
DEMOCRACY AND EXPERTISE IN THE LIPPMANN–TERMAN CONTROVERSY*

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Historians often interpret American political thought in the early twentieth century through an opposition between the technocratic power of expertise and the deliberative promise of democracy, respectively represented by Walter Lippmann and John Dewey. This article explores Lippmann’s concurrent controversy with Lewis Terman about intelligence testing, in which Dewey also intervened. It argues that the Lippmann–Terman controversy dramatized and developed a range of ideas about the politics of expertise in a democracy, which centered on explaining how democratic citizens might engage with and control the authority of experts. It concludes by examining the controversy’s influence on democratic theory.

In October 1922, the journalist Walter Lippmann intervened in a debate about democracy. Expert psychologists employed by the US Army during the First World War had measured the intelligence of over 1,700,000 soldiers, often using tests based on a revision of the Binet–Simon intelligence scale developed by the Stanford professor Lewis Terman.¹ After the war, they claimed that the “average intelligence” of the white draft, “when transmuted . . . into terms of mental age,” was “about 13 years (13.08).”² When transformed into a statistic about the average mental age of Americans, this claim generated an anxious debate about the very possibility of democracy in America. Lippmann contested it so

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¹ Lewis M. Terman, *The Measurement of Intelligence: An Explanation of and a Complete Guide for the Use of the Stanford Revision and Extension of the Binet–Simon Intelligence Scale* (Boston, 1916).

² Robert M. Yerkes, ed., *Psychological Examining in the United States Army* (Washington, DC, 1921), 785.

prominently, and Terman responded so vociferously, that contemporaries spoke of the “Lippmann–Terman controversy.”³

In subsequent scholarship, however, this controversy has been overshadowed by a different debate about democracy. For, six months earlier, Lippmann had published his classic study of *Public Opinion*, which famously concluded that only a bureaucracy of experts could make democracy work.⁴ Historians habitually read this text alongside *The Phantom Public*, which Lippmann published in 1925, and against *The Public and Its Problems*, which the philosopher John Dewey published in 1927. In what has come to be known as the “Lippmann–Dewey debate,” Dewey’s optimistic and systematic democratic theory responds to the pessimism of Lippmann’s “democratic elitism.” Dewey stands for education, government by the people, and the promise of democracy; Lippmann represents expertise, government by elites, and the power of technocracy. As recent research has shown, scholarly discussions of this debate emerged in the 1980s as a way to make the case for a cultural turn within communications studies.⁵ But it quickly became and continues to be an influential heuristic device for interpreting the intellectual history of American democracy in the early twentieth century.⁶

This article argues that the Lippmann–Terman controversy constitutes a significant episode in the history of American political thought, which provides a framework for revisiting the opposition between democracy and expertise that the Lippmann–Dewey debate has established. Historians of science have shown that the controversy helped generate enormous publicity for intelligence testing, and that it shaped debates about education policy, meritocracy, and

³ For example: Irving Gerdy, letter to the editor, *New Republic*, 17 Jan. 1923, 202.

⁴ Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York, 1922), Part 8.

⁵ Michael Schudson, “The ‘Lippmann–Dewey Debate’ and the Invention of Walter Lippmann as an Anti-democrat, 1986–1996” *International Journal of Communication* 2 (2008), 1031–42; Sue Curry Jansen, “Phantom Conflict: Lippmann, Dewey, and the Fate of the Public in Modern Society,” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 6/3 (2009), 221–45.

⁶ Examples include Robert B. Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy* (Ithaca, 1991), 293–318; Christopher Lasch, *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy* (New York, 1995), 167–73; Kevin Mattson, *Creating a Democratic Public: The Struggle for Urban Participatory Democracy during the Progressive Era* (University Park, PA, 1997), 118–20; Leon Fink, *Progressive Intellectuals and the Dilemmas of Democratic Commitment* (Cambridge, MA, 1997), 30–37; Brett Gary, *The Nervous Liberals: Propaganda Anxieties from World War I to the Cold War* (New York, 1999), 26–37; Melvin L. Rogers, *The Undiscovered Dewey: Religion, Morality, and the Ethos of Democracy* (New York, 2009), 191–202; Marc Stears, *Demanding Democracy: American Radicals in Search of a New Politics* (Princeton, 2010), 87–93; Jonathan Auerbach, *Weapons of Democracy: Propaganda, Progressivism, and American Public Opinion* (Baltimore, 2015), 93–129; and Sam Lebovic, *Free Speech and Unfree News: The Paradox of Press Freedom in America* (Cambridge, MA, 2016), 25–36.

eugenics.⁷ But they have been less concerned to explore the controversy's implications for democratic theory.⁸ And this is odd, for Lippmann criticized intelligence testing while writing his major theories of democracy. If his affinity for experts was so great, then why take on a leading purveyor of psychological expertise like Lewis Terman? Moreover, how should historians account for the fact that Dewey himself intervened in the controversy, but on Lippmann's side? This article seeks to show that the Lippmann–Terman controversy dramatized and developed a range of ideas about the politics of expertise in a democracy, which then influenced the arguments of contemporary democratic theory. It also suggests that the “Lippmann–Dewey debate” distorts historical understanding of American political thought in the early twentieth century, insofar as this heuristic pits democracy against expertise when what mattered to Lippmann and Dewey (and others) was understanding the political relationship between them.

Because it did much to shape this understanding, the Lippmann–Terman controversy also contributes to broader debates about the authority of the social sciences in modern America. Historians have long quarreled about the institutional, ideological, and intellectual dynamics of social-scientific expertise in the United States, and especially about how these dynamics relate to the phenomenon of professionalization.⁹ A more recent historiography,

⁷ Franz Samelson, “Putting Psychology on the Map: Ideology and Intelligence Testing,” in Allan R. Buss, ed., *Psychology in Social Context* (New York, 1979), 103–68; Carl N. Degler, *In Search of Human Nature: The Decline and Revival of Darwinism in American Social Thought* (New York, 1991), 168–9; Leila Zenderland, *Measuring Minds: Henry Herbert Goddard and the Origins of American Intelligence Testing* (Cambridge, 1998), 312–15; John Carson, *The Measure of Merit: Talents, Intelligence, and Inequality in the French and American Republics, 1750–1940* (Princeton, 2007), 249–52. The controversy also features glancingly in scholarship specifically on Lippmann and Terman: Ronald Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century* (Boston, 1980), 207–8; Henry L. Minton, *Lewis M. Terman: Pioneer in Psychological Testing* (New York, 1988), 102–4; Paul Davis Chapman, *Schools as Sorters: Lewis M. Terman, Applied Psychology, and the Intelligence Testing Movement, 1890–1930* (New York, 1988), 135–9; Barry D. Riccio, *Walter Lippmann: Odyssey of a Liberal* (New Brunswick, 1994), 77–8.

⁸ Thus the best recent history of intelligence testing relegates *Public Opinion* to a footnote (Carson, *The Measure of Merit*, 374 n. 80), where readers are referred to Lippmann's text “for a more jaundiced appreciation of mass democracy produced at almost the same time.”

⁹ Mary O. Furner, *Advocacy and Objectivity: A Crisis in the Professionalization of American Social Science* (Lexington, 1975); Thomas L. Haskell, *The Emergence of Professional Social Science: The American Social Science Association and the Nineteenth-Century Crisis of Authority* (Urbana, 1977); Haskell, ed., *The Authority of Experts: Studies in History and Theory* (Bloomington, 1984); Dorothy Ross, *The Origins of American Social Science* (Cambridge, 1991); David A. Hollinger, *Science, Jews, and Secular Culture: Studies in Mid-Twentieth-Century American Intellectual History* (Princeton, 1996).

alongside the field of science and technology studies, has focused on the public reception of social science, and shown how professional experts engaged in diverse exchanges with non-professional audiences.¹⁰ The Lippmann–Terman controversy is particularly productive in these contexts, for here historians have a moment when leading democratic theorists sought to influence “the publicity of knowledge” about some expertise that was widely perceived to imperil democracy.¹¹ Here, the intellectual culture of “scientific democracy” confronted the relationship between professional experts and democratic citizens as an urgent political problem.¹² And by exposing a range of practical and theoretical attempts to address this problem, moreover, the controversy shows how the authority of expertise in modern America once depended on unstable and ultimately rhetorical processes of democratic persuasion. This article will first explore Lippmann’s critique, then Dewey’s intervention, and then Terman’s response. It will conclude by considering both *The Phantom Public* and *The Public and Its Problems* in the context of the controversy.

I

The sensational statistic that the average mental age of Americans was about thirteen generated a cacophonous political debate in the early 1920s. For some scientists and publicists, such as the Anglo-American psychologist William McDougall, the army tests proved that genetic inheritance determined intelligence, which implied that most democratic citizens were biologically irredeemable.¹³ The historian and white supremacist Lothrop Stoddard went further, and used the tests to make the case for a racially pure political

¹⁰ Sarah E. Igo, *The Averaged American: Surveys, Citizens, and the Making of a Mass Public* (Cambridge, MA, 2007); Peter Mandler, *Return from the Natives: How Margaret Mead Won the Second World War and Lost the Cold War* (New Haven, 2013); Jamie Cohen-Cole, *The Open Mind: Cold War Politics and the Sciences of Human Nature* (Chicago, 2014); Freddy Foks, “Bronislaw Malinowski, ‘Indirect Rule,’ and the Colonial Politics of Functionalist Anthropology,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (forthcoming). See also Theodore M. Porter, *Trust in Numbers: The Pursuit of Objectivity in Science and Public Life* (Princeton, 1995); Lorraine Daston and H. Otto Sibum, “Introduction: Scientific Personae and Their Histories,” *Science in Context* 16/1 (2003), 1–8; Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity* (New York, 2007); Sheila Jasanoff, *Science and Public Reason* (London, 2012).

¹¹ Joel Isaac, “Tangled Loops: Theory, History, and the Human Sciences in Modern America,” *Modern Intellectual History* 6/2 (2009), 397–424, at 416.

¹² Andrew Jewett, *Science, Democracy, and the American University: From the Civil War to the Cold War* (Cambridge, 2012), 172–6.

¹³ William McDougall, *Is America Safe for Democracy?* (New York, 1921), 42–50. On him see Anne C. Rose, “William McDougall, American Psychologist: A Reconsideration of

order: “neo-aristocracy.”¹⁴ Intelligence testing thus gave seemingly scientific support to explicitly antidemocratic arguments, which often involved eugenic ideas and nativist policies.¹⁵ Always at stake in the debate as a whole was the scientific authority of psychological expertise, which psychologists had maintained through decades of public interventions and professional innovations that stressed their credibility as scientists.¹⁶ Intelligence testers had a particular need to persuade diverse audiences that their expertise was scientific, for they sought to shape public policy, especially education policy, and so found both intellectual substance and rhetorical force in eye-catching categories like “mental age.”¹⁷ Lewis Terman navigated these public and professional networks so successfully, and his revision of the Binet–Simon intelligence scale worked so well, that he had become one of the most prominent intelligence testers in the United States by the early 1920s.¹⁸

Within the academy, the Columbia educator William Bagley emerged as a powerful critic of intelligence testing. He argued that Terman’s tests failed to show that intelligence was hereditary, and that they threatened “to overturn the entire theory and practice of democratic education.”¹⁹ Terman countered that his data proved intelligence to be “pretty largely determined by native endowment,” but added that testing could improve democratic education by “making the

Nature–Nurture Debates in the Interwar United States,” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 52/4 (2016), 325–48.

¹⁴ Lothrop Stoddard, *The Revolt against Civilization: The Menace of the Under Man* (New York, 1922), 57–74, 263.

¹⁵ John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860–1925*, 2nd edn (New Brunswick, 1983), 270–77; Daniel J. Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (New York, 1985), 74–83; Alexandra Minna Stern, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America*, 2nd edn (Berkeley, 2016), 50–51. For the global intellectual context see Alison Bashford, *Global Population: History, Geopolitics, and Life on Earth* (New York, 2014), 107–32.

¹⁶ Dorothy Ross, *G. Stanley Hall: The Psychologist as Prophet* (Chicago, 1972), 169–85; Jill G. Morawski and Gail A. Hornstein, “Quandary of the Quacks: The Struggle for Expert Knowledge in American Psychology, 1890–1940,” in JoAnne Brown and David K. van Keuren, eds. *The Estate of Social Knowledge* (Baltimore, 1991), 106–10.

¹⁷ JoAnne Brown, “Mental Measurements and the Rhetorical Force of Numbers,” in Brown and Van Keuren, *The Estate of Social Knowledge*, 134–52; Brown, *The Definition of a Profession: The Authority of Metaphor in the History of Intelligence Testing* (Princeton, 1992).

¹⁸ Minton, *Lewis M. Terman*, 91–100; Chapman, *Schools as Sorters*, 83–106.

¹⁹ William C. Bagley, “Educational Determinism: Or Democracy and the I.Q.,” *School and Society* 15 (1922), 373–84; reprinted in Bagley, *Determinism in Education* (Baltimore, 1925), 11–32, at 17.

most of every child, the dull as well as the bright.”²⁰ For Bagley, a staunch educationalist, the tests undermined the very idea of democratic education; for Terman, a committed eugenicist, they underlined what could be democratic in education.²¹ But for both, the politics of the tests turned on how the intelligence of individuals, whether inherited or achieved, related to their subsequent merit in a democratic society.²² Among others who rejected the idea that biology determined intelligence, black scholars were notably robust, though some, like Horace Mann Bond, did not deny that intelligence was measurable, for the tests could contest racial hierarchies in the name of merit.²³ Terman and Bagley, meanwhile, formed a committee of (white) progressive social scientists to gather more evidence about the relationship between inheritance and education.²⁴ This debate soon became known as the “nature–nurture controversy,” and it continues to animate arguments about democracy and meritocracy.²⁵

Lippmann, however, approached intelligence testing from an unusual angle, for *Public Opinion* appeared in April 1922. He had worked on the book since

²⁰ Lewis M. Terman, “The Psychological Determinist; or Democracy and the I.Q.,” *Journal of Educational Research* 6/1 (1922), 57–62, at 60, 62. See also William C. Bagley, “Professor Terman’s Determinism: A Rejoinder,” *Journal of Educational Research* 6/5 (1922), 371–85.

²¹ On Terman and eugenics, see Minton, *Lewis M. Terman*, 143–50; and Stern, *Eugenic Nation*, 92–9. On Bagley and his context see Thomas D. Fallace, “Educators Confront the ‘Science’ of Racism, 1898–1925,” *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 48/2 (2016), 252–70.

²² Henry L. Minton, “Lewis M. Terman and Mental Testing: In Search of the Democratic Ideal,” in Michael M. Sokal, ed., *Psychological Testing and American Society* (New Brunswick, 1987), 95–112, at 103–4; Carson, *The Measure of Merit*, 248–9.

²³ Horace Mann Bond, “Intelligence Tests and Propaganda,” *The Crisis*, June 1924, 61–4; Wayne J. Urban, “The Black Scholar and Intelligence Testing: The Case of Horace Mann Bond,” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 25/4 (1989), 323–34. See also William B. Thomas, “Black Intellectuals’ Critique of Early Mental Testing: A Little-Known Saga of the 1920s,” *American Journal of Education* 90/3 (1982), 258–92; and cf. Erik Linstrum, *Ruling Minds: Psychology in the British Empire* (Cambridge, MA, 2016), 83–115.

²⁴ William C. Bagley to Lewis M. Terman, 26 Oct. 1923, Lewis Madison Terman Papers, Department of Special Collections and University Archives, Stanford University, Box 14, Folder 28; Terman, “The Possibilities and Limitations of Training,” *Journal of Educational Research* 10/5 (1924), 335–43.

²⁵ Guy M. Whipple, ed., *The Twenty-Seventh Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education: Nature and Nurture*, 2 vols. (Bloomington, 1928); Lewis M. Terman, “The Influence of Nature and Nurture upon Intelligence Scores: An Evaluation of the Evidence in Part I of the 1928 Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education,” *Journal of Educational Psychology* 19/6 (1928), 362–73; Nicholas Pastore, *The Nature–Nurture Controversy* (New York, 1949). Recent analyses include Steven Fraser, ed., *The Bell Curve Wars: Race, Intelligence, and the Future of America* (New York, 1995); and Nicholas Lemann, *The Big Test: The Secret History of the American Meritocracy* (New York, 1999).

before the First World War, but published it in a context where the army tests were generating widespread pessimism about the intellectual capacities of democratic citizens.²⁶ The book cautioned against “loose talk” about “race psychology” (“until you have thoroughly failed to see tradition being handed on . . . it is a solecism of the worst order to ascribe political differences to the germ plasm”), and did not discuss intelligence testing explicitly.²⁷ But Lippmann’s emphasis on the limited capacities of democratic citizens had an easy resonance with the army tests, which made *Public Opinion* seem obvious to some. The cultural critic H. L. Mencken, for instance, reviewed Lippmann’s book in terms that drew directly on the intelligence-testing debate. Complaining that *Public Opinion* would have worked better as “a scientific presentation of the fundamental mental and gastric processes of the mobs,” Mencken observed that most “Baltimorons” confronted problems every day that went “far beyond their intelligence.”²⁸

One of the subtlest responses to the book came in a letter Lippmann received in July 1922 from Carter Goodrich, a young economist at Amherst whose book *The Frontier of Control: A Study in British Workshop Politics* Lippmann had liked and helped publish two years earlier.²⁹ Goodrich returned the favor with a five-page analysis of *Public Opinion*, which began with praise for various aspects of the book, including Lippmann’s “excellent and careful phrasings” in “your cautions against ‘ascribing political differences to the germ plasm.’” But Goodrich had doubts when it came to “your main dilemma, that of democracy in a Great Society.”³⁰ This was certainly the dilemma, for, as contemporaries knew and historians know, Lippmann had been much influenced by the British social theorist Graham Wallas, who argued in *The Great Society* that the complexity and pluralism of industrial capitalism made “the general social organization of a large modern state” both inevitably important for expertise and incredibly difficult to control.³¹ Indeed, very many anglophone progressives agreed that specialized expert knowledge formed a necessary part of understanding and

²⁶ For his earliest notes, see “Notes on Public Opinion—Sebasco, Maine, June 1914,” Walter Lippmann Papers, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, Box 219, Folder 305.

²⁷ Lippmann, *Public Opinion*, 93.

²⁸ H. L. Mencken, *H. L. Mencken’s Smart Set Criticism*, ed. William H. Nolte (Ithaca, 1968), 121–30, at 124, 130. The word “moron,” much used by Mencken, had been invented in 1910 as a technical term for classifying intelligence. See Zenderland, *Measuring Minds*, 102–3.

²⁹ Carter L. Goodrich, *The Frontier of Control: A Study of British Workshop Politics* (New York, 1920); Walter Lippmann to Goodrich, 20 Feb. 1920, Lippmann Papers, Box 11, Folder 465.

³⁰ Carter L. Goodrich to Walter Lippmann, 10 July 1922, Lippmann Papers, Box 11, Folder 465.

³¹ Graham Wallas, *The Great Society: A Psychological Analysis* (London, 1914), v.

reforming mass society.³² Goodrich, however, concentrated on the figure at the center of Lippmann's argument: the ordinary amateur citizen. "That 'amateur' seems to me the key of things," Goodrich observed, before arguing that at the end of *Public Opinion* this figure "gets pushed aside . . . in your enthusiasm for your experts you have a little forgotten to put your amateurs into relation with them." For Goodrich, the dilemma of democracy in the Great Society turned on this relationship between amateur and expert, and here he asked Lippmann for more: "What is the amateur to do about governing? (Surely something, if it's democracy . . .)." What was needed, and what *Public Opinion* lacked, was a convincing account of the politics of expertise in a democracy. Goodrich did not produce this himself, but did suggest "adding a chapter on, say, 'The Amateur's Control of the Experts.'"³³

For Goodrich, "control" animated politics under modern capitalism, because it provided the language and mechanisms by which unions and other interests demanded reform.³⁴ Union demands were in essence political because they were "concerned with authority relationships" throughout industrial society, and sought to use "workshop politics" to change social and economic conditions.³⁵ Applying this conceptual framework to *Public Opinion*, Goodrich pushed Lippmann on exactly how amateur citizens could engage in political relationships with (that is, control) professional expertise. This went beyond the criticisms of Dewey (and others) that Lippmann had overplayed the importance of expertise and underplayed that of journalism, for Goodrich claimed that professional expertise in modern democracy had an inevitable authority that created distinctive political problems for amateur publics.³⁶ Engaging with Wallas's suggestion that the Great Society suffered from "grievously insufficient personnel," Goodrich insisted that "an increase in the personnel of experts"

³² James T. Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory: Social Democracy and Progressivism in European and American Thought* (New York, 1986), 267–77; John A. Thompson, *Reformers and War: American Progressive Publicists and the First World War* (Cambridge, 1987), 64–5; Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, MA, 1998), 25–8.

³³ Goodrich to Lippmann, 10 July 1922.

³⁴ Carter L. Goodrich, "Introduction: The Demand for Control," in Goodrich, *The Frontier of Control*, n.p.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 36–8, at 37 n. 35. Goodrich distinguished between "political" in "the wide sense" of authority relationships and in "the narrow sense of relating to the authority of the State of territorial unit." He was interested in the former.

³⁶ See John Dewey, "Public Opinion," *New Republic*, 3 May 1922, 286–8; and, for a strikingly similar criticism, Ernest Gruening, "Public Opinion and Democracy," *Nation*, 26 July 1922, 97–8.

could never resolve the democratic dilemma.³⁷ “Wallas’s phrase kept sticking oddly in my mind at the time when the Railway Strike of 1919 had England divided almost exactly into two camps,” Goodrich wrote, adding that “every industrial expert in the country was working either for the Railwaymen or in the government intelligence service,” and asking “how increasing the personnel in Whitehall on the one hand and at Unity House and in Eccleston Square on the other would have done anything to bring the Great Society together.”³⁸ Mass society always involved various claims to expert authority, which amateur citizens had to negotiate somehow. “Is it your belief,” Goodrich asked Lippmann, “that these two (or three) phalanxes of experts would so lucidly state their cases that a just and amicable settlement would either appear clearly to both parties or be forced by an overwhelming sentiment of informed amateurs?” Lurking within *Public Opinion* Goodrich detected a theory of democratic debate “well ventilated by experts on both sides and open to the public of amateurs.”³⁹

“I am delighted with your letter,” Lippmann wrote back, “for it goes to the center of the discussion.”⁴⁰ Goodrich’s criticisms resonated with Lippmann because they engaged with his theoretical interests and textual influences to probe a problem at the center of his democratic theory: the political relationship between professional experts and democratic citizens. He asked to meet in New York to discuss this problem further, though Goodrich left for Amherst before receiving Lippmann’s reply, and their correspondence lapsed.⁴¹ But it shows that sophisticated approaches to the authority of experts, which drew directly on *Public Opinion*, were very much on Lippmann’s mind as the intelligence-testing debate proceeded around him. Within weeks of replying to Goodrich, in fact, Lippmann started writing a long manuscript about the army tests, which centered on the psychological expertise behind them. “If the tests are sound,” he drafted, “if the conclusions usually drawn from them are true, a radical revision of the tenets of the democratic faith is inevitable.”⁴² When the *New Republic* published Lippmann’s manuscript over six consecutive issues from October, the series was

³⁷ Wallas, *The Great Society*, 371; Goodrich to Lippmann, 10 July 1922.

³⁸ Goodrich to Lippmann, 10 July 1922.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Walter Lippmann to Carter L. Goodrich, 14 July 1922, Lippmann Papers, Box 11, Folder 465.

⁴¹ Carter L. Goodrich to Walter Lippmann, 2 Aug. 1922, Lippmann Papers, Box 11, Folder 465.

⁴² Walter Lippmann, “The End of Democratic Optimism,” 7–9 Aug. 1922, Lippmann Papers, Box 219, Folder 308, 11. Lippmann also cited *Public Opinion* to argue that democratic citizens struggled to comprehend “the very complex problems of the Great Society.”

the most sustained criticism of intelligence testing to appear outside a scholarly publication.

“A startling bit of news has recently been unearthed and is now being retailed by the credulous to the gullible,” Lippmann began. “‘The *average* mental age of Americans,’ says Mr. Lothrop Stoddard in *The Revolt Against Civilization*, ‘is only about fourteen.’”⁴³ For Stoddard, the army tests showed that America required neo-aristocratic government by intelligent individuals of high merit and the right race: the best should rule because the rest could not. Lippmann, however, did not take Stoddard’s politics seriously. Like many white liberals, Lippmann asserted agnostic scepticism on the issue of biological determinism, and, in general, disliked discussing race.⁴⁴ Stoddard’s maniacal prophecies about “the downfall of civilization” also made it easy to dismiss him as “a propagandist.”⁴⁵ What Lippmann focused on, very specifically, was Stoddard’s scientific credulity. “The trouble,” he stressed, “is that Mr. Stoddard uses the words ‘mental age’ without explaining either to himself or to his readers how the conception of ‘mental age’ is derived.”⁴⁶ This conception, and the “scarifying statistics” it generated, had achieved widespread publicity as scientific knowledge. Beneath Stoddard’s “glittering tower of generalities,” then, Lippmann saw a more fundamental problem, less about the nature of intelligence than about the authority of the expertise behind intelligence testing. “For the statement that the average mental age of Americans is only about fourteen,” he argued, “is not inaccurate. It is not incorrect. It is nonsense.”⁴⁷

This argument dramatized Goodrich’s dilemma, and led Lippmann to attack not Stoddard, but Terman. The audacity of this attack is worth emphasizing. Targeting Terman meant contesting the authority of an expert who had studied psychology for nearly two decades, earned the respect of his colleagues, and published substantial contributions to the discipline. Intelligence testing sat comfortably within functional and evolutionary approaches to psychology, fulfilled demands for experimental and applied methodologies, and expanded the influence of the profession.⁴⁸ By contrast, Lippmann was very much an amateur. As a Harvard undergraduate, he had studied with Hugo Münsterberg and Robert

⁴³ Walter Lippmann, “The Mental Age of Americans,” *New Republic*, 25 Oct. 1922, 212–15, at 215. Emphasis added for the title of Stoddard’s text, but the emphasis on “average” is in Stoddard, *Revolt*, 69.

⁴⁴ This had a complex relationship to his Jewishness. See Steel, *Walter Lippmann*, 186–96.

⁴⁵ Lippmann, “Mental Age,” 213, 215.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 213.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Carson, *The Measure of Merit*, 183–93; John M. O’Donnell, *The Origins of Behaviorism: American Psychology, 1870–1920* (New York, 1985), 230–40.

Yerkes, and cultivated a relationship with William James.⁴⁹ Lippmann had also reviewed contemporary psychologists, and he read widely in social psychology, for this animated his political thinking.⁵⁰ But he never trained professionally, and had no experience in psychometric testing. He was certainly not a scientist. However, by publicly contesting Terman's scientific authority, Lippmann began to develop a politics of expertise through which amateurs could engage with experts.

Much here turned, as Wallas had emphasized, on the “non-technical or half-technical terms by which the conclusions of the experts can be made clear to lay thinkers.”⁵¹ So Lippmann produced lively and aggressive articles, which sought to undermine Terman's authority while assuring readers of their own scientific integrity. In them, Terman's revision of the Binet–Simon scale seemed like a shabby affair, which, building on “a very weak foundation,” only worked by “editing, rearranging and supplementing the original Binet tests” so that Californian children could cope with tests designed for French children.⁵² Lippmann did not linger over the details of Terman's revision, which included scale extensions, norm adjustments, and various other changes “in the scoring of a great many tests in order to make them fit better the locations assigned them.”⁵³ Instead, Lippmann argued that the particularities of Binet's original sample exposed serious limitations in Terman's revision. “The aspect of all this which matters,” Lippmann told his readers, explaining the technicalities of the tests in carefully nontechnical terms, “is that ‘mental age’ is simply the average performance with certain rather arbitrary problems. The thing to keep in mind,” he reiterated, returning to the political debate, “is that all the talk about ‘a mental age of fourteen’ goes back to the performance of eighty-two California school children in 1913–14.”⁵⁴

This was on target, more or less. Terman had actually tested “approximately 1000 children,” but Californian children provided a poor basis for norming the test scores of adult army recruits, and no basis for evaluating Americans in general.⁵⁵ Psychologists debated different methods of constructing psychometric

⁴⁹ Steel, *Walter Lippmann*, 12–22. On James's ambivalent professional identity see Francesca Bordogna, *William James at the Boundaries: Philosophy, Science, and the Geography of Knowledge* (Chicago, 2008).

⁵⁰ Walter Lippmann, “The Group Mind,” *New Republic*, 15 Dec. 1920, 82–6; Lippmann, “An Outline of Psychology,” *New Republic*, 22 Dec. 1920, 112–13; Lippmann, “The Behavior of Crowds,” 2 March 1921, 22–4.

⁵¹ Wallas, *The Great Society*, 227.

⁵² Lippmann, “Mental Age,” 214.

⁵³ Terman, *The Measurement of Intelligence*, 61.

⁵⁴ Lippmann, “Mental Age,” 213.

⁵⁵ Terman, *The Measurement of Intelligence*, 53.

norms during the war, and the issue has been much discussed since.⁵⁶ But rather than probing these problems in depth, Lippmann turned in his second article to the time limits under which the army administered the tests. Here he claimed that those who were able to complete the tests quickly were measured as more intelligent, such that the army could have classified more people as more intelligent “by lengthening the time” for testing.⁵⁷ For Lippmann, then, the unscientific nature of intelligence testing was shown not only by Terman’s revision of Binet’s scale, but also by the army’s administration of the subsequent tests. More than this, though, Lippmann argued that no psychologist possessed the expertise to isolate or measure intelligence as an innate construct. He allowed that testing might usefully measure some capacities in specific contexts, but announced that intelligence itself was “an exceedingly complicated notion which nobody has as yet succeeded in defining.”⁵⁸

So the idea that intelligence testing could either identify Stoddard’s neo-aristocracy or sustain a ruling expert elite seemed absurd. Indeed, Lippmann joked that if the tests were true then professors of psychology “would soon occupy a position which no intellectual has held since the collapse of theocracy . . . what a future to dream about!”⁵⁹ Rather, the problem the tests presented to Lippmann lay in the scientific authority they afforded to antidemocratic opinion, because this presented amateur citizens with the need to engage with and control professional experts. “When we see how men like Stoddard and McDougall have exploited the army tests,” Lippmann stressed, “we realize how necessary, but how unheeded, is the warning of Messrs. Yoakum and Yerkes that ‘the ease with which the army group tests can be given and scored makes it a *dangerous method in the hands of the inexpert.*’”⁶⁰ The danger for democracy was the difficulty of knowing which experts to trust, for while Yoakum and Yerkes seemed sensible on this point, they also produced expertise with contested political consequences. By making Terman’s expertise seem unscientific to democratic citizens, however, Lippmann modeled a politics of expertise that controlled expert authority through public controversies that shaped amateur opinion.

This politics relied on effective rhetorical strategies for making expertise accessible, which Lippmann’s literary facility and journalistic dexterity made possible. But his amateurism in psychology also risked error, and, unsurprisingly,

⁵⁶ Carson, *The Measure of Merit*, 205–8.

⁵⁷ Walter Lippmann, “The Mystery of the ‘A’ Men,” *New Republic*, 1 Nov. 1922, 246–8, at 248.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 246.

⁵⁹ Walter Lippmann, “A Future for the Tests,” *New Republic*, 29 Nov. 1922, 9–10, at 10.

⁶⁰ Lippmann, “Mystery,” 248, quoting Clarence S. Yoakum and Robert M. Yerkes, *Army Mental Tests* (New York, 1920), 2, emphasis added.

he made some dodgy claims about the tests. For instance, the army had used two main tests to measure intelligence: “Army *a*,” which used a scale developed by Yerkes (similar but not identical to Terman’s Stanford–Binet scale), to test around four thousand people; and “Army Alpha,” which used a scale whose results were more closely correlated with Stanford–Binet, to test around 1,700,000 people.⁶¹ But Lippmann wrote that the army “did not use the Binet system,” and baldly added that it “scored by a system of points which we need not stop to describe.” He then argued that the army results contradicted the Stanford–Binet scale by producing different measures of adult intelligence, and concluded that the army tests “knocked the Stanford–Binet measure of adult intelligence into a cocked hat.”⁶² This sounded good, but the substance of Lippmann’s argument here was that the army tests both proved Terman’s (already flawed) Stanford–Binet scale wrong, and also were wrong in themselves. This created cognitive dissonance, and overlooked two stubborn facts: first, that the army tests had actually used very similar techniques to “the Binet system,” because they had been broadly based on Terman’s revision of that system; and second, that Terman himself had helped further revise this system for the army. So nothing was knocked into a cocked hat.

Beyond these blunders, Lippmann ignored areas of agreement with Terman in his later articles. For example, he outlined “the positive value of the tests,” and argued that they could improve the administration of democratic education. Though the Stanford–Binet scale did not measure intelligence as an innate construct, Lippmann conceded that it correlated reasonably well “with the quality of school work, with school grades and with school progress.” So, “if you have to classify children for the convenience of school administration, you are more likely to get a more coherent classification with the tests than without them.”⁶³ This position, however, put Lippmann close to Terman. For years Terman had in fact chaired a subcommittee of the National Education Association on the “Use of Intelligence Tests in Revision of Elementary Education,” which in 1922 published a report about how testing could improve the administration of democratic education.⁶⁴ Lippmann thus agreed with Terman in a major public debate on a specific way in which science could improve education policy

⁶¹ On these intricacies see Carson, *The Measure of Merit*, 201–19.

⁶² Lippmann, “Mental Age,” 214–15.

⁶³ Walter Lippmann, “The Reliability of Intelligence Tests,” *New Republic*, 8 Nov. 1922, 275–6, at 276.

⁶⁴ Lewis M. Terman, Virgil E. Dickinson, D. N. Sutherland, Raymond Franzen, C. R. Tupper, and Grace Fernald, *Intelligence Tests and School Reorganization* (Yonkers, 1922), 1–29; Minton, *Lewis M. Terman*, 97–8. See also Terman’s introduction to Virgil E. Dickinson, *Mental Tests and the Classroom Teacher* (Yonkers, 1923).

for democracy, but spoke loudly and furiously past him. In this controversy, “scientific democracy” strained, for political hostility eclipsed intellectual proximity.

Indeed, Lippmann’s final article almost called Terman a fraud. “The chief intelligence testers, led by Professor Terman” had revealed themselves not only as pseudo-scientists, but ultimately as self-interested elites pursuing “the will to power.” Terman’s expertise, Lippmann concluded, had no authority as science. “The claim that Mr. Terman or anyone else is measuring hereditary intelligence has no more scientific foundation than a hundred other fads, vitamins and glands and amateur psychoanalysis and correspondence courses in will power,” he wrote, “and it will pass with them into that limbo where phrenology and palmistry and characterology and the other Babu sciences are to be found.”⁶⁵ In the end, Lippmann’s articles amounted to a rhetorically effective attack on a professional expert by an amateur critic, which was partly accurate and partly unfair, but which most of all was very public. It developed Goodrich’s demand that Lippmann think more about the politics of expertise in a democracy, and suggested some difficulties in making this politics democratic. For though Lippmann might convince nonexperts, he had stumbled with the science and avoided consensus with Terman. But before the expert himself responded, another intervention occurred.

II

“I agree with Mr. Lippmann’s conclusions,” wrote John Dewey to Herbert Croly, the editor of the *New Republic*. Dewey’s agreement extended to writing two articles, which preemptively defended Lippmann from Terman, and which made broader arguments about the relationship between democracy and expertise. Dewey was more conscious than Lippmann that he was “not an expert in this field,” and so sought advice from his daughter Evelyn, “who had worked practically on the tests for three years, and who also agreed. She made some suggestions which I have embodied . . . so that the ‘experts’ might not come back and accuse Mr L of ignorance or misrepresentation.”⁶⁶ Croly told Lippmann that Dewey’s articles were “extremely valuable, and almost as badly written as they are valuable.”⁶⁷ The *New Republic* printed them in the two issues following Lippmann’s series.

“As Mr. Lippmann has so clearly shown in these pages,” Dewey argued, the claim that the average mental age of Americans could be identified as about

⁶⁵ Lippmann, “Future,” 9–10.

⁶⁶ John Dewey to Herbert Croly, c. Nov. 1922, Lippmann Papers, Box 8, Folder 339.

⁶⁷ Herbert Croly to Walter Lippmann, 21 Nov. 1922, Lippmann Papers, Box 7, Folder 303.

thirteen was “literally senseless.”⁶⁸ Dewey already understood intelligence in terms of the relationship between individual habit and social environment, rather than as an innate construct, so he readily agreed with Lippmann’s argument that intelligence testing was not science and that the testers were not scientists.⁶⁹ But the tests did more than question Dewey’s understanding of intelligence; they also troubled his broader account of the relationship between democracy and education. Dewey had long argued that “democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living,” and had long seen education in “scientific method” as essential for this mode.⁷⁰ Moreover, his argument built on a distinctive philosophical system, which, by combining a naturalistic (anti-metaphysical) epistemology with a consequentialist (instrumental) ethics, saw science and democracy as mutually constitutive activities.⁷¹ Dewey had always urged experts to educate broader publics by popularizing scientific knowledge, and attacked attempts to limit scientific education, such as William Jennings Bryan’s contemporaneous campaign against teaching evolutionary biology in public schools.⁷² But while Bryan’s campaign represented a form of antiscientific democracy, which could be combated through better education about evolution, Terman’s tests presented Dewey with a potentially more worrying proposition: antidemocratic science.

Beyond embracing Lippmann’s argument that intelligence testing was unscientific, Dewey therefore explained its political implications through the education of the experts themselves. “There is no need to re-traverse the ground so admirably covered by Mr. Lippmann,” he wrote. “But why has it been so generally assumed among our cultivated leaders that a purely classificatory formula gives information about individual intelligence in its individuality?”⁷³ This focus on “the acquired habits of intellectual spokesmen” rather than “the inherent intellectuality of the populace” made sense, for it meant that Dewey could attack the experts without conceding the possibility that their expertise might be true. Building on Lippmann’s conclusion that the intelligence testers concealed an elitist will to power, Dewey indicted a broader intellectual

⁶⁸ John Dewey, “Mediocrity and Individuality,” *New Republic*, 6 Dec. 1922, 35–7, at 35. Dewey’s particular target was George B. Cutten, “The Reconstruction of Democracy,” *School and Society* 16 (1922), 477–89.

⁶⁹ John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct* (New York, 1922), 172–80.

⁷⁰ John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York, 1916), 101, 256–9.

⁷¹ Westbrook, *John Dewey*, 141–5, 169–72; Jewett, *Science*, 94–8.

⁷² Laura M. Westhoff, “The Popularization of Knowledge: John Dewey on Experts and American Democracy,” *History of Education Quarterly* 35/1 (1995), 27–47, at 27–37; John Dewey, “The American Intellectual Frontier,” *New Republic*, 10 May 1922, 303–5.

⁷³ Dewey, “Mediocrity,” 35.

elite that the testers represented and preserved. “The inference to be drawn from the popular reception of mental testings . . . shows how their education, that given by their surroundings as well as by their schools,” Dewey argued, “has fixed in them the disposition to judge by classification instead of by discrimination, and by classifications which represent the average of massed members, mediocrities instead of individualities.”⁷⁴ For Dewey, intelligence testing threatened democracy not because it was scientific knowledge, but because the testers themselves had not been educated democratically. The authority of their expertise thus reaffirmed Dewey’s broader claim (expressed in his review of *Public Opinion* and many other places) that democracy depended on “fundamental general education.”⁷⁵ He insisted that “until we have tried the educational experiment, we simply do not know and shall not know what individual capacities and limits really are.”⁷⁶

Dewey’s second article expanded on these individual capacities and their relation to democracy. “It was once supposed, at least by some, that the purpose of education . . . was to discover and release individualized capacities,” he wrote. Yet now, he added, “we welcome a procedure which under the title of science . . . assigns [the individual] to a predestined niche and thereby does whatever education can do to perpetuate the present order.” Dewey then emphasized that “the irony of the situation is that this course is usually taken in the name of aristocracy, even of intellectual aristocracy, and as part of an attack upon the tendencies of democracy to ignore individuality.” Drawing on his broader theoretical commitments, he went on to argue that democracy actually implied “faith in individuality, in uniquely distinctive qualities in each normal human being; faith in corresponding unique modes of activity that create new ends, with willing acceptance of the modifications of the established order entailed by the release of individualized capacities.” By ignoring individuality and damaging education, the intelligence testers denied democracy’s “basic moral and ideal meaning.” For Dewey, ideal democracy meant a form of associated living in which morally equal individuals realized their uniquely individualized capacities through scientific education and public deliberation. “Democracy in this sense,” he wrote, “denotes, one may say, aristocracy carried to its limit.”⁷⁷

Dewey’s argument that true democracy meant universal aristocracy challenged the whole distinction between professional experts and amateur citizens. In Dewey’s democracy, “every human being as an individual may be the best for some particular purpose and hence be the most fitted to rule, to lead, in that specific

⁷⁴ Ibid., 36.

⁷⁵ Dewey, “Public Opinion,” 288.

⁷⁶ Dewey, “Mediocrity,” 37.

⁷⁷ John Dewey, “Individuality[,] Equality and Superiority,” *New Republic*, 13 Dec. 1922, 61–3.

respect.” When fundamental general education had released each individual’s individuality, there would be no distinction between “superior” and “inferior” individuals, but rather an equality of superiorities. Because science would be the domain of everyone, and because deliberation would be continuous, all the citizens would in some respect be experts. “Democracy will not be democracy until education makes it its chief concern to release distinctive aptitudes in art, thought and companionship,” Dewey reiterated. He concluded that “the democrat with his faith in moral equality is the representative of aristocracy made universal.”⁷⁸

It has been observed that Dewey’s democratic theory struggles to account for political reality and tends to rely on moral exhortation.⁷⁹ But the Lippmann–Terman controversy provides a particularly striking case study in the consequences of his politics. For here Dewey intervened in a live public debate about some scientific expertise that had dire implications for his vision of democracy, and he argued that there was no ultimate conflict between democracy and expertise. After embracing Lippmann’s critique and endorsing his attempt to make the politics of expertise democratic, Dewey explored the defective education of the intelligence testers and suggested that real education could eventually make democracy expert. Where Lippmann saw an urgent political problem in Terman’s expertise, Dewey saw an ultimately pedagogical problem. He struggled to explain how democracy and expertise could engage with each other politically, because he saw true democracy as universal aristocracy, and universal aristocracy had no need for a politics of expertise. This argument, however, had little traction in a controversy about the political relationship between democracy and expertise, and neither Lippmann nor Terman felt compelled to engage with it.

III

Colleagues reported that Terman “trembled with rage” after reading Lippmann’s articles.⁸⁰ Having led disciplinary efforts to define professional standards and influence public policy, and having happily debated fellow scholars (like Bagley) in academic journals, Terman found amateur attacks on his expertise

⁷⁸ Ibid., 62–3.

⁷⁹ Westbrook, *John Dewey*, 179; Westhoff, “Popularization of Knowledge,” 45–7; Alan Ryan, *John Dewey and the High Tide of American Liberalism* (New York, 1995), 185–7; Richard J. Bernstein, “Dewey’s Vision of Radical Democracy,” in Molly Cochran, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Dewey* (Cambridge, 2010), 288–308, at 301–3. For an ambitious attempt to “recast” Dewey’s democratic theory “as a preoccupation with power and domination,” which aligns him with “a defense of freedom understood as nondomination,” see Rogers, *Undiscovered Dewey*, 208–35 (quotations at 195 and 209).

⁸⁰ Minton, *Lewis M. Terman*, 286 n. 79.

politically damaging and intellectually insulting.⁸¹ Forced to defend his authority in public, Terman responded with a long and angry article in the *New Republic*, which argued that a critic like Lippmann could have no standing against the “majority of the psychologists of America, England and Germany” who supported intelligence testing. Terman focused first on Lippmann’s vulnerable claim that the army tests contradicted the Stanford–Binet scale, and explained that Lippmann had not accounted for the different points systems used by the army, nor for their similarities to the Stanford–Binet scale, nor for the fact that “independent age norms have several times been derived for the army tests by applying them to large groups of unselected school children. I have presented some of these norms,” he added, invoking his own expertise while revoking Lippmann’s claims on it, “in the very report from which Mr. Lippmann quotes a few of the facts he is unable to interpret.” Similarly, Terman contested Lippmann’s claim that time limits determined test scores by observing that this issue had also been “thoroughly investigated.”⁸² And, indeed, the experts had found that changing time limits did “not result in any demonstrable improvement” in test scores.⁸³

More broadly, Terman accused Lippmann of bad faith in his use of psychological expertise. For instance, Lippmann had suggested that the British eugenicist Francis Galton and the American psychologist James McKeen Cattell disagreed about whether or not intelligence was hereditary, and then had used this suggestion to argue that the hereditary nature of human intelligence was not a scientific consensus.⁸⁴ But Terman argued that Lippmann’s suggestion was dishonest. “Note how cleverly Mr. Lippmann strives for effect by playing off one psychologist against another,” Terman wrote. “The trick is very simple; all you do is to take an isolated statement out of its original setting and quote it in a setting made to order. In that way you can have all the expert opinion on your side.” Because Lippmann’s criticism did depend on deploying scientists strategically to generate rhetorical authority, this had some bite. “Mr. Bryan,” Terman added, “is said to use this method with telling effect against the evolutionists.” Terman then warned that “when the outsider comes along” and tries to exploit legitimate disagreements among professional scientists, “it is well to be on one’s guard. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred it means that an unfair advantage is being

⁸¹ Minton, *Lewis M. Terman*, 122–3; Chapman, *Schools as Sorters*, 103–6.

⁸² Lewis M. Terman, “The Great Conspiracy: Or the Impulse Imperious of Intelligence Testers, Psychoanalyzed and Exposed by Mr. Lippmann,” *New Republic*, 27 Dec. 1922, 116–20.

⁸³ Yerkes, *Psychological Examining*, 417.

⁸⁴ Walter Lippmann, “Tests of Hereditary Intelligence,” *New Republic*, 22 Nov. 1922, 328–30, at 328–9.

taken both of the reader and of the author quoted.”⁸⁵ Because amateurs like Lippmann or Bryan could manipulate their publics, what mattered politically was the protection of autonomous space for the professionals. Terman’s politics of expertise was therefore about removing politics from expertise. Science was for scientists, and democracy happened after or elsewhere.

In the context of Lippmann’s claims about Galton and Cattell, however, Terman’s argument depended on showing that all the experts agreed that intelligence was hereditary. And here Terman could only use his own rhetorical strategies to try to persuade public opinion that the science was on his side. “Think,” he urged, “of Mr. Lippmann’s quoting Cattell in support of his tirade against intelligence testing.” The thought was ridiculous: “Cattell, the pupil of Galton, the father of mentality testing in America, the inventor of new methods for the study of individual differences, the author of important studies (in progress) on the inheritance of genius!”⁸⁶ Yet, striving for effect, Terman strained against both the history of intelligence testing and his own intellectual biography. For, substantively, Cattell had neither followed Galton nor fathered American intelligence testing. Rather, Cattell’s early Comtean sympathies meant that Galton’s statistical positivism would always have been attractive (especially after training with Wilhelm Wundt).⁸⁷ And though Cattell’s 1890 article on “Mental Tests and Measurements” generated some enthusiasm among American psychologists, this was unsurprising in the broader context of the empirically oriented “new psychology,” and his influence had mostly died by 1900.⁸⁸ Terman knew and respected Cattell, but did not engage much with his work.⁸⁹ Indeed, Cattell told Terman that his response to Lippmann had exaggerated the scientific consensus about the hereditary nature of human intelligence.⁹⁰ “I am quite aware that you probably attribute somewhat less to native endowment than I do,” Terman replied, “but I did not feel that Lippmann was justified in quoting you in a way to leave the impression that you attributed next to nothing to endowment.”⁹¹

⁸⁵ Terman, “Great Conspiracy,” 118–19.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 119.

⁸⁷ Carson, *The Measure of Merit*, 172–3.

⁸⁸ James McKeen Cattell, “Mental Tests and Measurements,” *Mind* 15/59 (1890), 373–81; Michael M. Sokal, “James McKeen Cattell and the Failure of Anthropometric Testing,” in William R. Woodward and Mitchell G. Ash, eds., *The Problematic Science: Psychology in Nineteenth-Century Thought* (New York, 1982), 322–44; Ross, *G. Stanley Hall*, 351; Carson, *The Measure of Merit*, 176.

⁸⁹ Minton, *Lewis M. Terman*, 19, 26, 119. Cattell does not appear in Terman, *The Measurement of Intelligence*; nor in Alfred Binet and Theodore M. Simon, with marginal notes by Lewis M. Terman, *The Development of Intelligence in Children* (Nashville, 1980).

⁹⁰ James McKeen Cattell to Lewis M. Terman, 3 Jan. 1923, Terman Papers, Box 15, Folder 20.

⁹¹ Lewis M. Terman to James McKeen Cattell, 16 Jan. 1923, Terman Papers, Box 15, Folder 20.

Terman's own use of experts for effect thus reinforced Lippmann's position: amateur publics struggled to evaluate expertise in its own terms, but they could and would engage with the authority of experts in *some* terms. The political contest was over *which* terms, and here much turned on matters of rhetoric and tone. For what contemporaries responding to the controversy cared about most was not what Terman said, but the manner in which he said it. "Professor Terman, if animated by the scientific spirit," complained one correspondent in the *New Republic*, "would have stated fairly, clearly, frankly and with a minimum of jargon his assumptions; these and the deductions drawn from the application of these assumptions are the questions at issue on which ironic invective throws little light."⁹² Another objected that the controversy had descended into "a clash of wits," and observed that intelligence testing "is becoming the table-talk of countless school teachers and social workers, who in their local way can and perhaps are doing much damage by the application of unripe theories."⁹³ Because Terman sounded more like a polemicist promoting table-talk than a scientist probing the evidence, he struggled to achieve authority for his expertise. Lippmann could get away with ad hominem attacks, for journalism rewarded sharp sentences about the hidden interests of one's opponent. But scientific authority demanded a more measured manner, which stuck to the substance of the arguments at stake.

Terman's decision to abandon this rhetoric generated especially acute anxieties among academics. "I think you make a mistake to adopt the sarcastic attitude," warned Howard Warren, a Princeton psychologist. "That attitude still goes in politics and the drama, but I believe that scientists ought to eschew it even in replying to a Bryan."⁹⁴ From Chicago, the political scientist Charles Merriam likewise fretted in a letter to Robert Yerkes "that there should be so much odium philosophicum in the discussion of a coldly scientific situation."⁹⁵ The controversy put Yerkes in a particularly difficult position, however, for he had both worked with Terman on the army tests and taught Lippmann at Harvard. He first rebuked Lippmann for not doing justice to "the science of mental measurement," and regretted that if "you had had a better psychological background . . . your

⁹² "A.W.," letter to the editor, *New Republic*, 17 Jan. 1923, 202.

⁹³ Gerdy, letter to the editor, 202.

⁹⁴ Howard C. Warren to Lewis M. Terman, 5 Feb. 1923, Terman Papers, Box 16, Folder 3.

⁹⁵ Charles E. Merriam to Robert M. Yerkes, 1 Feb. 1923, Charles E. Merriam Papers, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago, Box 43, Folder 16. See also Merriam's influential manifesto, "The Significance of Psychology for the Study of Politics," *American Political Science Review* 18/3 (1924), 469–88, which at 476 argued that "the acrimonious controversy between Mr. Terman and Mr. Lippmann" had neither explained intelligence testing's implications for democracy nor resolved the relationship between psychology and political science.

contribution might have been more largely constructive.”⁹⁶ But he then told Terman that “the layman” would not understand so flippant a response to Lippmann: “I found myself doubting whether the average reader would not mistake playfulness (humor, sarcasm, irony and other things) for a species of psychological seriousness.”⁹⁷ Terman’s tone troubled academics because many shared his belief in the intellectual authority of autonomous scientific research, but worried about the journalistic rhetoric on which this authority depended in public. To them the controversy suggested that responding effectively to amateur attacks meant responding with the sobriety and specificity that could reinforce the cultural authority of scientific autonomy. It suggested, in other words, that the authority of scientific expertise in a democracy depended less on the intellectual content of the science than on the rhetorical credibility of the scientist.

So when Lippmann replied to Terman’s response by emphasizing its lack of “scientific temper,” Terman had nowhere left to go.⁹⁸ His now-nervous publishers told him that, although that Lippmann was “dead wrong,” any continuation of the controversy would “lower the dignity of the psychological profession,” and that the best strategy was to “withdraw with as few words as possible.”⁹⁹ This Terman did, in a short letter of six sentences.¹⁰⁰ Lippmann cheerfully responded again, in a longer letter that declared victory.¹⁰¹ Two months later, Terman glumly told an old graduate student that “answers in the future will be confined to the presentation of data in scientific journals. There is no use trying to argue with some people.”¹⁰² By forcefully and repeatedly claiming that Terman was not a scientist, and with the help of Terman’s furious response to these claims, Lippmann had publicly and convincingly contested the authority of the expertise behind intelligence testing.

⁹⁶ Robert M. Yerkes to Walter Lippmann, 26 Nov. 1922, Lippmann Papers, Box 35, Folder 1314.

⁹⁷ Robert M. Yerkes to Lewis M. Terman, 2 Jan. 1923, Terman Papers, Box 17, Folder 2. Others had more sinister doubts: E. G. Conklin, in a letter to Terman (6 Feb. 1923, Terman Papers, Box 16, Folder 3), found it “almost incredible that the ‘New Republic’ or the ‘Jew Republic’ should really believe what some of its writers profess to believe, that all men are essentially equal.”

⁹⁸ Walter Lippmann, “The Great Confusion: A Reply to Mr. Terman,” *New Republic*, 3 Jan. 1923, 145–6.

⁹⁹ Arthur S. Otis to Lewis M. Terman, 4 Jan. 1923, Terman Papers, Box 20, Folder 19.

¹⁰⁰ Lewis M. Terman, letter to the editor, *New Republic*, 17 Jan. 1923, 201.

¹⁰¹ “Mr. Lippmann Replies,” *New Republic*, 17 Jan. 1923, 201.

¹⁰² Lewis M. Terman to Jessie Chase Fenton, 12 March 1923, Terman Papers, Box 14, Folder 3. This view persisted: Lee J. Cronbach, “Five Decades of Controversy over Mental Testing,” *American Psychologist* 30/1 (1975), 1–14, at 11–13.

As a broader political model, however, Lippmann's position involved difficulties. He had shown how professional expertise could be made accessible to an amateur public through an effective rhetoric that gave the right sort of authority to the right sort of expert, but these variables did not align easily in the actually existing culture of American democracy. There was no guarantee, for instance, that major rhetoricians would be good democrats who listened to the professionals: witness Mencken. But nor was there a guarantee that "scientific democrats" would be good rhetoricians: witness Dewey. And unscientific democrats could still captivate publics through oratory, as Bryan would demonstrate two years later at the Scopes trial. Moreover, Lippmann had relied on a journalistic rhetoric to make expertise democratic, but this allowed him to evade the scrutiny that more professional registers made possible. And the scope of his public remained unclear: Lippmann wrote for a general reader, but the actual audience of the *New Republic* was fairly elite.¹⁰³ He sought to make expertise accessible through journalism, but did not specify how other institutions, like schools or unions, might productively engage with the press.

Most importantly, professional scientists continued to develop intelligence testing's intellectual sophistication, ideological force, and institutional reach. In the *New Republic* in June 1923, the Harvard psychologist Edwin Boring published his influential argument that "intelligence is what the tests test," which carefully deflated many of Lippmann's criticisms.¹⁰⁴ In an early account of what came to be known as "operationism" in psychology, Boring argued that intelligence was not an individually innate construct (like "mental age"), but an operationally observable concept.¹⁰⁵ Drawing an analogy with the concept of power in physics, he claimed that intelligence testing tested intelligence as "the amount of work that can be done in a given time." And this, he pressed, collapsed Lippmann's contention that time limits undermined a unitary concept of intelligence, because if "intelligence is like power, this contention is not an argument. If these people have less power, they have to go up the hill on low gear and it takes them longer; that is all."¹⁰⁶ Boring did not mention Lippmann explicitly, but implicitly offered a more convincing response to him than Terman had. Like Terman, Boring prized scientific autonomy and mostly thought that expertise was for experts.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ The paper even printed mock intelligence tests as advertisements "to test your capacity to be a subscriber to the The New Republic." *New Republic*, 22 Nov. 1922, v.

¹⁰⁴ Edwin G. Boring, "Intelligence as the Tests Test It," *New Republic*, 6 June 1923, 35–7.

¹⁰⁵ On the later emergence of operationism, see Joel Isaac, *Working Knowledge: Making the Human Sciences from Parsons to Kuhn* (Cambridge, MA, 2012), 102–24.

¹⁰⁶ Boring, "Intelligence as the Tests Test It," 36.

¹⁰⁷ See also the discussion of "truth versus policy in scientific theory" in Edwin G. Boring, *Psychologist at Large: An Autobiography and Selected Essays* (New York, 1961), 300–1.

But he made his case through epistemology, not irony, and he took care to sound scientific. “Only with more observation and less inference,” Boring concluded, could more be said about intelligence.¹⁰⁸

Terman also assumed the presidency of the American Psychological Association in 1923, which showed how little professional objections to public sarcasm harmed his career. In his presidential address, Terman confidently concluded that intelligence testing had “broadened and intensified our incentives to research, enlarged the public support of our science, and attracted new hosts of workers to the psychological vineyard.”¹⁰⁹ By the end of the 1920s, his scales for testing children in primary and secondary education had annual sales in the hundreds of thousands.¹¹⁰ Also at this time, psychometric testing expanded into many other areas, including the scientific study of gifted children, the coerced sterilization of “feebleminded” adults, the racialized restriction of immigration from particular nations, the internment of criminals, the detection of delinquency, the analysis of sexuality, and the administration of industry.¹¹¹ By the late 1940s, Boring wrote, “there was so much testing and it was working well.”¹¹² So when cognitive psychologists during the Cold War argued that testing personalities for authoritarian tendencies could enhance democracy, they were untroubled by an old controversy about measuring intelligence.¹¹³ And when critics of intelligence testing in the 1970s sought to revive Lippmann for “an unfinished chapter in the history of psychology,” the effort miscarried, for he had nothing new to add to the nature–nurture controversy.¹¹⁴ And at a broader level, New Left critiques of psychological expertise had little room for Lippmann. Noam Chomsky, for instance, became an influential critic of both behavioral psychology and Lippmann’s democratic theory as ideologies of technocratic elitism.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁸ Boring, “Intelligence as the Tests Test It,” 37.

¹⁰⁹ Lewis M. Terman, “The Mental Test as a Psychological Method,” *Psychological Review* 31/2 (1924), 93–117, at 117.

¹¹⁰ Minton, *Lewis M. Terman*, 94–5.

¹¹¹ Beyond works cited already, see Ellen Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology: Political Culture in the Age of Experts* (Berkeley, 1995); Mark A. Largent, *Breeding Contempt: The History of Coerced Sterilization in the United States* (New Brunswick, 2008); and Peter Hegarty, *Gentlemen’s Disagreement: Alfred Kinsey and the Sexual Politics of Smart Men* (Chicago, 2013).

¹¹² Edwin G. Boring, *A History of Experimental Psychology*, 2nd edn (New York, 1950), 577.

¹¹³ Cohen-Cole, *Open Mind*, 35–62, 195–214.

¹¹⁴ Nicholas Pastore, “The Army Intelligence Tests and Walter Lippmann,” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 14/4 (1978), 316–27, at 316. See also Ned Block and Gerald Dworkin, eds., *The I.Q. Controversy: Critical Readings* (New York, 1976), 4–44.

¹¹⁵ Noam Chomsky, “Psychology and Ideology,” *Cognition* 1/1 (1972), 11–42; Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York, 1988). The latter took its title from Lippmann, *Public Opinion*, 248.

Lippmann continued to criticize intelligence testing as 1923 wore on, but became repetitive. He published another, shorter series of articles in the *New Republic*, which centered on the British psychologist Cyril Burt as “one of the great authorities” on intelligence testing, who had superior expertise to “the more breathless work of the better known American testers.”¹¹⁶ But Burt did not differ much from Terman, for both saw intelligence as scientifically measurable, significantly hereditary, and politically consequential.¹¹⁷ Lippmann’s use of Burt’s authority to suggest Terman’s breathlessness simply reiterated the difficulties of making amateurs engage with experts. Terman himself stayed silent, but William McDougall (Burt’s old Oxford tutor) waded in as “a man of science” to insist that experts had a duty to publish their opinion “no matter how distasteful it may be.”¹¹⁸ Lippmann replied to McDougall by restating the dilemma that Terman had dramatized: “when a man of science comes along, claims to speak as a biologist and a scientific psychologist, and offers doubtful political theories as scientific judgments, the protection of genuine scepticism is denied us.”¹¹⁹

IV

Lippmann began making notes for another work of democratic theory in March 1923, just after finishing his controversy with Terman.¹²⁰ He completed a draft in August, which he soon titled *Live and Let Live*.¹²¹ The text went through several revisions before being published two years later as *The Phantom Public* (not least in terms of its title, which for a while was simply *Democracy*).¹²² It returned to the dilemma of democracy in the Great Society, and is usually read as a sequel to *Public Opinion*, shorter and starker in style, perhaps, but basically similar in substance.¹²³ Here, however, it will be suggested that important

¹¹⁶ Walter Lippmann, “Mr. Burt and the Intelligence Tests,” *New Republic*, 2 May 1923, 263–4. See also Lippmann, “Rich and Poor, Girls and Boys,” *New Republic*, 9 May 1923, 295–6; Lippmann, “A Judgment of the Tests,” *New Republic*, 16 May 1923, 322–3; and Lippmann, “A Defense of Education,” *Century*, May 1923, 95–103.

¹¹⁷ Cyril Burt, *Mental and Scholastic Tests* (London, 1922), 235; Linstrum, *Ruling Minds*, 96.

¹¹⁸ William McDougall, letter to the editor, *New Republic*, 23 May 1923, 346.

¹¹⁹ Walter Lippmann, letter to the editor, *New Republic*, 23 May 1923, 347.

¹²⁰ Walter Lippmann, “March 22, 1923—Draft Outline,” Lippmann Papers, Box 219, Folder 308.

¹²¹ Walter Lippmann, “First Draft: Original MS—July 15–August 15, 1923,” Lippmann Papers (Additional Material), Box 17, Folder 39; Lippmann, “Live and Let Live: An Attempt to Define the Sphere of Public Opinion” Lippmann Papers, Box 219, Folder 309.

¹²² See the correspondence with Harcourt Brace, Lippmann Papers, Box 12, Folder 507; and Walter Lippmann, “The Phantom Public,” Lippmann Papers, Box 217, Folder 298.

¹²³ Some later editions of the text, beginning with Macmillan in 1927, used “A Sequel to ‘Public Opinion’” as a subtitle. But the first edition from Harcourt Brace, and

aspects of Lippmann's argument in *The Phantom Public* developed the themes of the intelligence-testing debate. For this text did not make the case, as *Public Opinion* had done in the end, for integrating experts into the bureaucracy of the administrative state. Instead, Lippmann devoted much of *The Phantom Public* to exploring the nature of democratic debate, and to asking how democratic publics might make political decisions about issues for which they lack expertise. Indeed, the text can be read as a minimal but constructive account of how amateurs control experts through public controversies.

There are obvious resonances of *Public Opinion* in *The Phantom Public*, for both texts address connected questions and are products of the same sensibility. Lippmann still saw the omniscient citizen as an "unattainable ideal," despite, he now added, the claims of "Lothrop Stoddard and other revivalists" that such a figure could be bred.¹²⁴ *The Phantom Public* also repeated earlier arguments against the liberal constitutionalist approaches to public opinion associated with James Bryce, and placed itself firmly in the context of what Lippmann called "the disenchantment of democracy."¹²⁵ But crucially, where he had earlier moved from these positions to emphasizing the need for more expertise in government, he now explored why and how expert authority created political problems for democracy. As Lippmann wrote in an early draft, "there is no automatic virtue in the fact finding agency. It is neither fool-proof nor knave-proof, and worst of all, from the point of view of democracy, its conclusions are rarely interesting."¹²⁶ In the published text, he argued that this "popular boredom and contempt for the expert" could make the authority of expertise frail in democracies, even as it remained an inevitable aspect of the Great Society. "The organization of intelligence to administer modern affairs would probably be entirely neglected," Lippmann wrote, "were it not that departments of government, corporations, trade unions and trade associations are being compelled by their own internal necessities of administration, and by compulsion of other corporate groups, to record their own acts, measure them, publish them and stand accountable for them."¹²⁷

The Phantom Public did not claim that democracy could somehow consign politics to a general class of elite experts. Precisely because of the Great

from which citations will be taken, did not: Walter Lippmann, *The Phantom Public* (New York, 1925).

¹²⁴ Lippmann, *The Phantom Public*, 22. "Not being a biologist," Lippmann added, "I keep an open but hopeful mind on this point, tempered, however, with the knowledge that certainty about how to breed ability in human beings is on the whole in inverse proportion to the writer's scientific reputation."

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 18–19, 52–3.

¹²⁶ Lippmann, "First Draft: Original MS—July 15–August 15, 1923," "Chapter II," 4.

¹²⁷ Lippmann, *The Phantom Public*, 42–3.

Society's complex variety, no such class existed. Different political problems involved different groups of "insiders" and "outsiders," depending on the interests and opinions at stake, but Lippmann thought that those who saw "a congenital difference between the masterful few and the ignorant many" were "victims of a superficial analysis."¹²⁸ The pluralism of the Great Society was so deep, and the specialization of knowledge so great, that insiders with expertise in one area of modern democracy would always be amateur outsiders in others. "That is why," Lippmann argued, "excellent automobile manufacturers, literary critics and scientists often talk such nonsense about politics."¹²⁹ Henry Ford had expertise in industrial production, Mencken knew much about novels, and certain psychologists (probably Burt rather than Terman) might even be able to measure particular traits. But Ford could not evaluate psychology scientifically, Mencken could not mass-produce cars, and Burt could not appraise literature: no one could comprehend, let alone direct, the complexity of the Great Society's politics. The challenge for democratic theory, then, was to explain how amateur outsiders could engage with the expertise necessary to address an always evolving range of intricate political problems. "We are forced to ask," Lippmann wrote, "whether it is possible for men to find a way of acting effectively upon highly complex affairs by very simple means."¹³⁰

He answered that it was possible, and produced an austere analysis of "what the public does."¹³¹ In this, Lippmann argued that groups of citizens became publics at specific moments to address particular political problems by observing and intervening in public controversies. He did not think that these publics could generate the expertise necessary "to deal with the substance of a problem," but he did argue that "the ideal of public opinion is to align men during the crisis of a problem in such a way as to favor the action of those individuals who may be able to compose the crisis."¹³² This "ideal" did not solve political problems through public reason, but it did provide a way for democratic publics to engage with and make judgments about those who claimed the authority to solve them. In an echo of the intelligence-testing controversy, Lippmann argued that amateur citizens could not understand the technical content of expertise, but that they could and should control the experts. "They must judge externally," he wrote,

¹²⁸ Ibid., 149–50.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 150. "Their congenital excellence, if it exists," he continued, "reveals itself only in their own activity. The aristocratic theorists work from the fallacy of supposing that a sufficiently excellent square peg will also fit a round hole."

¹³⁰ Ibid., 79.

¹³¹ Ibid., 54.

¹³² Ibid., 68.

“and they can act only by supporting one of the interests directly involved.”¹³³ Moreover, their judgments depended on the external signs by which those who stood on the side of the public interest in a particular controversy could be perceived. “The power to discern those individuals,” he stressed, “is the end of the effort to educate public opinion. The aim of research designed to facilitate public action is the discovery of clear signs by which these individuals may be discerned.”¹³⁴ These signs were not stereotypes for manufacturing consent, but rhetorical representations to help ordinary citizens make political judgments about particular insiders, which further echoed Lippmann’s earlier strategy for making psychological expertise accessible to amateurs. “The signs are relevant,” he continued, “when they reveal by coarse, simple and objective tests which side in a controversy upholds a workable social rule, or which is attacking an unworkable rule, or which proposes a promising new rule.”¹³⁵

Lippmann expanded on these social rules in the second half of *The Phantom Public*. “The interest of the public,” he wrote, “is not in the rules and contracts and customs themselves but in the maintenance of a régime of rule, contract and custom.” This amounted to something like a system of democratic norms, “some system of rights and duties” that maintained the culture through which democracy functioned.¹³⁶ Public controversies represented breaches of this culture, which turned on intricate issues that most amateur outsiders could not understand, but which could also involve representational schemes through which external judgments about expert insiders might be made. To aid citizens in their navigation of these controversies, Lippmann established various “tests” that could be applied in them.¹³⁷ For example, when someone contested a social rule while relying on the authority of someone else whose assent was lacking (or whose conformity was absent), the contested rule could be assumed to serve their self-interest, and the public could proceed to choose another person to fix it.¹³⁸ Lippmann’s tests tried to be specific, but also exposed gaps in his argument. He did not, for instance, detail the actual political procedures by which publics aligned themselves with particular insiders. Nor did he provide guidance on how to resolve social rules that were broken unjustly but without objection. Nor did he explain what to do if debate broke down and a minority found itself at the mercy of a tyrannical majority.

¹³³ Ibid., 103.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 68.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 105–6.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 107–9.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 115–24.

But *The Phantom Public* nonetheless argued that democracy was a political order in which amateur outsiders exerted controlling authority over expert insiders. Even as Lippmann chronicled the complexity of mass society, even as he emphasized the illusions of public opinion, and even as he detailed the deficiencies of the citizens, he also maintained that “the bystander’s only recourse is to insist upon debate.”¹³⁹ Through public controversies, a democratic citizen could constructively shape politics. “He will not be able, we may assume, to judge the merits of arguments,” Lippmann reiterated. “But if he does insist upon full freedom of discussion, the advocates are very likely to expose one another. Open debate . . . will tend to betray the partisan and the advocate.”¹⁴⁰ *The Phantom Public*, then, presented public controversies as the agonistic locus of democratic politics, where partisanship could be perceived, advocacy betrayed, social rules contested, and expertise eschewed or embraced. Controversies were not deliberative spaces for rational discussion among all the citizens, but political arenas in which claims to authority competed for the attention and loyalty of particular publics through symbolic representations of the issues at stake. Through them, Lippmann argued that public opinion in its “highest ideal” would “defend those who are prepared to act on their reason against the interrupting force of those who merely assert their will.”¹⁴¹

During the intelligence-testing controversy, Lippmann had assumed precisely this role of an individual prepared to act reasonably, and directly accused Terman of merely asserting a will to power. He had doubted that amateur citizens could understand the intricacies of the tests themselves, and so contested the authority of the expertise behind them through rhetorical strategies that represented them as unscientific before a broader public. In the cut and thrust of democratic debate, Lippmann had developed ideas about the politics of expertise that made their way into his democratic theory. For in *The Phantom Public* he explained, minimally but constructively, how amateur citizens might direct democratic politics through public controversies that turned on the authority of experts. Read in the context of the Lippmann–Terman controversy, *The Phantom Public* seems less like a sequel to than a revision of *Public Opinion*. The texts share many premises and a disenchanting sensibility, but the substances of their arguments differ. Lippmann had earlier emphasized the need for expertise in democratic government and more broadly explored the social psychology of democratic citizenship, but now he sought to understand the real politics of democratic debate. Moreover, *Public Opinion*’s conceptual vocabulary does little work in *The Phantom Public* (“stereotypes” appear only glancingly; “pseudo-environments”

¹³⁹ Ibid., 114.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 69.

are absent), and Lippmann develops other arguments about “rules” and “tests” in public controversies. After Terman, Lippmann’s democratic theory focused on how public opinion could function through democratic debate “so that men, driven to make terms, may live and let live.”¹⁴²

“Hence, while one might cite passages which, if divorced from their context, would give the impression that Mr. Lippmann was permanently ‘off’ democracy,” wrote Dewey in an admiring review of the text, “Mr. Lippmann’s essay is in reality a statement of faith in a pruned and temperate democratic theory, and a presentation of methods by which a reasonable conception of democracy can be made to work, not absolutely, but at least better than democracy works under an exaggerated and undisciplined notion of the public and its powers.” Dewey added that, “to my mind at least, his contribution is constructive.”¹⁴³ Two years later Dewey published *The Public and Its Problems*, and included in this classic work a much-discussed engagement with Lippmann. Given the generally binary nature of this discussion, it is worth recalling that the first half of Dewey’s text consists of a consequentialist theory of the pluralist state, which drew on his much older ambivalence about juristic accounts of sovereignty.¹⁴⁴ This is not the place to explore these chapters, but rather to emphasize that *The Public and Its Problems* contains complex arguments about various subjects, to some of which Lippmann is liminal. Not until a footnote in the fourth chapter does Dewey signal his “indebtedness” to *Public Opinion* and *The Phantom Public*, “not only as to this particular point [that “the Public seems to be lost; it is certainly bewildered”], but for ideas involved in my entire discussion even when it reaches conclusions diverging from [Lippmann].”¹⁴⁵ And, as this acknowledgment suggests, Dewey saw his engagement with Lippmann as more of a dialogue than a refutation.¹⁴⁶ In the second half of *The Public and Its Problems*, Dewey thus explored how the “Great Society” might be transformed into what he called a “Great Community.”¹⁴⁷

¹⁴² Ibid., 74.

¹⁴³ John Dewey, “Practical Democracy,” *New Republic*, 2 Dec. 1925, 52.

¹⁴⁴ John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems: An Essay in Political Inquiry* (New York, 1927), chaps. 1–3; Dewey, “Austin’s Theory of Sovereignty,” *Political Science Quarterly* 9/1 (1894), 31–52. See also Westbrook, *John Dewey*, 301–6.

¹⁴⁵ Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, 116 n. 1.

¹⁴⁶ Lippmann, however, did not feel compelled to respond to Dewey, and declined to review *The Public and Its Problems* for the *Nation*. Busy writing *A Preface to Morals* (New York, 1929) and dealing with the death of his father, Lippmann told Mark Van Doren (19 Aug. 1927, Lippmann Papers, Box 33, Folder 1229), “if I felt that [Dewey’s] book was not being reviewed but was waiting for me, I should have it on my conscience badly. I wish you’d go ahead with a review of your own.”

¹⁴⁷ Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, 142.

Part of this transformation concerned “the relation of experts to a democratic public,” which Dewey considered most fully in his final chapter.¹⁴⁸ Here he did not discuss Lippmann explicitly, but he did invoke the intelligence-testing controversy. “*Effective* intelligence is not an original, innate endowment,” Dewey wrote. “No matter what are the differences in native intelligence (allowing for the moment that intelligence can be native), the actuality of mind is dependent upon the education which social conditions effect.”¹⁴⁹ As Lippmann had argued and Dewey had agreed, those who claimed the expertise to measure native intelligence actually threatened democracy by giving authority to pseudo-science. For Dewey, fundamental general education was still the issue. “A more intelligent state of social affairs, one more informed with knowledge, more directed by intelligence, would not improve original endowments one whit, but it would raise the level upon which the intelligence of all operates,” he reiterated. “The height of this level is much more important for judgment of public concerns than are differences in intelligence quotients.”¹⁵⁰ Indeed, when it came to the relationship between democracy and expertise more generally, Dewey insisted that “*the problem of the public*” was “the improvement of the methods and conditions of debate, discussion and persuasion.”¹⁵¹

In the context of the Lippmann–Terman controversy, This argument here is best understood as an agreement with Lippmann. For the methods and conditions of debate, discussion, and persuasion had defined Lippmann’s engagement with Terman and shaped his theoretical agenda in *The Phantom Public*. Though Lippmann’s account of democratic debate was more agonistic, and Dewey’s was more deliberative, both sought to explain how democracy could engage with and control the authority of expertise. *The Public and Its Problems* agreed with Lippmann that this authority was inevitable in mass society, and also approved of attempts to make expertise democratic through public debates. “It is not necessary that the many should have the knowledge and skill to carry on the needed [expert] investigations,” Dewey wrote; “what is required is that they have the ability to judge of the bearing of the knowledge supplied by others upon common concerns.”¹⁵² Here, in fact, Dewey came close to articulating Lippmann’s position on intelligence testing: democratic citizens did not have to understand the technical content of scientific expertise, but they did need to judge “the bearing of the knowledge” through discussion and persuasion. However, Dewey also held on to the hope that scientific education and public deliberation would one day

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 203.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 209, emphasis in original.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 210–11.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 208, emphasis in original.

¹⁵² Ibid., 209.

make democracy expert. “Just as the specialized mind and knowledge of the past is embodied in implements, utensils, devices, and technologies which those of a grade of intelligence which could not produce them can now intelligently use,” he claimed, “so it will be when currents of public knowledge blow through social affairs.”¹⁵³

Dewey concluded that only local community could realize true democracy. This conclusion involved the familiar difficulties of his politics, for Dewey did not explain how to sustain such a community under modern conditions, and effectively abandoned the broader analysis of how the Great Society could become a Great Community.¹⁵⁴ “It is outside the scope of our discussion to look into the prospects of the reconstruction of face-to-face communities,” he stated.¹⁵⁵ But, Dewey nonetheless insisted, in a local community the immediacy and energy of face-to-face communication would release and expand the unique capacities of every individual beyond anything the intelligence testers had imagined. “There is no limit to the liberal expansion and confirmation of *limited personal intellectual endowment* which may proceed from the flow of *social intelligence* when that circulates by word of mouth from one to another in the communications of the local community,” said Dewey. “That and that only gives reality to public opinion.”¹⁵⁶ So, *pace* Lippmann and *contra* Terman, Dewey argued that local and vocal rather than mass and visual communication could deliberately generate “social intelligence.” Expertise in a true democracy would not be confined to intelligence testers, either in themselves or in their subjects, but would rather be the realm of all. Even as Dewey engaged with Lippmann, he continued to criticize the tests. Even as he made distinctive arguments about democracy and education, he drew on Lippmann’s ideas about democracy and expertise.

The heuristic of the “Lippmann–Dewey debate” has set democracy against expertise in much recent scholarship on American political thought. But the history of the Lippmann–Terman controversy suggests that the relationship between democracy and expertise was a more complicated matter in the early twentieth century. For here a wider range of characters produced a subtler set of arguments about the politics of expertise in a democracy. There is Lippmann’s emphasis on making this politics democratic through public debate, and his interest in the cultural and rhetorical aspects of expert authority. There is Dewey’s basic agreement with Lippmann, as well as his broader argument for a universal aristocracy in which democracy itself becomes expert. And there is Terman’s case for scientific autonomy, in which expertise gets protected from public opinion

¹⁵³ Ibid., 209–10.

¹⁵⁴ Westbrook, *John Dewey*, 315–18.

¹⁵⁵ Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, 213.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 219, emphasis added.

while also guiding public policy. The controversy was framed by both anti-expert populism (Bryan) and antidemocratic criticism (Mencken), and it generated much anxiety among academics (Yerkes, Merriam, Warren). Yet here it did not seem possible for experts to isolate themselves from democracy, for mass society both generated and needed specialized knowledge and experts often intervened in politics. But nor was it plausible to put experts in charge of democracy, for their expertise could threaten democratic values and undermine democratic culture. Instead, the authority of amateurs over experts turned on the contested dynamics of the public controversies through which they engaged with each other politically. For Lippmann, these dynamics, with all their difficulties, ultimately meant that the politics of expertise had to make sense within, and neither resolve nor escape, the broader fact of democracy.