

**“The Narration of Politics: Literary Illumination
of Collective Action Problems.”**

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INTRODUCTIONⁱ

Narrative literature provides numerous examples of the two essential components of politics—collective decision-making and power. Decision-making is, ipso facto, political because it involves a group of individuals who collectively determine a social outcome. The importance, severity and consequences of the collective decision may of course vary from trivial to life sustaining. Illustrations of the politics of such collective decision-making are readily found in a variety of narrative works: the election of a new master in a Cambridge college (C.P. Snow's The Masters), the decision of whether or not and where to permit the building of a road through a rural 19th century French village (Émile Zola's The Earth), the determination of housing arrangements in a Japanese-controlled internment camp for foreigners in China during World War II (Langdon Gilkey's Shantung Compound), a *pueblo*'s debate to permit small private plots or to collective all lands following its retaking from Nationalist forces in the Spanish Civil War (in the Homage to Catalonia-inspired film Land and Freedom), a jury's deliberations about the guilt or innocence of a Puerto Rican youth on a murder charge in New York City (the play Twelve Angry Men), the mob-rule leading to the hanging of three men believed to have stolen cattle (Walter Van Tilburg Clark's The Ox-Bow Incident), and the difficult decisions regarding who remains in a hopelessly overcrowded lifeboat and who must be thrown overboard (Abandon Ship). All of these works successfully capture the tensions between individuals' preferences and the politics of the making of decisions for a group.

Power, on the other hand, involves the persuading, coercing, or forcing of individuals to do something they might be reluctant to do otherwise. Within the context of collective decision-making, power becomes political when it aids in the determination or implementation of the collective decision. Narrative literature captures great variation in the exercise of power, both in form and type, in William Goldman's Lord of the Flies, the loyalty toward a small-time labor leader in a fictitious Latin American country (Joseph Conrad's Nostromo), the revolutionary leadership against apartheid in South Africa (Nadine Gordimer's My Son's Story), the effectiveness of school teachers and others to persuade young men to march off to certain death in war (Enrich Maria Remarque's All Quiet On the Western Front), and the social pressure for aged Eskimos to commit

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suicide by walking until the ice no longer holds them and thus end their use of scarce resources (Hans Ruesch's Top of the World). Such examples of the exercise of power for collective ends reveal how politics is embedded in many contexts and forms of narrative literature.

Theoretically, an interesting line of questioning about the politics of collective decision-making and the power that accompanies it is how and why such decision-making occurs. More specifically, underlying these narrative illustrations of decision-making and the exercise of power is a crucial assumption that individuals are the basic units of political analysis, but that understanding group behavior is the fundamental goal for the study of politics. Analytically building on the belief that individuals are rational actors, and therefore predictable, public choice theory questions why group decision-making often achieves sub-optimal social outcomes.ⁱⁱ This essay therefore utilizes public choice theories as a lens through which to look at some important works in comparative literature. It does so as a means to better understand the nature of the relationship between individual rationality and political outcomes, especially in the context of small groups. It suggests the imagination of authors of narrative literature may help to identify and to lessen the inevitable conflict between individual rationality and sub-optimal collective outcomes.

Methodologically, this paper acknowledges the use of narrative as both a resource and a mode of analysis. As a resource for the study of politics, the use of narrative should be focused on theoretical explanations of political behavior. More than mere story-telling or description of political events, whether fact or fiction, the effective use of political narrative requires that the analysis be theoretically framed. Narrative may also be a means of illustrating theories of political behavior. As a mode of analysis, the use of narrative focused on comparative literature should be considered within the literature that has developed the logic of comparative political inquiry.ⁱⁱⁱ

Both as resource and method, the use of narrative should theoretically address important patterns of political behavior in comparative politics. Some works, such as Steinmo, et.al. (1992) rely heavily on historical narrative. Others, such as Tsebelis (1990), exemplify how analytic narrative in case studies can be combined with rational choice theorizing to explain collective outcomes.

Tsebelis, for example, utilizes narrative when he creatively links rational choice theorizing with insightful historical accounts, "stories," and cases. Such work is part of an emerging area of scholarship that uses analytical narrative within the rational choice perspective. Sociologically-oriented analysis in this trend includes Scharpf (1997), Abell (1987), and Kiser (1996). Within political science, the recent collaborative effort by Robert Bates, Avner Greif, Margaret Levi, Jean-Laurent Rosenthal, and Barry Weingast has developed "analytic narrative" as an important empirical method as part of public choice analysis. Margaret Levi (1997) describes the method well:

An analytical narrative presumes that the outcome or event to be explained derives from the aggregation of individual choices. The analytical narrative rests on the behavioral postulates of rational choice: Individuals are the decision makers, they are rational in the sense that they act consistently on their preferences and their choices are meant to serve their ends, they are strategic in that the choice of each is affected by the likely choices of others, and the variation in choice is a function of the constraints on the actors. An analytic narrative requires the researcher to clearly identify the key actors, their strategic considerations, and the relevant technological, social, political, or economic constraints, and this specification depends on a detailed knowledge of the case. (pp. 30-1)

Such a methodological logic in the study of comparative social and political behavior should serve as a model for other "empirical" evidence, such as from narrative literature, in terms of how it can assist in theorizing about problems of collective action.

In sum, this paper suggests that the use of narrative literature can assist students of comparative politics to better understand the politics of collective action problems. It proposes that the use of narrative literature is a methodologically useful means to generalize about fundamental issues of political behavior, especially in the areas of public choice. The paper therefore begins with an overview of five important problems in the politics of collective action. These five basic problems emphasize the aggregation of individual preferences into collective outcomes: cooperation, collective action, supply of public goods, control of externalities, and commons governance. Utilizing the well-developed theoretical literature in public choice, this paper then presents illustrations of how narrative literature has successfully captured the essence of these public choice problems. The paper concludes by revisiting the methodological issue of how the use of narrative

can help us better understand the politics of the aggregation of individual preferences in the determination of collective outcomes.

ANALYTICAL FOCI OF PUBLIC CHOICE

The theoretic literature in public choice analytically covers a wide range of important issues in the study of politics. A full review of this literature is well beyond the scope or goal of this essay. Central to this analysis, however, is the view that a public choice perspective helps make the causal linkage between individual behavior and group outcomes. Similarly, narrative literature is often quite good at describing individual motivations and behavior as well as how such individual behavior results in group outcomes. Taken together, public choice theories and narrative literature can help gain insight into political behavior by linking the “the extremes of the ‘isolated individualism’ of psychology and the ‘group-think’ of sociology.”^{iv} With its methodological individualism derived from microeconomics, public choice is ultimately concerned about the ‘social welfare’ of groups. Narrative literature helps to document the centrality of individual rationality and, more importantly, the nature of social interdependence in such theorizing.

As summarized in Table 1, theories of public choice address at least five generic problems. Table 1 arranges these five—cooperation, collective action, supply of public goods, control of externalities, and commons governance—in an analytic order from small group to large group concerns. Analysis on cooperation compares the benefits of, generally, two individuals working together with these same individuals’ incentives to defect. Problems of cooperation arise when individuals are motivated to defect when it is individually advantageous not to cooperate, given the uncertainty of the behavior of the other individual. Collective action analytically moves such cooperation problems into a multi-person group context. The issue is however the same—free-riding or non-cooperative contribution to efforts of other group members. In many situations, such free-riding can be prevented by excluding the non-contributing individual from enjoying the group benefits. Public goods problems, however, derive from the fact that the supply of benefits, given their very nature, cannot be denied the non-contributing or free-riding individual. Similarly, individual or group actions often have consequences for others, or externalities. Whether positive or

negative consequences, such inattention to effects of one's behavior transmits costs (or benefits) to others not engaged in the action itself. Finally, such costs are analytically related the overutilization of a common resource. While externalities tend to arise from private transactions, governing-the-commons problems arise when the misuse of the shared resource hurts others' potential to receive benefits from it.

Theorizing in public choice involves much more: group choice analysis, spatial models, analysis of strategic behavior, voting methods and electoral systems, and the analysis of rules, structures, and institutional arrangements and their effects on behavior. This essay, nevertheless, focuses on the five types of public choice problems outlined in Table 1 and utilizes them to link such theorizing with situations and behavior described in some well-known works of narrative literature. Within analysis of each of these five problems, literary examples are used, first, to identify and illustrate the problem and, second, to clarify potential solutions.

Table 1: Problems In Public Choice Analysis

Type of Problem	Behavior Problem	Potential Solution
Cooperation	Defection	Repeat Play
Collective Action	Free riding	By-products political entrepreneur
Supply of Public Goods	Noncontribution	Public provision
Control of Externalities	Inattention to External effects	Tax/subsidy scheme
Commons Governance	Overutilization	Property rights regime governance structure

Adapted from Kenneth A. Shepsle & Mark S. Bonchek, Analyzing Politics.

New York: W.W. Norton, 1997.

COOPERATION

A theoretical understanding of the issues involved in social cooperation are most easily modeled in a two-person relationship: they analytically focus squarely on the nature of incentives for individuals to cooperate or to defect. Rewards and payoffs depend upon not only the person's own behavior but also that of the other. Two-person game theory teaches us a great deal about such incentives and the resultant behavior. Substantively, of course, students of politics have a greater interest in social cooperation in its multiple-actor contexts.

One assumption and one variable that are central to any analysis of cooperation are individual rationality and the nature of communication (information). In narrative literature, C.P. Snow's The Master and the play Twelve Angry Men, and its movie version, illustrate nicely the importance of both to cooperation. Cooperation in these two works arises from the need to determine a group outcome in an election process: the selection of a new master for a Cambridge college and an agreement on a verdict in a murder trial in New York City. The formation of individual preferences and attempts by others to change them are the essence of both works. The provision of new information in attempts to change individuals' preference orderings provides the dramatic element in them. Both works richly characterize the precarious nature of cooperation in such small group situations and the potential for individuals to defect (either to the other side or from the group itself).^v

Cooperation among individuals does not always produce a position outcome. The prevention of cooperation may in fact be a normative or policy goal. For example, Walter Van Tilburg Clark's The Ox-Bow Incident brings alive the inherent tensions between the "democracy" of majority rule and the importance of individual rights in liberal politics. It also raises questions about minority protection. Lynch mobs in fact are "democratic institutions" in the context of majority rule decision-making, but they clearly leave open the question of individual justice. Clark's narrative powerfully

reminds us that “democracy” may produce non-Pareto outcomes in collective decision-making, especially regarding the protection of individual rights. Similarly, issues of mob rule and popular justice in other works, such as the “sharpening of the knives scene” in the killing of the bourgeoisie in A Tale of Two Cities, illustrate negative outcomes of cooperation.

Economic incentives also motivate individuals to cooperate. Narrative literature frequently documents how political alliances are formed for the advancement of individual economic preferences. For example, in Joseph Conrad’s Nostromo the Monterist revolt and the breakup of Costaguana as a country was motivated by economic benefits for the victor.

“(Pedrito Montero) did not desire supreme power.....Before all, Pedrito Montero, taught by his European experience, meant to acquire a serious fortune for himself. With this object in view he obtained from his brother, on the very morrow of the successful battle, the permission to push over the mountains and take possession of Sulaco.”(p.329)

The political consequences of such economically self-interested cooperation is also revealed in Mrs. Gould’s description of Costaguana: “the government of the country had been a struggle of lust between bands of absurd devils let loose upon the land with sabres and uniforms and grandiloquent phrases.” (p.103) The intra-family plotting and conspiracies of the England royal family of Henry II in James Goldman’s The Lion in Winter also depict similar motivations for alliance building. Henry II’s three surviving sons--John, Geoffrey, and Richard--all seek in this play set in 1183 to be named heir to the throne. Along with their mother Eleanor of Aquitaine, who wishes to control various lands in the kingdom, they demonstrate the potentially destructive forces of individual rationality for the collective outcome—whether it be the Plantagenet family or England. Eleanor’s speech in Scene V strikes home the destructive forces when she talks about how “we” (politicians and leaders) start the wars, not ideology and nations.

Solutions to cooperation problems from a game theoretic perspective involve the interaction of trust, accountability, and repeated play. E.M. Forster in A Passage to India nicely depicts how trust as the glue for cooperation can be extremely fragile. The trust the Moslem Dr. Aziz had in the English school teacher Mr. Fielding, as symbolized by Dr. Aziz’s gift to him of his collar stud, is perceived by Dr. Aziz to have been destroyed by their repeated interactions in the events narrated in

Forster's work. Given the destruction of the trust in the relationship, Dr. Aziz later felt powerless in British India to hold others, including Mr. Fielding, accountable for their "defection."

Jonathan Swift in Gulliver's Travels also nicely illustrates the role of individual rationality and the politics of accountability in producing cooperative relations. First, this is consistent with the King of Brobdingnag's response to Gulliver's long description of English politics and government: "You have clearly proved that ignorance, idleness, and vice are the proper ingredients for qualifying a legislator. That laws are the best explained, interpreted, and applied by those whose interest and abilities in perverting, confounding, and eluding them." (p.172) Second, Swift suggests that individual rationality (selfishness) might undercut cooperation for some common good. He articulates this through the learned doctor (viz. political scientist?) in the Academy in Laputa when he has him state that "every senator in the great council of a nation, after he had delivered his opinion, and argued in the defence of it, should be obliged to give his vote directly contrary; because if that were done, the result would infallibly terminate in the good of the public." (p.234) Swift's obvious concern here is minimizing individual self-interest in the matters of political cooperation.

Besides trust and accountability, game theoretic literature has also demonstrated that repeated play of the same game alters the incentive structures for cooperation or defection. For many socio-political situations, the evolution of cooperation may be more important than any single, isolated, event.^{vi} Conrad's Nostromo, for example, is a great book for more than its ability to capture the essence of Latin American politics—it describes in rich narrative the repeated play of the political game that, unfortunately, creates long memories of defection, and how this negative behavior has affected collective cooperation.

Repeated play of cooperative games establishes historical norms and develops memories. Psychological solutions to defection problems attempt to establish positive norms in order to build trust, insure predictable behavior, and increase accountability. Political and governmental solutions add to the institutionalization of these rules and norms. For example, formal, state-created, solutions to cooperation problems take, among other forms, the creation of contractual agreements to bind

people to early cooperative agreements. In Gulliver's Travels, Swift recognizes the need for contract law:

"They look upon fraud as a greater crime than theft, and therefore seldom fail to punish it with death... but honesty hath no fence against superior cunning: and since it is necessary that there should be a perpetual intercourse of buying and selling, and dealing upon credit, where fraud is permitted or connived at, or hath no law to punish it, the honest dealer is always undone, and the knave gets the advantage.." (p.94)

When laws are broken, societies then utilize the state to impose accountability on the violating individual. This is one reason why trials are so widely utilized in narrative literature. Trials reflect an institutional attempt to maintain the integrity of cooperative relations. They are also examples of where people often choose to cooperate within institutions of collective decision-making, The trial of Dr. Aziz in A Passage to India, that of Sonny in My Son's Story, the numerous trials in the revolutionary context of 18th century France in A Tale of Two Cities, and that of the Puerto Rican youth in Twelve Angry Men all demonstrate attempts to make collective decisions about holding individuals accountable for non-cooperative behavior. This institutionalization of the monitoring of trust and accountability is, of course, what Frank Kafka takes to the extreme in The Trial. Throughout the work, the reader is led to wonder why Josef K. continues to cooperate with the bizarre and drawn-out trial in which he is defendant, even until the point of his execution. One possible explanation, from a rational choice perspective, is that the very drawn-out nature of the trial resembles for Joseph K. some sort of repetition of the game. In each step of the process he appears to believe he has hope of "winning" the case.

Repeated play lessens coordination problems in part because it improves information. Information availability is often crucial to the achievement of optimal social outcomes. The provision of anything less, such as in a Prisoner's dilemma, frequently depends upon who controls the flow of information. Orwell's frustration with the Soviet Union's manipulation of information in Homage to Catalonia, and the inspiration for his thinly veiled attack on Stalinism in Animal Farm, gives a strong non-fiction account of information's central role in a politicized war effort. Similarly, All Quiet on the Western Front captures the impact of information on the coordination of

Germany's war effort. The novel addresses the fact that the costs of the horrors of wars are unevenly spread across society. The problem at one point is that the war effort is going badly but the information is not reaching the home front. Many civilians strongly supportive of the war are not adequately informed about its real costs. For example, the scene when Paul Bäumer returns to his hometown and drinks with the elder men of the town, including his father, is powerful because Paul knows the true cost of the war and wants others to know it. The townsmen, given their lack of first hand information, want the war to continue and want Germany to push on...to Paris. Both All Quiet on the Western Front and Homage to Catalonia highlight the analytical linkages between issues of coordination and collective action problems.

COLLECTIVE ACTION

Mancur Olson's seminal book, The Logic of Collective Action, convincingly argued that the most important problems of collective action are formation and maintenance of group. He helped define collective action as involving cooperative behavior among individuals with the objective of some group goal. His work challenges pluralist thinking that assumes individuals with common interests will form group organizations and engage in collective action because, the reasoning goes, if cooperation is sufficient and the number of contributors is sufficiently large, then the goal should be obtained. In challenging pluralist thinking, Olson highlights three basic problems of collective action: free-riding, difficulty in the coordination of multiple objectives (nonuniqueness), and difficulty in reaching decisions regarding which common interests to pursue (conflict of interest).^{vii} His work demonstrated that the maintenance of groups is difficult and that smaller groups are less prone to collective action problems than larger groups. Most important to this paper's analysis, Olson highlights that collective action problems frequently arise because 1) individuals may have a choice about contributing or not; and 2) every member of the group enjoys the benefits of obtaining the goal regardless of whether or not he or she contributed to its obtainment. The former raises analytical concerns about monitoring and enforcement; the latter includes issues of distribution of benefits.

Questions of monitoring and enforcement suggest how coordination problems are related to issue of collective action. The monitoring of the revolutionary causes by “true-believers” willing to turn in anyway not “dedicated enough to the cause” in The Tale of Two Cities, Dr. Zhivago, and Animal Farm play a parallel role as the police and the military in other narrative works such as the arresting of “unruly” workers in Hard Times and Nostromo. This need for monitoring against free-riding, and the necessity for enforcement, is problematic throughout Shangtung Compound. A major concern for the inhabitants throughout their stay in the compound was the inability to enforce collective decisions and to prevent free-riding. For example, a conflict over housing space arose between families with teenagers and those with young children. The housing committee was unable to do anything beyond attempts at persuasion. Subsequently, “for six whole months the committee had done nothing.” (p.89) Gilkey came to the conclusion that “The question ‘Can it be done?’ is as relevant as the question, ‘Is it right?’” (p.120) and that “political action is limited by the amount of power available to put the solution into effect.” (p.122). Enforcement must therefore include the possibility of resorting to force. In order to prevent free-riding, the state reserves the right to utilize coercion to ensure a particular type of behavior, e.g., trials, as previously discussed, as institutionalized examples of enforcement. Politics, defined as collective decision-making, frequently involves concerns about how to enforce group rules in order to prevent free-riding problems.

Mancur Olson’s analysis of how large groups can successfully prevent free-riding concentrated on the search for selective incentives for individuals that help facilitate group goals. “By-product theory” suggests that “that a group that provides only collective groups goals may have a hard time.”^{viii} Collective goals themselves may not be compelling enough to encourage contributions. Instead, individual or private benefits that are conditional upon whether they contribute to the group may make the difference. In assessing the evidence, Shepsle and Bonchek (1997, p. 249) conclude that “Members of economic groups join primarily for the selective benefits (instrumental behavior), while members of noneconomic groups join primarily for the collective benefits (experimental behavior).” Selective benefits and instrumental behavior are thus more important in terms of

“economic” behavior. This is one reason, for example, why the silver becomes so important in Nostromo. However, private benefits are not the only means of creating incentives for the attainment of collective outcomes. Non-materialistic motivations exist as well. Non-economic groups and collective benefits are generally more important to students of comparative politics.

Narrative literature tends to highlight two non-economic types of incentives: leadership and political ideology/belief systems. Examples of leadership and political entrepreneurship in preventing free-riding, and thus overcoming collective action problems, are seen in the character of Nostromo in Conrad’s book by that name. He commands both the respect and even awe of many of his fellow dock workers. Many would follow him anywhere, for any cause. Political ideology and belief systems, on the other hand, help solve collective action problems through moral and institutional forms. In terms of moral correction, Langdon Gilkey asserts that “A good constitution is the expression of a deep underlying moral will of a community, not its cause.”(p.160). Ideology, for its part, helps create value changes in individuals. Nationalism plays a similar role. Both are used politically to justify coercion via institutions to overcome collective action problems. Literary illustrations of the power of nationalism overcoming free-riding problems are found in Passage to India and Nostromo. The powerful role of political ideology is expressed in many places, including the Spanish Civil War in Homage to Catalonia and For Whom the Bell Tolls and in the context of the 18th and 19th century France in A Tale of Two Cities and Les Miserables.

Organization, nevertheless, also remains key to solving collective action problems. Organization facilitates the determination of group goals and the prevention of free-rider problems through monitoring and enforcement. The successes of such organization can be seen in the early stages of the animals take-over of the farm in George Orwell’s classic Animal Farm. More than just a parallel in their terms of a similarity in their production in agriculture, the French small landowners in Zola’s The Earth are ineffective in gaining protectionist policy to defend their economically inefficient production.

“We need organization” (p.455) asserted Canon, one of the villagers. In response, Lequeu explains in disgust the essential problem: “Because there’s doubt about it, you could be the

masters. But the fact is that you don't really get on well together, you're isolated and suspicious and ignorant: you save all your dirty tricks for each other. (pp.455-6)

SUPPLY OF PUBLIC GOODS

Private goods are differentiated from public goods in that the former can be exchanged in economic markets because the "owner" has full control over their use. "Private goods possess two properties: *excludability* (the owner may exclude others from enjoying the good) and *solitary supply* (use depletes the availability of the good)."^{ix} Public goods, in contrast, are *nonexcludable* and *jointly supplied*, meaning all can enjoy them and one person's use of the good does not diminish its use for others. The politics of public goods arise from the fact that "the provision of public goods is subject to socially destructive incentives. Because a public good is nonexcludable, it may be enjoyed without paying for it. But a producer will be loathe to provide a good if he cannot elicit payment for it...As a result, everyone is worse off."^x

The problem social choice theory helps identify in the supply of public goods is that incentives are insufficient to encourage their voluntary production. Narrative literature provides many useful examples of this. Two help illustrate the nature of public goods and the problem of non-contribution. One example comes from Émile Zola's The Earth. In one part of the book, political discussions amongst the inhabitants of Rognes centered around if and how a small road should be built through this town in France. At a meeting of the town's council, the public benefits of the road as a public good were made clear.

"The mayor listed the advantages for Rognes: a gently sloping street which would allow carriages to drive up to the church and then a saving of five miles compared with the present Châteaudun road which passed through Cloyes; and the commune would only have to pay for less than two miles..." (p.164)

The problem of non-contribution to the provision of the road as a public good and the nature of the incentives against contributing it were also strong, and quickly came out in these same discussions.

"What had prevented the project from going through was above all the question of compensation. Each councillor could see there was a lot of money to be made out of it and was concerned to discover whether any part of his own land would be affected and if he could sell some of it to the commune, at a hundred francs a pole. And if he was not going to be able to sell any part of a field belonging to him, why should he vote in favour of putting money in

someone else's pocket? And as for the gentle slope and the saving in distance, fiddlesticks! His horse would have a harder pull, that's all!" (p.164)

Similarly, the capitalists of Coketown in Hard Times held the same individual preferences not to contribute to education and public health as a public good. As Dickens ridiculed them,

"Surely there never was such fragile china-ware as that of which the millers of Coketown were made. Handle them never so lightly and they fell to pieces with such ease that you might suspect them of having been flawed before. They were ruined when they were required to send labouring children to school; they were ruined when inspectors were appointed to look into their works; they were ruined when such inspectors considered it doubtful whether they were quite justified in chopping people up with their machinery; they were utterly undone when it was hinted that perhaps they need not always make quite so much smoke." (p.103)

The basic relational problem behind the supply of public goods is that as long as individual costs are greater than the individual benefits, the incentives for the voluntary contribution for its production are not in place. So why and how are public goods provided? What solves the supply problem?

The most common solution to the problem of supply of public goods is for public (collective) provision of the good.^{xi} If private providers cannot be adequately compensated for providing the good, then the collectivity may decide to step in to provide it. The resolution of the problem of the supply of public goods therefore generally involves some sort of political problem-solving, such as "grants of monopoly privilege, waivers of antitrust laws, public subsidy of private production, and outright public provision."^{xii} Moreover, to address the problem of non-contribution, the collectivity mandates that individuals must contribute to its provision. In requiring individual contributions, the state reserves the possibility to utilize force and coercion, if necessary, to carry out this mandated contribution. Such public provision of public goods, therefore, utilizes the state's ability to use its authority to require payment (taxation) or contribution in other forms (such as participation). The mandatory nature of the contribution and the potential use of public-sanctioned force to enforce it suggests why politics must be defined as *both* collective decision-making and power.^{xiii}

Narrative literature is full of illustrations of this means of mandating and enforcing contribution to the supply of public goods. The gun, and the ring as a sign of authority, given by the dying Frank

Kelly to Alec Holmes in Abandon Ship symbolizes the necessary role of force, and its potential use, in providing security for the collectivity. It is also the role of the dogs in Animal Farm, the British military in A Passage to India, the police in My Son's Story, and in part the guillotine in A Tale of Two Cities. State sanctioned coercion or the threat of the use of force is therefore one means of minimizing the problem of non-contribution in the provision of public goods. This is also why narrative illustrations of anarchism--an ideology that fundamentally opposes such state sanctioned coercion as an infringement of basic individual freedom--can be so powerful. Mrs. Verloc in Joseph Conrad's The Secret Agent emphasizes this point in addressing Stevie's "suspicion of duplicity in the members of the police force." (p.144) when she says "Don't you know what the police are for, Stevie? They are there so that they as have nothing shouldn't take anything away from them who have." (p.144). Among other things, opposition to the state's use of force is also part of Bazarov's nihilism in Ivan Turgenev's Fathers and Sons.

Narrative literature also highlights how costs for non-contribution can be imposed without force. The instilling of an individual's sense of responsibility to others, and the associated guilt of non-contribution, is a psychological alternative to the use of physical force to insure contribution to the provision of public goods. Ruesch's anthropological narrative of Eskimo society near the North Pole captures well, in a land of scarcity, a strong sense of equalitarianism in the sharing of scarce food supplies as a public good. Society's imposition of individual guilt discourages non-contribution to food in Top of the World: "The fruit of the hunt was always divided in equal shares, but those who had contributed least felt mortified and ate without joy, while those who had contributed most beamed and laughed, and the women had eyes for them only." (p.151) This is why much earlier in the work, the following scene transpired:

"The liver belonged to Erneneck, for he had done the killing, and as soon as it had thawed he presented Anarvik with it in order to get even with him. Anarvik couldn't endure this humiliation and passed the liver on to Powtee who, dutiful wife as she was, handed it to Oooloolik. But Oooloolik gallantly offered it to Siksik, who returned it to Erneneck who tried to on the two girls, who were too young to accept it." (p.12)

Narrative literature can thus be used to describe how social psychological solutions to the non-contribution problem are developed. Through such social psychological means collective action problems can be overcome without force; individual preference orderings can be changed such that the survival of the collectivity takes precedence over that of the individual preferences. Such reordering of individual preferences is necessary to explain why a rational person might act in a manner that would, in other situations, not be initially perceived as rational action.

An extreme, but politically relevant, example of costly individual contributions to a public good can be seen in national defense. The study of politics and literature gives many powerful social psychological examples that help explain "Why do individuals fight in wars?" War, and the periods of intense nationalism they promote, provide many situations where an individual rationally gives up his or her own life for the collectivity's betterment. Ideological indoctrination and the development of intense group affinity are common means by which collectivities are given higher priority than the individual, even by individuals themselves. Nationalism and political indoctrination are two social psychological means of achieving this. For example, a powerful dialogue among soldiers in the 1930 film version of All Quiet on the Western Front addresses in simple language the enlisted man's perspective of war.^{xiv} This dialogue involves a simple conversation among a group of soldiers. One of them questions "How do wars start anyway?" and then he states aloud that "I'm not mad at anyone on the other side" or offended by anything the enemy did. They then go on to ask why are they fighting and willing to make the ultimate sacrifice? The viewer knows the explanation has already been provided in one of the movie's opening scenes. It shows the soldiers a few years earlier, prior to their entering the war, in their schoolroom. Their German schoolteacher nationalistically encourages in a long harangue all of them to join the war effort, in the name of the Fatherland. Such passionate socialization efforts to convince individuals that the collectivity (nation) matters more than their lives is also seen in the opening scene of the award-winning movie "Z." In a remarkably similar scene of nationalism, but in the context of Greece in the 1960s, we see the power of nationalistic appeals to individuals. Similar

issues of nationalistic solidarity also underscore many scenes in A Passage to India where the social psychology of being Muslim, Hindu, and British provide for difficult interactions.

The development of an individual's sense responsibility for the collectivity takes other forms as well, particularly in times of social change and revolutionary contexts. In My Son's Story by Nadine Gordimer, Sonny initially became involved in the anti-Apartheid struggle in South Africa because he possessed the characteristics for such group affinity:

"There were people like him in these communities, people who felt responsibility beyond their families, and they were eager to recruit anyone who showed a sign; he had marched across the veld; he was marked. Although no family was losing its home as yet in his community it was obvious he was the kind of man who would realize that all communities of his kind were in fact one...." (.p32)

Going from potential to actualization, Sonny's own preferences shifted from individual concerns to collective goods such as justice when he witnesses the South African government's brutal massacre of many Blacks and Coloreds. A boy shot by the government and another child's carrying of a photograph of the boy's body remained a strong image in Sonny's mind. His psychological internalization of "the real blacks as siblings" motivated his contribution to justice as a public good and a fight, costing him dearly in terms of personal sacrifice. Sonny's self-sacrifice against injustice came out in much the same way as Monsieur Defarge in A Tale of Two Cities when he witnesses the horrors of the French government. Like Sonny, Defarge's empathy with humanity motivates—in Defarge's case for the unjust imprisonment of his former employer Doctor Mannette—motivated him to strive to rectify the situation, to fight violent and unjust governments. In both cases, we see a shift of preferences from the individual to the collectivity.

The emotions of affinity with the collectivity, even at the expense of one's own life, comes through extremely well in the musical version of Victor Hugo's Les Misérables. The character Marius laments while recovering from his wounds in Cosette's care not having died with his friends at the barricade in the Paris uprising in 1832. The song "Empty Chairs at Empty Tables" is a memorable musical reminder of how deeply one can become psychologically attached to a group, so strongly that the group identity is more important than individual needs—even in its most basic

form of continued life. Similar war-time experiences and scenes, often in revolutionary contexts, are depicted in other narrative works such as Enrich Maria Remarque's All Quiet on the Western Front and George Orwell's Homage to Catalonia, a film derived from it entitled Land and Freedom, and the Spanish 2nd Republic film entitled The Will of the People. In many of these revolutionary contexts, the characters have different stories to tell, yet they share a similar characteristic: a common force, that of a brutal government affecting their lives, drives them toward a common, revolutionary, goal.

Non-contribution to the supply of public goods exists when incentive structures do not promote adequate compensation for private providers. Solutions to such problems underscore basic elements of cooperation and collective action. The solutions themselves, however, are inherently political because they are collectively derived as well as enforced. Whether solutions to non-contribution involve the use of state-approved coercion or other, more psychological, means they nevertheless entail getting people to behave in a manner than may, in the short term, appear non-rational in order to maximize the collective outcome. Requirements forcing contribution to the provision of public goods are also politically related to regulations and tax schemes to control auxiliary costs borne by others not directly involved in production activities themselves.

CONTROL OF EXTERNALITIES

Externalities are the unintended by-product of some behavior or transaction whose costs or benefits are imposed on others. Both positive and negative externalities exist, although theorists are wont to emphasize negative externalities.

Economic examples of externalities are widely cited in public choice literature. They often clearly present how production costs are frequently borne by others not part of the process, even when the production potentially adds to social welfare. In narrative literature, Josiah Bounderby (in Charles Dickens' novel Hard Times) epitomizes the individual selfishness (viz. rationality) that helps produce the positive collective welfare produced through laissez-faire market economics. In his excellent narrative on classic political economy, Dickens provides an informative illustration of

economic externalities in his rich description of Coketown, an industrial city in the Midlands of England. Even in a sunny midsummer day...

Seen from a distance in such weather, Coketown lay shrouded in a haze of its own, which appeared impervious to the sun's rays. You only knew the town was there, because you knew there could have been no such sulky blotch upon the prospect without a town. A blur of soot and smoke, now confusedly tending this way, now that way, now aspiring to the vault of Heaven, now murkily creeping along the earth, as the wind rose and fell, or changed its quarter: a dense formless jumble, with sheets of cross light in it, that showed nothing but masses of darkness—Coketown in the distance was suggestive of itself, though not a brick of it could be seen. (p.103)

Illustrations of negative economic externalities are seldom described so well in the public choice literature. In his narrative, Dickens richly captures the notion that the health problems and other consequences of air pollution are central to the human condition in 18th century industrial England. Much of the remainder of the novel elaborates the horrible conditions (costs) borne by individuals in Coketown, such as children, not directly involved in the production process. George Orwell, in his non-fiction narrative The Road to Wigan Pier, also describes such negative externalities as a consequence of the industrialization process in middle England.

Negative economic externalities are not as central a theme in Émile Zola's The Earth or Joseph Conrad's Nostromo as in Hard Times or The Road to Wigan Pier. Zola and Conrad, nevertheless, describe the politics of negative externalities quite effectively. Situated in a hamlet in rural northern France rather than an industrialized English city, Zola uses narrative to capture the political tensions created by economic policy:

“‘What’s ruining us’, said Monsieur de Chédeville, ‘is this free trade the Emeror is so keen on. Of course, things went well after the 1861 treaties; people said it was an economic miracle. But it’s now that the real effects are being felt. Look how prices are falling all round. I’m a protectionist, we must be defended against foreign competition.’” (pp. 152-3).

A little later in the same conversation, Hourdequin elaborated on these sociological externalities of free-trade economic policy:

“‘Everything’s going to buggery,’ he exclaimed coarsely. ‘The next generation will see the land go bankrupt...the small farmers...they’ve lost confidence...But the worth thing is that education, do you remember, that wonderful education that was going to be our salvation? Well, all it does is to speed up this emigration and depopulation of the countryside...’” (p.154)

Conrad, for his part, presents examples of externalities in several characters' psychological reaction to the push for the economic development of Costaguana, the fictitious Latin American country. Referring to Charles Gould, Conrad writes "The mine had corrupted his judgement by making him sick of bribing and intriguing merely to have his work left alone from day to day. (p.311)

Rational choice literature also helps focus analysis on externalities of political transactions. Pork-barrel politics, defined as the granting of special favors to constituents by political representatives, and some forms of lobbying are perceived by many as a negative externality in decision-making in representative democracy. Émile Zola captured this process of securing private goods as part of the allocative process of public goods in 18th century France during a national representative's visit to the small town of Rognes:

"...the villagers...fought over him to gain a hearing, tugging him this way and that, full of requests and complaints or asking for favours. One of them dragged him off to the village pond, which was no longer regularly cleaned out through lack of funds; another wanted a covered public washplace on the Aigre, at a spot which he showed him; a third asked for the street to be widened in front of his door so that he could turn his cart around; there was even one old woman who, after forcing the deputy into her house, showed him her swollen legs and asked him if he didn't know a cure for that in Paris." (p.167)

Solution in the theoretical literature to help control externalities tend to identify taxes and subsidies instrument to alter incentive structures, and thus behavior. Taxes are widely used as instruments to combat negative externalities. Subsidy schemes are often developed by the government to encourage the production of positive externalities. The two are not, however, exclusive of the other and they must match the problems being faced in a given situation. Others instruments that may affect externalities include regulatory regimes and respecification of property rights.^{xv}

Much of Émile Zola's The Earth depicts the difficulty of finding the right formula of a property rights regime to solve the economically-driven social externality of the youth leaving the countryside. In the village of Rognes, land utilization was a fundamental problem, even though it was privately held, because generation-after-generation had subdivided the lands as part of their

inheritance system. Such an inheritance system came at the expense of economies-of-scale and efficient production. Zola uses the politician Monsieur de Chédeville to describe the economic situation of the small landholder and the difficulties of operating an economic system without this economy-of-scale. In this passage, Monsieur de Chédeville is attempting to gain political points by highlighting the case of a women who, along with her husband, lived off of less than an acre.

“The villages have nicknamed her Old Ma Poohpoo because she doesn’t mind emptying her chamber-pot—and her husbands’—over her vegetables, which is a method used by the Chinese, apparently. But it’s really not much more than gardening, I can’t see cereals growing on plots no bigger than a cabbage-patch; and if the small farmer has got to product a bit of everything in order to be self-sufficient, what’s going to become of the people here, who can only produce wheat if Beauce is cut up into a patchwork?” (p.156-7)

In terms of solutions, Zola emphasized the tax and subsidy solution normally highlighted in the public choice literature. Specifically, that in 19th century France...

“excessive division of the land seemed dangerous, so much so that after passing laws in its favour immediately after the Revolution, in the fear that the big estates might be reconstituted, the situation now was that exchanges of land were being encouraged by giving tax relief on them.”(p.156)

In sum, control of externalities is a fundamental problem of public choice. This genre of problem is related to the supply of public goods in that involves an allocation process. Narrative literature illustrates how the allocation itself can be economic, sociological, psychological, or political in nature. Externalities are, nevertheless, generally consequences of the utilization of private goods. The “commons problem” is one of over-utilization of commonly held property.

THE GOVERNANCE OF COMMONS

Garrett. Hardin’s “The Tragedy of the Commons”(1968) presents the now classic description of the problem of commons governance. Elinor Ostrom’s more recent Governing the Commons (1990) made a significant contribution to theoretical and empirical identification of examples of the problem. She also emphasized institutional solutions to them. These and other works suggests the essential element of the problem: incentives for individuals to over utilize resources held by all rather than held privately.

Three narrative examples illustrate well the tragedy of the commons. The first is Hans Ruesch's Top of the World. This anthropological novel of Eskimos society vividly highlights the role of instilling norms of individual responsibility to the collectivity in a situation of scarce resources, even when it involves the ultimate sacrifice. Without directly naming it, Ruesch illustrates the frozen North as a situation of the commons, one dominated by extremely scarce resources. In a characteristic but nevertheless revealing passage, Ruesch describes the thoughts of Powtee, a grandmother in the Eskimo society, who had reached a point where she knew her continued existence in a society with scarce resources would deny others the means to live. As Ruesch describes,

“Powtee knew the future because she knew the past, and her familiarity with the facts of life allowed her to understand, and therefore accept without bitterness, nature's eternal tragedy—that flesh must perish so that flesh may live. She was to die so that the bear might live for the day when Ernekek could slay it to feed Asiak and Papik.” (p. 42).

Ruesch uses the character of Powtee to help the reader understand the basic problem underlying the tragedy of the commons—over utilization of the resources of the commons. Powtee, as all in this ice-bound society, viewed the world's scarce resources as a commons. As such, she understood the long-term survival of the collectivity took precedence over the needs of any single individual.

A second narrative illustration of the tragedy of the commons is the classic “lifeboat” situation so popular amongst ethicists. The 1957 film Abandon Ship--known in Britain by the story name Seven Waves Away--depicts the situation where, after a luxury liner sinks, the people in an overcrowded lifeboat must decide who should live and who should die. As in Top of the World, the tragedy of the commons in Abandon Ship forces difficult decisions about individual lives because failure to make the tough choices will destroy them all. Over-utilization of the lifeboat in Abandon Ship epitomizes the fundamental problem of the tragedy of the commons and why solutions to them are inherently political.

Third, Langdon Gilkey provides in Shantung Compound an example of narrative about how the role of individual selfishness (rationality) creates a “tragedy” in commons situations. With all Westerners confined to this Japanese-controlled compound in China during World War II, the

inhabitants had to determine for themselves how to allocate all common resources, including all essentials such as food and housing. All food, provided in bulk by the Japanese, had to be collectively prepared and distributed. The stealing of food quickly emerged as an over utilization problem of this vital common resource. Throughout this non-fictional narrative, Gilkey inductively philosophizes about the social experiences he participates in while living in the compound, by generalizing to the larger world.

“In the world today, Western culture as a whole is learning that material progress and the wealth that it creates are no unmixed blessings. The present possession of security and goods in a world where the majority are hungry and insecure puts the Western world in much the same position...If the material gains of modern Western society can be spread over the world with some evenness, this new wealth may create a fuller life for us all. But if we hoard it for ourselves alone, it will surely become a demonic possession creating bitterness and jealousy all around us, and ultimately threatening our very existence.” (p.106)

A large literature in public choice analytically develops the role of public institutions in resolving problems of governing the commons. Effective governing of the commons depends on the creation of governance structures, including property rights regime, that are well matched to the particular needs of the commons. In narrative literature, several interesting examples highlight the means by which individuals coordinate with others decision-making about governing and regulating the use of a commons. Such government and institution building is at the heart of Gilkey's Shangtung Compound where the compound itself is the commons. While commonly “owned”, the committees ultimately relied on some “private” ownership of housing and resources in order to maximize social benefit. Similar “privatization” is also the pattern developed in Joseph Conrad's Nostromo for many of the Costaguana's commonly held resources. The granting of the mining concession by the state to the Gould family exemplifies the development of a property rights regime to maximize common benefits. In contrast, the development of political structures to govern the commons highlights Orwell's Animal Farm. Conceptualizing the barnyard as a commons, the role of the dictatorship to “insure the common good” is a major satirical target for Orwell's narrative.

What is clear from all these depictions of “governing the commons” is that social coordination is needed to protect the commons from over utilization. Commons utilization questions analytically

build on Machiavelli's notion that "it is not individual prosperity but the common good, that makes cities great" (p. 282). Like Machiavelli, they recognize the need to create and maintain formal structures decision-making processes and state-like structures. Organizing and maintaining such decision-making processes underscores much of William Golding's Lord of the Flies, with the narrative illustrating the need for government.^{xvi} Refining the institutionally-induced incentives for proper utilization of the commons, as well as addressing other collective action problems, is what Swift had in mind when he wrote in Gulliver's Travels: "Although we usually call reward and punishment the two hinges upon which all government turns, yet I could never observe this maxim to be put in practice by any nation except that of Lilliput."(p.95) Maintaining these state-like structures is what Gilkey speculates about in Shantung Compound when he writes "One reason that democracy is essential as a form of government suddenly dawned on me: under it authority is derived from the very people who suffer from its existence, and a rational answer can be given as to the question of *legitimacy*." (p.123)

CONCLUSION: NARRATION AS METHODOLOGY

Several scholarly interests motivate this paper's analysis. First, thinking about the logic of comparative political analysis should remain a constant companion of any study of comparative politics. In comparative politics, at least two major traditions dominate the field: the variable-oriented approach and the case-oriented approach. The variable-oriented strategy is generally theory-oriented and often associated with the use of quantitative methods. This approach emphasizes generalizable explanations. In formulating explanations, complexity and generality are often competitive goals. The researcher generally studies the effects of certain explanatory variables on the dependent phenomenon across a number of cases. The research can evaluate the usefulness of competing hypotheses to the extent that one variable has more "explanatory power" than the others. In contrast, the case-oriented approach emphasizes the context within which a phenomenon occurs. Its defining feature requires the researcher to consider cases as wholes. Its logic is that casual complexity is an important feature of social phenomena. Causal factors must therefore be studied in their larger context, in order to understand in which situations they will have the

hypothesized causal effect.^{xvii} Yin (1994) makes clear that there are in fact two types of case study approaches. He is concerned with the case study as a method for comparative analysis because of its potential for generalization to theory (as opposed to populations in the variable-oriented approach.) The other case-oriented approach, which is not the type he has in mind, is heuristic. Such case studies are important for teaching and illustrative purposes. The analysis in this essay has suggested that narrative literature can be used in both types of case studies.

Despite the possibility for teaching and illustrative purposes, this essay's has been primarily motivated by using narrative for theory and theory-building. I have argued that narrative literature as cases can be utilized to help us better understand the theoretical and analytical propositions. Narrative literature can help provide insight into our development of theoretical explanations of political behavior. I do not contend that narrative examples somehow help us to scientifically "test" hypothesized explanations of comparative political phenomena. Such narrative literature cannot be used scientifically to generalize to some larger population. They are not samples. However, as sketches of the world of world of human behavior, they are more than simply story-telling. They might, however, be considered more than descriptive case studies within another part of the literature on the logic of comparative political inquiry.

Finally, as Jonathan Swift says in Gulliver's Travel's "...Providence never intended to make the management of public affairs a mystery..." (p.95) Theorizing about collective decision-making and its outcomes helps demystify important areas of public affairs. This paper's focus on collective action problems is only one example of how narrative literature may help us advance our theoretical understanding of political behavior. Public choice and collective action problems are rich and robust lines of theoretical inquiry. They reveal a great deal about how collective action occurs, why collective action problems exist, and even possibly suggest how we might overcome some of the problems they present. They are not, however, the only ones narrative literature could help illuminate.

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ⁱ This essay reflects a convergence of the author's intellectual interests, most specifically the study of comparative politics, the logic of comparative political inquiry, and the reading of narrative literature. My thinking on this subject has benefited greatly from the opportunity to teach a course entitled "Politics and Literature" on a regular basis for several years as part of Emory University's England Summer Abroad Program at University College, Oxford and several offerings during the regular academic year of an Emory College Freshman Seminar called "Comparative Politics & Literature." I wish to extend special thanks to all the students and colleagues who had suggested examples of narrative literature that I should read and consider as part of this convergence of interests.

ⁱⁱ This essay leaves for others the rich and lively debate about the assumptions and merits of theories in public choice.

ⁱⁱⁱ It might borrow from attempts for methodological rigor similar to that pursued by social science scholars such as Yin (1994) and the historian Charles Tilly (1984) in his Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons.

^{iv} Shepsle & Bonchek, p.197.

^v Throughout Twelve Angry Men, one juror is constantly more worried about making a decision, any decision, just so he would be late for the baseball game he held tickets for.

^{vi} See, for example, Axelrod (1984) and Hardin (1990).

^{vii} Shepsle & Bonchek, p.237-239.

^{viii} Shepsle and Bonchek, p.242.

^{ix} Shepsle & Bonchek, p.261.

^x Shepsel & Boncheck, p. 263.

^{xi} Shepsle & Bonchek credit Aranson & Ordeshook with making the the distinction between "the consumption of a public good and its production." (p. 270) This analysis follows their reasoning that "When designating a good as public or private, we are really talking about consumption properties—whether you can exclude others from consuming the good or not and whether

consumption diminishes the availability of the good.” (Ibid.) See, Peter Aranson and Peter Ordeshook, “Public Interest, Private Interest, and the Democratic Politiy,” in Roger Benjamin and Stephen Elkin, eds., The Democratic State. (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1985).
xii Shepsle & Boncheck), p. 275.

xiii The refusal of the two defendents to attend or even recognize the authority of the court to try them in Shantung Compound is a most straightforward statement of the relationship between the collective decision-making aspect of providing public goods (order in this case) and the use of coercion. The compound’s inability to use force, and thus the lack of an enforcement mechanism, made the trial little more than that an exercise in the mechanics of justice.

xiv 54:45-57:15 minute of the movie.

xv See, Shepsle & Bonchek, page 285.

xvi A favorite American example is the running of dormatories without Resident Advisors.

xvii A weakness of the case-study approach is that is largely evidence-oriented. The researcher may have more difficulty discerning commonalities and patterns across these cases. Theory, and thus generalizability, may not be the most central goal for scholars utilizing this method. Some argue that the case-oriented strategy may not facilitate parsimonious explanations.