playing rhetorical tricks. They have an obligation to try to understand an argument and to come to grips with it” (Banfield 1971a, 77). Despite his scorn, Banfield notes in the preface to a second edition of the book, aptly named *The Unheavenly City Revisited*, that he took the criticism seriously and writes that “in a great many places I have recognized, and I hope eliminated, ambiguities of language or confusions of thought that created confusion (and often outrage)” (Banfield 1990, ix). However, he did not change the substance of his argument—a fact noted by at least one reviewer of the revised text (Danzig 1978, 162).

Most observers agreed that the exchange between Banfield and his critics was impoverished. One attributes the problem to Banfield’s inflammatory style causing his critics to misread the book (Hartzler 1971, 59-60). Even Banfield’s ardent defender, Irving Kristol, lamented his friend’s deep skepticism. Pondering Banfield’s rejection of the possibility of improving the condition of the lower class, Kristol admitted “I wish he had kept these pessimistic speculations in his notebook” (Kristol 1970, 198). One reviewer does not confine his disappointment to Banfield, but extends it to his critics as well. He notes the exchange “tells us less about what may be wrong with Banfield than about what is wrong with standards of critical discourse among social scientists today” (Marmor 1972, 86). He agrees that Banfield’s rhetoric may have invited the acrid responses, but also that “The [poor] reception illustrates how the

scholarly community fails to assess dispassionately the *relative merits* of a book or argument” (Marmor 1972, 87, emphasis in original). He concludes that “The entire enterprise of intellectual debate in the United States was demeaned by the reception of *The Unheavenly City*. No work by a prominent social scientist, however unorthodox, however flawed, however provocative, merits the kind of hysteria which greeted this book. In the process, another chance was lost to discuss seriously the problems of urban America and their possible cures” (Marmor 1972, 88).

Yet the opportunity need not be lost. Because the exchange has been well preserved in the journals, it is possible to reconstruct it, and in so doing, bring a more substantive debate to light. The reviewers’ arguments might not have been articulate, but they raise important matters worthy of more serious consideration than Banfield gave them. Had he engaged them, he might have improved horizon theory. Because he did not, it has provided excuse either to reject it out of hand or to embrace it on faith—neither position being intellectually satisfying. Specifically, there are three important issues that arise in the critical exchange and seem never to have been adequately resolved.

The first issue deals with Banfield’s understanding of class. Critics contend that his derivation of class based on a person’s psychological orientation to time is an oversimplification. They note that even though conventional sociologists consider present-orientation in their definition of class, it is never taken as the sole measure (Danzig 1978, 163; Mundel 1972, 303-5; Rossi 1971, 817-818). One reviewer refers to the work of Oscar Lewis, pointing out that Lewis included time horizon as one of 79 variables (Elesh 1971, 252). Another reader connects Banfield’s simplistic view of the lower class to his general skepticism regarding policy success (Lampman 1971, 830-34). The dispute over defining the lower class based solely on time horizon also leads several reviewers to attack Banfield’s claim that poverty should be determined

using an absolute measure of hardship rather than a relative standard (Mundel 1972, 305; Sennett 1970, 24; Todd 1970, 51-55).

The second issue focuses on the permanency of the lower class. Irving Kristol admits that he can not refute Banfield's pessimistic claim that the lower class never has assimilated into conventional society, however Kristol thinks it is untrue on an intuitive level. He notes that in European cities lower class children have moved into the working class and beyond (Kristol, 1970).⁵ In one of the few reviews that Banfield acknowledges as valuable, Russell D. Murphy wonders about the distribution of people who fit Banfield's definition of low class relative to the more traditionally defined economic classes. Murphy offers reason to believe that some whom Banfield would characterize as low class do rise to higher economic classes over time. He notes that many who migrated to the city (particularly from the southern United States) would be low class using Banfield's definition. However, he suggests that "immigration to the city would seem to be *prima facie* evidence of the migrant's future-orientation, of his hopes and positive expectations for himself and his progeny" (Murphy 1971, 218).

Finally, the critics raise an important issue pertaining to the factors that drive human behavior. The question, reminiscent of the debate between nature and nurture, is whether the anti-social behavior Banfield attributes to his lower class is the result of a person's external environment or internal pathology. This is significant because if behavior is pathological, it will not respond to changes in environment and so policy intervention is, as Banfield suggests, unlikely to solve problems. Several reviewers oppose this point (Mundel 1972, 310; Sennett 1970, 24; Todd 1970, 52). By classifying lower class behavior as "pathological" rather than

⁵ Part of the problem stems from confusion over the definition of class. One critic claims to have evidence of mobility among the lower class in urban America (Danzig 1978, 163). However, he errs in focusing on economic class and ignoring Banfield's claim that many poor people are not low class by his definition and would be expected to experience mobility.

environmental, Banfield, the critics argue, ignores established research, particularly that of Herbert Gans (1962).

Despite their efforts, the critics fail to offer evidence that actually refutes Banfield's basic argument. They offer a few examples suggesting that those in Banfield's lower class are a bit more complex and that they can behave differently than he predicts under certain conditions. However, merely establishing an additional set of facts is not the same as demonstrating that Banfield's facts are incorrect. The critics accuse Banfield of using selective evidence to build an invalid theory, but they offer an equally selective body of evidence claiming to refute him. At most, this suggests that Banfield's horizon theory is incomplete and needs modification. Unfortunately modification would require engagement between scholar and critic. Instead, the critical reaction to Banfield's ideas cast a shadow of suspicion over those who would attempt to use human nature to analyze policy. The result is a chilling effect on similar research. Much of the dispute between Banfield and his critics rests on unstated assumptions about the nature of self-interest, its relation to human behavior, and the ability of politics to alter said behavior. This is the basic question at the heart of liberal political philosophy, especially that of John Locke. Thus, rethinking Banfield's argument in light of Locke's teaching might offer a way out of the quagmire.

Locke's Understanding of Self-interest and Horizons

In Locke's *First* and *Second Treatise* we learn of the role self-interest or the desire for self-preservation plays in human behavior. Locke explains the extent to which self-interest, united with the faculty of reason, presents certain problems but also a certain potential for our well being. Rational self-interest can divide people against one another, driving them to war, or it can bring them together, allowing them to live in relative peace and prosperity.

Locke's initial discussion of self-interest unites the concept of self-preservation with reason, stating that God "spoke to [man] directed him by his senses and reason, as he did the inferior animals by their sense and instinct, which he had placed in them to that purpose, to have use of those things, which were serviceable for his subsistence, and given him as means of his preservation" (1T§86.9-15).⁶ The distinction between humans and animals is telling. Humans are directed by their "senses and reason" whereas animals are directed by their "sense and instinct." If we are to interpret Locke's words literally, two substantive differences come to light. First, in animals self-preservation is merely an instinct, whereas in human beings preservation is rooted in reason. Instinct is less sophisticated, generally offering the discrete options of fight or flight, with no middle ground, and so we should expect some degree of uniformity and regularity in the way animals seek preservation. However, in human beings, reason differs from instinct in that it assesses different circumstances differently. This is connected to the second difference. Along with instinct, animals rely on "sense" but along with reason, humans use their "senses." Like instinct, sense is discrete in its detection of danger. Thus, animals are either in danger or not in danger and therefore must either act or not act for self-preservation. Humans, on the other hand, having *senses*, are able to detect degrees of danger, and using *reason* they are able to respond with a variety of actions. Our actions are not random and chaotic, nor are they fixed and uniform. Because of the more complicated process that goes into interpreting and responding to the world, people are less predictable. Moreover, this diversity of interpretation and response will apply both to different people facing identical circumstances, any single person finding himself in altered circumstances, and, perhaps most

⁶ All citations are to the Laslett Edition of Locke's *First* and *Second Treatises* using the standard convention of citing the abbreviated name, followed by the section number, and the specific line numbers where appropriate.

importantly, that same person in the same circumstances over time. Simply put, people are capable of a range of responses based on the greater complexity of moral calculus and the variety of outcomes born of this complexity gives rise both to certain problems and a certain potential for human beings. These are best understood by first considering the moral dimensions of self-interest—how our individual conduct results from the calculations of self-interest. These lead directly to the political dimensions of self-interest—how we interact with other people based on those calculations.

The Moral Dimensions of Self-interest

There are three characteristics that we must consider if we are to understand self-interest more fully. The first characteristic describes the scope of self-interest. In the narrowest sense self-interest is concerned with bare preservation. This expands slightly as a person desires to have use of those things, “which were serviceable for his subsistence, and given him as means of his preservation” (1T§86.9-15). Once we have attended to these needs, our self-interest broadens further to include a concern for comfort. The idea of comfort prompts Locke’s first mention of property, noting that “Adam’s property in the creatures was founded upon the right he had to make use of those things, that were *necessary or useful* to his being” (1T§86.26-28 emphasis added). Finally, comfort itself proves to be an expansive term as Locke goes on to speak of the greatest comforts (1T§87), and even convenience (2T§33).

The second characteristic of self-interest describes its relational dimension. Bare preservation is an exclusive concern, and the goods of sustenance are “for the benefit and sole advantage of the proprietor” (1T§92). On the other hand, comfort and convenience require us to take into consideration others, beginning with our offspring, but extending to strangers. Locke stresses that even though humans, like all animals, possess the impulse of exclusive bare self-

preservation, adults will often sacrifice their own preservation for that of their offspring (1T§56). Furthermore, he notes that the goods of comfort require innovation, which requires property rights. Property creates more sophisticated links between the interest of one and that of others. In the *First Treatise*, we learn that property allows us to benefit others by seeking our own self-interest. The most obvious way is that we acquire wealth that we may share with others. This is most clear in the discussion of inheritance. Locke explains that property rights passed from Adam to his children and the rest of his descendants, noting that the purpose of property is not merely for gaining things that are necessary or useful, but more broadly, for our “comfortable preservation” (1T§87). He explains that parents have an interest in sharing their property with their children for several reasons: We have an interest in propagating the species (1T§56.20-27; §88.18-23), we have an interest in having others who will take care of us when we are old (1T§90.25-30), and we have a natural love and tenderness for the young (1T§97.1-10). A key point is that what begins as a crude calculation of mutual interest has the possibility of developing into genuine affection. The luxury of affection comes only after one is reasonably secure in terms of personal, bare preservation and sustenance. Ultimately, Locke tells us that the self-interested development and acquisition of property allows one to benefit others beyond offspring. It also may benefit mankind in general. Locke writes that:

Upon this ground a man’s having his stores filled in a time of scarcity, having money in his pocket, being a vessel at sea, being able to swim, etc. may as well be the foundation of rule and dominion, as being possessor of all the land in the world, any of these being sufficient to enable me to save a man’s life who would perish if such assistance were denied him; and any thing by this rule that may be an occasion of working upon another’s

necessity, to save his life, or any thing dear to him, at the rate of his freedom, may be made a foundation of sovereignty as well as property. (1T§43.11-20)

There is another aspect of property that makes possible mutual benefit, and perhaps even good will, which we see not by looking to the end of property—how it is used—but to the beginning—how it is acquired and the interconnected nature of property in a complex economy. Consider Locke's discussion of a simple loaf of bread. In order for more sophisticated goods to exist (the kind of goods that make possible comfortable existence), people must develop a complex economy. This requires a sort of cooperation, albeit one rooted in personal self-interest.

For it is not barely the ploughman's pains, the reaper's and thresher's toil, and the baker's sweat, is to be counted into the bread we eat; the labour of those who broke the oxen, who digged and wrought the iron and stones, who felled and framed the timber employed about the plough, mill, oven, or any other utensils, which are a vast number, requisite to this corn, from its being seed to be sown to its being made bread, must all be charged on the account of labour, and received as an effect of that. (2T§43.13-21)

Thus, the acquisition and maintenance of property in any sophisticated form requires cooperation. This also extends the relational aspect of self-interest beyond heirs to non-related people such as friends, fellow citizens, and strangers. In sum, it may be an exclusive concern that drives a person to look to her own good without regard for others and in the extreme, even at the expense of others, or it may be a broader concern that drives a person to see her interest as mutual to that of others. Self-interest is ultimately at the heart of commerce, philanthropy, and even parenthood.

We have seen that self-interest can be narrow or broad, exclusive or mutual. Taken together, they point to a third characteristic of self-interest, related to a dimension of time. Bare

preservation is an immediate need. When it is threatened, we take immediate action, without regard for long term consequences. We seek to preserve our existence at all costs. When circumstances are so dire that we decide our very existence is threatened, we may take actions that we otherwise would not—perhaps even actions that we regret in the future. When circumstances allow us to focus on the broader concept of self-interest, such as comfort, we may make decisions with a greater sense of the future in mind. That is, we take into account long term consequences of our actions. We may be more willing to risk investment of time and resources for these goods. For example, we may be willing to sow seeds, fertilize, irrigate, and chase pests away, in order to have better food. We may be willing to gather materials and assemble them together in order to have better shelter. If we did not have some reason to believe that we would be alive to reap the fruits of our labor, we would not engage in these activities. Thus, it is when our immediate need for bare preservation has been reasonably secured that we may begin to calculate and act for the sake of longer-term interests like comfort.

The stark difference between those who calculate self-interest in the narrow, exclusive, and short term sense on one hand and those who look to the broad, mutual, and long term on the other is most clear in an anecdote Locke offers, almost in passing. He tells of a tribe of people who eat their own young (1T§57.4-18). This appears to contradict his earlier statement that human beings will nurture their children and even sacrifice themselves for the sake of their young (1T§56). Rather than the product of lazy thinking or sloppy writing, it is more likely that Locke intended this as an illustration of the poles of self-interest. In both cases children are the instruments of self-interest. On one hand, where we have already secured our basic needs, children are our connection to the future—agents of a kind of immortality. On the other hand, when facing dire circumstances, self-interest may be so narrow and exclusive that our children

best serve us by serving as a meal. In the present age this is probably more apparent as metaphor. While we do not hear of parents literally eating their children, we do hear news reports of people selling their children or even prostituting them for money and other goods. Locke would tell us that the reason is a failure to heed his teaching about self-interest. Society has allowed the self-interest of some to become narrow and exclusive and they, figuratively, if not literally, are willing to “eat their young” for their own narrow and short term benefit.

The Political Dimensions of Self-Interest

The complexity of human self-interest affects individual conduct, but more importantly, it affects social conduct and ultimately determines both the limits and the possibilities of politics. How this affects our relations with others is seen in Locke’s discussion of the law of nature. As he announces it, “the state of nature has a law of nature to govern it, which obliges every one, and reason, which is that law, teaches all mankind who will but consult it, that being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty or possessions” (2T§6.6-10). Note that he equates the law of nature with reason, which he elsewhere tells us is “our only star and compass” (1T§58.6). That is, like other tools of navigation, reason, or the Law of Nature, is used to decide the manner in which we pursue our interests. Therefore, understanding the Law of Nature helps us to understand how rational or sensible people will behave. This means that the law of nature is quite different from the concept it is meant to replace—the natural law. The law of nature is more like the laws of physics that Galileo and Newton devised to describe how certain bodies, for example planets, behave in relationship to one another. Newton’s Law of Universal Gravitation, for example, tells us that if we want to understand the force generated between two bodies, we must examine the mass of each body and then the distance between them. Thus, we need two types of information: One in absolute terms

(the masses of each body) and the other in relative terms (the distance between them). In the case of human behavior, Locke's Law of Nature tells us to look to the conditions in which people live, in both absolute terms and relative to one another. This is clearer in Locke's restatement of the Law of Nature, where he notes that:

Every one as he is bound to preserve himself, and not to quit his station willfully, so by the like reason, when his own preservation comes not in competition, ought he as much as he can to preserve the rest of mankind, and not unless it be to do justice on an offender, take away or impair the life, or what tends to the preservation of the life, the liberty, health, limb, or goods of another. (2T§6.19-25)

This calls to our attention for a second time the greater complexity in human behavior. Unlike celestial bodies, people can react in a variety of ways based on context. Consequently, the law of nature, unlike the law of universal gravitation, cannot be expressed in a formula. It is neither predictive nor deterministic, but instead reveals the likely range of behavior, given three general conditions: First, when there is no competition. We are obligated to preserve ourselves and others. This is reasonable because there is no incentive to fight. Second, when there is competition, we may act without regard for the good of others. Finally, when another's actions cause direct harm, we may act in a way that directly harms him.

The problem is twofold, partly material and partly moral. Materially, if there is scarcity of goods, then the third condition exists—any person's consumption of any good meets the strict definition of theft and therefore we may act in a way that harms others,⁷ for "every man hath a right to punish the offender, and be executioner of the law of nature" (2T§8.22-24). Conflict is imminent and violence is the only means of settling the conflict. The second problem is even

⁷ In the *Second Treatise* it is theft, or an invasion of one's neighbor's share to make use of anything that another needs for survival.

more serious. Locke tells us that the law of nature is “in vain” with nobody to enforce it. Therefore, everyone may enforce it in nature. In other words, since the law of nature is reason, and reason, as we have seen, is in the service of self-interest, everyone is left to follow his or her personal rational self-interest. Chaos will ensue unless reason is able to hold a steady course. But this is not the case. Despite Locke’s early assurance that “calm reason and conscience” (2T§8) will keep behavior moderate, his elaboration reveals the opposite: people are biased and their judgments are subject to mistake, passion, and envy or the desire for revenge (2T§13, 87, 125). This means that even if scarcity is overcome, there may still be conflict. People will still consider themselves to be at risk and may still see others as competitors.

The problem stems from an aspect of human nature that Locke explains more clearly in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. In the *Essay*, Locke elaborates on what it means to say humans are driven by desire. Desire, he argues, “is an uneasiness of the mind for want of some absent good” (Locke, 1975, Chapter XXI, §31, 3-4). Furthermore, unease is not settled once a particular good is obtained, but instead, having obtained the object of a previous desire, we immediately discover yet another good that is absent. Simply put, we are never fully satisfied. We are likely to see ourselves as vulnerable and always in need of acquiring more and more goods, in an attempt to settle our feeling of unease. Consequently, we are likely to see others as competitors regardless of the wealth we have already acquired. In this case, reason (the law of nature) will still tell us to act without regard for others.

This is likely to be a problem when we focus on the relational aspect of the Law of Nature—especially as inequality develops when some acquire more and others less. Those with less may come to see those with more as having gained at their expense. Likewise, the rich may suspect that the poor would gladly take from them what is rightfully theirs. Each comes to see

the other as a threat, possibly a thief, and therefore will be told by reason (the law of nature) to punish his or her rival. Left unharnessed, rational self-interest is not sufficient for preserving peace. Even a person who has come to develop a broad, mutual, and long-term understanding of self-interest will, owing to insecurity and unease, tend to decay in moral terms into narrow, exclusive, and immediate interest. This will encourage behavior that, according to the law of nature, is antisocial and warlike. As we shall see, this exposes the heart of Banfield's error.

Rethinking Horizon Theory

To Banfield's credit, he constructed horizon theory using evidence from the published social science of his day. As one later observer noted, "To gain a hearing for himself in the academy, he spoke to his fellow social scientists in their own language" (Henry Salvatori Center 2002, 21). However, this virtue may also have been the source of his argument's vice. His reliance on contemporary social science may be to blame for his neglect of political philosophy where he might have discovered the dynamic nature of self-interest and the potential for shaping and reshaping horizons. Such a discovery would, in turn, have prompted different conclusions and recommendations. The summary of Locke's teaching makes these matters clear and therefore offers a foundation for rethinking Banfield's argument.

The Dynamic Nature of Horizons and Moral Calculus

Much of Banfield's horizon theory is consistent with Locke's understanding of human nature. Horizons are formed based on the way individuals act upon rational self-interest in pursuit of security and comfort in a particular material context. Some people will undoubtedly tend to have greater degrees of security and thus broader horizons and others will tend to have lesser degrees of security and thus more narrow horizons. Those with broader horizons have the

luxury of planning for the distant future; those with narrower horizons must focus on immediate preservation.⁸

However, there are also key differences between Banfield and Locke. Banfield neglects the complexity of human behavior by assuming that a person's horizons, once formed, are fixed and that the class structure is consequently stable. That is, a particular person, if he should happen to be present-oriented, will always be so and another person, if she should happen to be future-oriented, will always be so. Therefore, those in the lower class will always be lower class and those not in the lower class will never be lower class. Banfield suggests that because lower class people use a different calculus prior to acting, there is a moral gulf between the classes. Owing to this moral gulf, he offers little hope that people in the lower class will independently improve their condition and even less hope that society can help them with generous social programs.

Locke suggests that horizons have a dynamic nature. All people act using the same basic calculus—rational self-interest. However, rational self-interest can lead to different behavior based on a number of factors, the first of which is a person's material context. One's senses and reason work together to tell a person how best to utilize the goods present in a particular material context for the sake of satisfying the desire for progressively higher degrees of comfortable preservation. This shapes tastes and preferences as well as the intensity with which one pursues them. It would therefore seem likely that the same person who behaves in a manner that Banfield calls future-oriented would likely behave differently in a different material context. If

⁸ This phenomenon is also present in one of the classic works of rational choice theory, Robert Axelrod's *Evolution of Cooperation* (1984). Axelrod argues that the probability of any two people cooperating in the absence of central authority increases as the likelihood increases that they will meet again in the future. Likewise, as the probability of meeting again decreases, the incentive to take advantage of one another gets stronger, i.e. people have greater reason to act on narrow self-interest owing to a constrained time horizon.

that same person's senses, reason and desires do not change, but the material context changes—either the amount or quality of goods is altered in an absolute sense or simply in a relative sense due to changes in population or even simple demand—one can expect different behavior.

Likewise, if either that person's senses, reason or desires are altered, then he, acting on different tastes and preferences, will behave differently even in the same material context because the value he places on a particular set of material goods will have changed.

This becomes critical when we consider unease as the catalyst for altering a person's senses, reason, and desires. The person in fixed material conditions, who had initially considered her situation adequately secure and comfortable, may have had fairly broad horizons. Even without changes in material conditions, she might begin to sense that what was once adequate is no more. Unease will then work with rational self-interest to collapse her horizons, and she will move from future- to present-orientation. Importantly, nothing need actually change to trigger a person's sense of unease. The mere perception of a threat to one's security could invite present-oriented behavior. Recalling Locke's slippery discussion of judgment and perception, it may take very little to set off a sense of danger causing one to retreat to a self-preservationist posture. The same dynamic should also work in the opposite direction. A person whose material conditions improve from scarcity to abundance, creating greater opportunity and comfort will, following rational self-interest, likely become more future-oriented. Likewise, accounting for the role of perception, one could come to see previously intolerable conditions as acceptable even if they do not actually change and become more future-oriented. In sum, and contrary to Banfield's teaching, it seems that any person is capable of a wide range of behavior from present- to future-oriented.

The problem of unease reveals something none of Banfield's critics seem to have noticed: Despite his skepticism toward the likelihood of policy eliminating social problems, Banfield may be *too optimistic*. He envisions the possibility of a world without a lower class. On one hand, he applies demographic trends to predict a decline in the lower class as cohorts fail to reproduce at a rate equal to their mortality (240-241). Yet, he notes, advances in health care will prevent all of the lower class from dying off. Nevertheless, those who live on may benefit from a "reduction of uncertainty about future possibilities or an increase in ability to exert political or other influence [which] would extend time horizons thereby producing changes in the traits that constitute a culture or life style" (240). With the elimination of a lower class, Banfield implies the present-oriented behavior of the bare preservationist and the social ills such behavior instigates will cease. This is a startling revelation about Banfield's understanding of human nature: He appears to believe that our souls can be satisfied once filled with enough security. Such an idea is quite naïve by Lockean standards. It ignores the problem of unease, and it neglects Locke's most important moral lesson: security is fleeting. All people and all classes will always discover new uncertainties to replace old ones, and horizons will always be in danger of collapse.

Banfield offers several examples that suggest he is more aware of the dynamic nature of horizons than his initial treatment recognizes. In discussing the upper class he notes that they may find themselves choosing between investment and expression, noting that when they grow comfortable with their wealth, they turn to expression, but that often something shakes them from that way of life to return to work and investment.⁹ In this discussion he is on the way to

⁹ On this point Banfield might have considered whether it is possible to turn the virtue into a vice. If horizons are extended too far, they could counter the desired effects—cause people to put off industry, cooperation, civic engagement, since there are no dangers calling for the need. Generally future-orientation is to be preferred over present-orientation, but consider Aristotle's

recognizing the role of unease. However, he does not develop it enough to realize how intense and universal it is (at least according to Locke). Nor does he consider the likely anti-social effects unease could have by instigating present-orientated behavior among the upper class. This might include such acts as cheating on taxes, conducting insider trading, operating a factory that pollutes the environment, or running a business in a manner that violates civil rights, exploits workers, or defrauds consumers and investors. On a more mundane level, present-oriented behavior may lead a person in the middle or upper class to relocate outside an urban area, taking his wealth with him, and, following Tocqueville's prediction, "isolate himself from the mass of his fellows and withdraw into a circle of family and friends; with this little society formed to his taste, he gladly leaves the greater society to look after itself" (Tocqueville 1966, 506).¹⁰

At the same time, Banfield implies that even his lower class may, under certain circumstances, be capable of future-oriented behavior. In his discussion of immigrants who come to the city Banfield claims "a future-oriented ideal diffused rapidly throughout the population" (Banfield 1990, 66). He continues: "although they traveled at very different rates of speed, all ethnic and racial groups were headed in the same cultural direction: from less to more future-oriented." And "those people sacrificed the present for the future who had reason to think that doing so would be in some sense profitable, and the greater the prospective rewards, the more willing they were to accept the discipline and to put forth the effort required" (Banfield 1990, 67). Once we understand the dynamic nature of horizons, we need to understand what accounts for change. This gives rise to the need to consider the environment.

discussion of the magnanimous man whose extreme future-orientation may lead to paralysis and aloofness.

¹⁰ This suggests a connection between the present-oriented behavior of the middle and upper classes and the phenomenon Paul Peterson describes in *City Limits* (1981).

The Complex Interaction of Nature and Nurture

As demonstrated in the exchange between Banfield and his critics, many thought that Banfield paid inadequate attention to the role environmental factors play in human behavior. It is true that he considered present-oriented behavior to be primarily the result of internal “pathology” but to say that he completely dismissed external environmental factors requires that one neglect the many qualifications he placed on his own argument. Recognizing that the debate is a variation of the false dichotomy between nature and nurture, Banfield stated that the most likely possibility is that behavior is “the outcome of a complex interaction between *both* sets of forces” (1990, 56 emphasis in original). Yet this makes his ultimate treatment of the issue less satisfactory. A complex relationship should warrant a more nuanced discussion leading to a more tentative conclusion than Banfield provided. A closer examination of this problem will reveal that with only slightly greater care, Banfield could have reached a more tenable conclusion and offered a more realistic and productive set of recommendations.

If the environment plays no role whatsoever, then behavior is determined solely by one’s internal character. Thus, the person of high character would not even steal a loaf of bread when facing starvation. The moral worth of actions would thus be judged by universal standards such as Kant’s categorical imperative. Conversely, if external environment wholly determines behavior, then a person who steals in one material context would not if his economic conditions were improved. In this case there would be no such thing as character and it would make no sense to speak of the moral worth of an individual’s actions. One could, however, judge the morality of a society based on its tendency to establish sufficient material conditions for all people. This line of thought leads to Marx.

Locke's teaching suggests a more complicated middle course. Behavior is the product of internal and external factors. The senses detect the goods available in a material environment. Reason then decides how to make use of the material goods in pursuit of our strongest desire—comfortable self-preservation. This gives shape to a person's tastes and preferences, which drive actions. The internal factors, meaning the functioning of the senses and reason, as well as the content of desire vary from one person to the next and within a single person over time. Rather than trying to decide whether this makes us creatures of nature or nurture, it may be better to think in a different way: Following the dynamic nature of horizons, each person would seem to be capable of a certain range of behavior. The range will vary from person to person. Some people will have a broader capacity for certain actions than others, but most would likely have a set of capacities that extend across Banfield's spectrum of time-orientation. Behavior then follows from some point within a person's capacity. That point is the actual disposition of his rational self-interest as it processes environmental conditions via the senses. Disposition would therefore be subject to alteration over time as one takes in new experiences and develops new tastes and preferences, all of which shapes and reshapes the senses, reason, and desire. Furthermore, the environmental factors and the internal factors likely influence, but do not simply determine, each other. Simply put, a person's environment will play a role in shaping rational self-interest and a person acting on rational self-interest will alter her environment.

Thinking about ways that a person's behavior can change reveals even greater complexity: First, the endpoints of a particular person's range of capacities might change over time. Secondly, a person's disposition might change within a given range. The endpoints probably change more slowly and less frequently than the disposition. Some people will likely be more malleable than others and therefore change, either in capacity or in disposition, more

frequently. Some may change far more incrementally and others more radically. A particular person may change more quickly and radically at one point in life (such as youth) and more slowly and incrementally at other points in life (such as middle age and beyond). Shaping the behavior of another person or group of people deliberately would therefore require understanding the delicate interplay of senses, reason, desire, and material conditions and the way they influence both capacities and disposition. Policy that focuses on one variable and neglects the others or unwittingly alters the variables in contradictory directions would likely not achieve the intended results. It also seems that most people would be more resistant to certain types of shaping—such as direct manipulation of desires—and more receptive to more indirect types of shaping owing to the relationship between vanity and unease.¹¹ This, too, will vary from person to person and within a particular person over time.

It is important not to overstate the degree to which Banfield neglects environmental factors. One reviewer claims that Milton Friedman must have had a significant influence on Banfield. However, he notes that Friedman, with his emphasis on shaping incentives, must believe that environment shapes behavior (Rossi 1971, 818-20). Banfield states explicitly that “it is plausible to suggest that time horizons change, although perhaps not without a considerable lag, in response to changes in the objective situation” (239). He elaborates, noting that “people often respond to government measures by making adaptations the aggregate effect of which is to render the measures ineffective or even injurious” (Banfield 1990, 265). What is more, he notes elsewhere, “it has been, and continues to be on ever-widening scale, the fate of such political action to worsen the problems, by cutting off whatever adaptive responses to them might otherwise have taken place in the behavior of those closest to the conditions” (Banfield 1971b,

¹¹ See *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Compare to Madison *Federalist* #10 and also the Socratic treatment of *thymos* in Plato’s *Republic*.

858). But as one review contends, adaptations are specifically made with reference “to a given situation” which would not indicate a response hard wired by nature, or “a result of a completely stable and distinct culture of poverty based on attributes such as present-mindedness” (Averch and Levine 1971, 147). The seemingly innocuous term *adaptations* may help to avoid the false dichotomy of nature vs. nurture, but it also obscures the important way people react to changes in the environment. Policy interventions alter a person’s environment, changing the patterns of incentives that register in that person’s senses. This shapes the desires, gets processed through rational self-interest, and leads to different tastes, preferences, and ultimately, actions. While Banfield focuses on the undesirable changes in behavior that poorly designed policy might invite, it seems just as likely that if behavior can be negatively impacted by changes to one’s environment by policy interventions, then behavior could also be altered for the better.

Recall Banfield’s discussion of immigrants assimilating following their arrival in an American city. He ponders why many moved toward future-orientation, noting that “it makes a great difference whether one supposes that (1) the American environment instilled in the immigrant a more future-oriented view; (2) it merely gave scope to those individuals whose view was such to begin with; or (3) it produced both effects” (Banfield 1990, 67). His framework implies that to the extent the first point is correct, environment matters, whereas to the extent the second point is correct, it does not because the person possessed the capacity for future-oriented behavior prior to immigrating. This, however, misses the essential point. In the second case, at least from the perspective of practical politics and public policy, it matters little that desirable behavior was a latent part of the person’s behavior all along. What matters is the factor that awakens the latent behavior, and in this case, even by Banfield’s account, it is a change of environment. Developing a more future-oriented view would be akin to developing broader

capacities whereas “giving scope” to individuals whose view was such to begin with suggests relocating the disposition of a person’s actions within an existing set of capacities. Thus, environment matters. More importantly, because environment matters, policy matters.

Policy Matters

The notion that policy matters changes the light in which we should interpret Banfield’s assertion that policy must be designed with an understanding of the relationship between the source of the problem and human nature (1990, 74). He intended this statement to remind readers of the constraints human nature places on policy—but it could just as well suggest the possibilities. Unfortunately, as noted in the introduction, there is little agreement over the source of most problems. Some focus exclusively on character or human nature whereas others focus on the environment and systemic barriers in the economy and political institutions. This leads to two very different policy strategies: One is the state-centered approach featuring complex programs of social engineering that directly seek to change living conditions assuming that behavior will change accordingly. The other is the market-centered approach which holds that there should be no government intervention other than for the sake of physical security. However, both strategies are flawed: The libertarian error causes us to fail to regulate in certain areas where regulation is needed. The statist error causes us, in those places where we do regulate, oftentimes to do so in an inappropriate manner. Banfield recognizes the vices of the statist, but neglects those of the libertarians. In so doing, he recognizes the limitations of political society, while neglecting its promise.

A middle course follows from a broader understanding of the factors that shape human behavior. Because behavior is the product of environment, senses, reason, and desire, any policy strategy associated with the middle course would have to shape each of these where necessary

and possible. Such a strategy is neither statist nor laissez faire, but instead follows that developed in Montesquieu, Locke, and the *Federalist Papers* of indirectly channeling human nature toward desirable ends. It respects that too direct and heavy handed an attempt to shape behavior will likely trigger a person's sense of unease, causing horizons to collapse and inviting self-preservationist behavior that undermines the policy. This is true where policy attempts to alter the external environment by regulating market activity such as the acquisition and use of property. It may be even more problematic if policy seeks to alter the internal components of behavior. In both cases self-interest tells us to protect ourselves if we perceive a threat to our security.¹²

The complexity of self-interest poses the greatest challenge to policy design. One must take care in designing policy that has a salutary effect on self-interest and the consequent behavior. Policy shapes a person's environment, creating or altering patterns of incentives—literally, making certain alternatives either more or less attractive to the senses, reason, and desire. This alters the way the senses inform reason and the way reason guides people in pursuit of their desires or interests. An altered environment may, in this regard, cause a person to plot a different course of action becoming either more present-oriented or more future-oriented. Thus, policy can alter horizons. Yet even this conclusion is far from simple: There is a diversity of ways in which people sense their environment and a diversity of ways people process those senses using rational self-interest. Therefore it seems likely that two different people might react quite differently to a particular policy intervention. This could result in unintended consequences, or simply countervailing reactions on the part of the policy's target audience.

¹² Bear in mind that security is connected to property both in terms of estate and ultimately in terms of the origin of all property—the body itself which includes the senses, reason, and desires that operate in the body and serve as the fount of all other property.

What is more, the unintended consequences of an initial policy intervention may prompt a call for policy change in the spirit of reform. However, the new policy, further altering the target audience's environment, would reshape tastes and preferences once again. Consequently, the reformed policy could have the effect of making people who had just become more future-oriented owing to the initial policy return to present-oriented behavior even as some who had always been present-oriented become future-oriented for the first time.

While these challenges may be discouraging, there is reason for optimism. Banfield argues that policy is stymied by the tension between the feasible and the acceptable—a tension that stems from human nature. This was a valuable contribution at a time when most research focused only on the economic and institutional constraints on policy. However, like his understanding of self-interest and horizons, Banfield's understanding of the nature of the tension between the feasible and the acceptable suffers from being too static. He sees the tension as direct, absolute, always present, and not subject to change. Once his portrait of human nature is corrected to take in the more dynamic aspects of self-interest and horizons, it is possible to speculate on a more dynamic nature to the tension between the feasible and the acceptable. Simply put, because the factors underlying the tension can be shaped, the tension itself can be shaped. This renders Banfield's horizon theory more consistent with other scholarship on policy constraints, particularly the work of Albert Hirschman, who demonstrated that economic and institutional constraints are neither direct nor absolute, but characterized by some degree of slack in the system (Hirschman 1970). Hirschman's argument prompted a new generation of research including an important article explaining that it is within the space created by slack that politics operates and influences policy design (Swanstrom 1988). In sum, because of slack, all constraints—whether they result from economics, institutions, or human nature—are subject to

the forces of politics, and politics, therefore, offers an opportunity to ease tensions and make possible certain alternatives that are both feasible and acceptable.

Conclusion

There appears to be some veracity to one reviewer's observation that "so much is right in an essentially wrongheaded thesis and so much is wrong in an essentially right-minded thesis, that it should be sensitively read and severely evaluated" (Greer 1971, 829). Unfortunately, due to the poor exchange between Banfield and his critics and the subsequent pall cast over horizon theory, there has been insufficient work on sorting out the right-minded from the wrongheaded and even less of an attempt to correct the wrongheaded. The present engagement with the theoretical foundations of horizon theory suggests that while there is great promise in attempting to ground urban policy analysis in human nature, Banfield's error lies in his neglect of the dynamics of self-interest, leading to his disregard for the role of the environment in human behavior and consequently his skepticism with regard to public policy.

There are several reasons that might account for Banfield's error: As he noted, he was offering an ideal model, never claiming that the real world would provide empirical evidence that confirms people are either present-oriented or future-oriented. This is not to dismiss the critics' counter-evidence. Ideally, it should have prompted a revision of the theory. In this case it did not. A second source of Banfield's error may lie in his assessment that scholarship had placed too much emphasis on systemic causes of poverty, too much weight on the role of the environment, and too much faith in the ability of policy to solve problems. In Banfield's estimation, this ideological position, rooted in the Progressive Movement, had come to dominate conventional wisdom. In light of this, he may have been following Aristotle's advice to bend the warped board twice as far in the opposite direction in an effort to reorient it toward the center.

Finally, even as he attacked the Progressive Movement, Banfield might not have fully escaped its grasp. He clearly thinks that the effort to separate policy from politics has led to the decline of both. Consequently, his response is to give up on politics and policy altogether. This conclusion is only tenable if one first accepts the premise Banfield appears to reject. Had he liberated himself from Progressive ideology completely, he might have considered the alternative route of calling for policy to be reunited with politics in hopes that both could prosper as a result.

Rethinking horizon theory suggests the merit of considering the alternative route more seriously and reuniting the study of urban policy with politics. This, at the highest level, implies studying urban policy with reference to human nature. Echoing Stephen Elkin with only modest alteration, this means the study of urban policy should be normative (Elkin 1987, 1). Also following Elkin, normative does not simply mean inquiry into ideas of justice and the ends of politics; it must also include consideration of politics with regard to the means of pursuing those ends. This calls for continued attention to the design of institutions, political leadership, and networks of participation for individuals and organized interests in each case determining how each can best contribute to the kind of politics that produces policy that conforms to our normative expectations. It also means a reconsideration of the standards that ought to guide policy evaluation. Such an endeavor will not be easy, and will surely invite dispute, but to quote the title of Banfield's final public response to his critics, "putting social science to work is a risky undertaking" (1971b). The present argument suggests that it is a risk worth taking.

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