

6 HUMANISM

What have we seen so far? (1) That we live in the Age of Populism, which is an era of dangerous trends and forces. (2) That public life in that era is churned by painful conflicts and polarizations, some of them generated by a market-based economy that creates winners and losers who are not necessarily more or less meritorious than each other. (3) That on the advice of economists in the (metaphorical) Temple of Science, politicians, opinion leaders, and ordinary citizens are strongly committed to economic growth, which emerges from creative destruction, which entails constantly changing social and economic practices leading to pockets of prosperity but also to the One Percent problem of inequality. (4) That, among other consequences, inequality gives rise to political contributions that, in the name of free speech, confer political power on dollars along with voters, to the point where, in effect, a marketplace based partly on moneyed activism has come to influence all branches of government.³³⁸ (5) That, in that marketplace, many people increasingly believe that institutions and other people are not telling them the truth. (6) That, against a backdrop of all these factors, resentment grows and encourages populism. And so forth and so on.

In those circumstances, which I think are extremely worrisome, how might political scientists proceed? Because the truth is that, so far, like many other scholars, and of course like most ordinary citizens, they have not responded collectively to what I just described.

Many political scientists are followers of Aristotle in that they assume that most people are *homo politicus*, naturally intended to live in communities, which in the modern world have become states. Because politics in those states entail a wide range of relationships, some personal and some social, between many people and to various ends, the political science discipline is pluralistic and embraces a wide array of different sub-fields – from “Information Technology and Politics” to “Legislative Studies,” from “Formal Political Theory” to “Women and Politics.”

In practice, however, in whatever their sub-fields, most political scientists tend to investigate, teach, and publish about democracy (say, institutions and techniques) and about citizenship (say, political rights and participation). Moreover, when they talk about such subjects, they are most likely to highlight what many colleagues have regarded as procedural rather than substantive matters, that is, how things *get done* (or not), rather than which things *should be done* (or not).

The Default Setting

Professionally speaking, then, the default setting for many political scientists is an abiding interest in democracy – what it is (and is not), where it is (and is not), who its citizens are (and are not), how it is working for them (or not), whether it needs repair (or not), and more. That being the case, if some of us will want to focus on large trends that plague our times, we can easily remain within our professional vocabulary and research techniques, where many of us are anyway working on subjects, including stubborn conundrums, related to democracy. So our first step in the direction of analyzing the Age of Populism, if we choose to go down that road, is not even a step: We are already there.

We should be aware, however, that there is an auxiliary dimension to political science’s default setting, and that is our commitment, as scholars, to work scientifically wherever that is possible. On this score, most political scientists are

post-Darwinians because, in our world of knowledge, scientific (empirical) research and analysis are more highly regarded than the (value-laden) suppositions that are sometimes called “qualitative research.”³³⁹

In a moment, along with Ian Shapiro, I will commend the practice of empirical research. But I want first to warn that, on the subject of democracy, such research tends not to support and may even cast doubts on democracy.³⁴⁰ A good many empirical studies, including some of the best, suggest that American democracy is attenuated and imperfect. Sometimes scholars point out (1) that *average voters* fail democracy, that many of them are polarized, that many of them ignore electoral issues, that many of them refuse to learn about candidates, that many of them neglect public interests, and more. And sometimes scholars point out (2) that *powerful players* – individuals and groups – deliberately distort the system, for example, via intense partisanship, gerrymandering, large campaign contributions, lobbying, sponsored punditry, social media manipulations, and more.

The point here is that, if we want to serve a democratic society, it is not enough to study democracy and then prove that it doesn’t work. We must do more than highlight dreary instances of ineptitude and irrationality.³⁴¹ We must go beyond concluding that American politics is dysfunctional,³⁴² or that the modern state cannot make decisions and stick with them,³⁴³ or that, as time goes by, democratic nations create such a gridlock of conflicting groups that political standoffs and stalemates are the rule of the day,³⁴⁴ or that because, nowadays, many citizens are politically incompetent, we should replace them with an “epistocracy” of people who “know” rather than just entertain “opinions.”³⁴⁵

Humanism

We should, in a word, make some of our work contribute to what has historically been called *humanism*. Humanism was the informal creed of many intellectuals during the Enlightenment,

who believed that ordinary people are competent enough to overthrow social restrictions and discriminations on the road to fashioning more equitable practices and making them work well.³⁴⁶ Humanism was the faith of thinkers like Thomas Paine, with his appeal in *Common Sense* to colonial Americans for an insurrection against King George III.³⁴⁷ It was what inspired James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay, in *The Federalist*, to insist that representatives of the people were capable of hammering out a constitution that would defend and protect all (white male) Americans.³⁴⁸ It was Ralph Waldo Emerson identifying with the “party of hope.” It was Abraham Lincoln calling on Americans to ensure that government of the people would not perish from the Earth. It was William Jennings Bryan refusing to let his compatriots be crucified on a British cross of gold. It was Woodrow Wilson going to war to make the world safe for democracy. It was Franklin D. Roosevelt proclaiming that Americans have nothing to fear but fear itself.³⁴⁹ It was Rosa Parks taking her seat on the bus. It was Martin Luther King maintaining his belief in a dream. And, for the academic world, it was Richard Rorty telling us that, if a scholar is to serve her society, “You have to be loyal to a dream country rather than the one to which you wake up every morning.”³⁵⁰

Rorty did not mean that we should be unrealistic about our social aspirations. We need empiricism to know what is happening. And when populism is promoted by truth-challenged leaders like Donald Trump, which Rorty did not live to see, we need empiricism more than ever. What Rorty had in mind, though, was that sometimes people can be inspired to go beyond the facts, to change the facts, to do what is right rather than what is routine. What he insisted, therefore, was that we should be optimistic about the chances of achieving even unlikely goals.³⁵¹

In other words, what Rorty really believed was that we should do scholarship with *passion*, about things that are important to us and to our society, regardless of short-term forecasts. Coincidentally, that is what Theodore Lowi, APSA

president for 1991, called for in his presidential address. Lowi argued that many works of modern political science are “dismal” and lacking in “passion” because, while accepting the present bureaucratic state’s parameters, they use that state’s economic yardsticks to shape research in fields like public opinion, public policy, and public choice. The dispassionate results show up in political science journals like the *American Political Science Review*, which Lowi criticized for publishing few articles that “transcend their analysis to join a more inclusive level of discourse.”³⁵²

To restate the matter, we should be passionately committed to things we *know* are true, even though current circumstances might seem indifferent or even hostile to them. In that sense, and to learn from a great thinker, we should recall that James Madison rejected Thomas Jefferson’s suggestion of rewriting the Constitution in every generation. Madison believed that such constant change would undermine habits, emotions, traditions, and trust in government.³⁵³

It was not, I think, a matter of proof; it was something that Madison felt he simply knew. In our day, it would not be fanciful to apply the same insight, against constant change, when economists and neoliberals encourage us to generate the serial disruptions of creative destruction. Paradoxically, to insist every morning that the downsides of creative destruction are our target would not be utopian because it would be conservative in the best sense, according to, say, the standards of Edmund Burke, who praised social stability, moderation, small group solidarity, habits, and traditions.³⁵⁴

That a liberal like me can align with a conservative like Burke suggests that, in the matter of trying to mitigate the damage, destruction, and dislocations of economic growth, we can be passionate without slipping into partisanship.³⁵⁵ To that end, various sensible sources encourage us. Thus journalist Evgeny Mozorov says that “The overriding question, ‘What might we build tomorrow?’ blinds us to questions of our ongoing responsibilities for what we built yesterday.”³⁵⁶ And conservationist

John Sawhill declares that “In the end, we will be defined not only by what we create but by what we refuse to destroy.”³⁵⁷ And World Health Organization director Gro Brundtland warns that “We must consider our planet to be on loan from our children, rather than being a gift from our ancestors.”³⁵⁸

Along these lines, the Hippocratic Oath has long enjoined doctors to do no harm. For political scientists, Samuel Huntington, president of the APSA in 1987, in effect suggested a corollary to Hippocrates when he observed that “by and large, political scientists want to do good ... [with regard to] social goals or public purposes ... [where these include] enhancement of liberty, justice, equality, democracy, and responsibility in politics. The impetus to do good ... is ... embedded in our profession.”³⁵⁹ To extend Huntington’s sentiments, political scientists can promote the “good” in different ways within their pluralistic profession. But surely one of those ways could be to focus on indiscriminate economic destruction, innocent losers, and subsequent political resentment.

A New Role

The default setting of political science encourages practitioners to consider many aspects of democracy. But that central theme does not stand alone. Get the facts straight, but believe that they can evolve. Study politics quantitatively, but add qualitative considerations. Study representative governments, but compare them to authoritarian regimes. Study the politics of individuals, but see what groups do politically. Study the majority, but keep an eye on minorities. Study the rich, but don’t forget the poor. Study leaders, but also track followers.

As I said earlier, this pluralism in political science, but with an emphasis on democracy, gives us room to maneuver if we will want to direct some of our attention to the downsides of creative destruction. To rephrase that, we need not aspire to overthrow current disciplinary interests and practices but to add something to them. What most political scientists are doing, in the Big Tent of their Temple of Science column (to

mix metaphors), most of them are doing well. So I am not suggesting that they stop.

What I am proposing, instead, is a project that flows from a recommendation that, as an adjunct to our occasional talk about what we together should be doing (scope and methods), some of us should become – professionally, voluntarily, rigorously, and responsibly – more involved politically than we used to be.³⁶⁰ And I suggest that strategy because, in populist times, some circumstances – which will not all fix themselves – are more dangerous than those that we, our students, and the public, lived with previously.

Yes, some scholars should go up on the Temple of Science's roof. From there, they should study, teach, and publish about how to arrange our lives more successfully than living conditions are presently ordered in the Age of Populism. The roof-sitters will not all agree among themselves, and we will not all agree with all of them. The point, though, is that they will talk about what they think they know from their own and other Temple columns as if, in an Aristotelian sense, their enterprise endeavors to understand what bears upon *homo politicus* seeking a good life in a good community.³⁶¹

Here is a bottom line because, I think, modern political science is the academic discipline most suited for this work. First, because when we consider scope and methods, we agree that it is our scholarly job to investigate degrees of power, which affect who prospers more and who prospers less in many realms of life treated by various disciplines in the Temple of Science. APSA president (1956) Harold Lasswell made this point when he described power struggles authoritatively in his canonical *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How* (1935).³⁶²

Lasswell's formulation of "who gets what, when, how" has been quoted innumerable times by later political scientists.³⁶³ Moreover, it was extended analytically by Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz to cover almost every sort of power relationship, that is, not just what *does* happen (and why) but what *does not* happen (and why), that is, not just *decisions* but also

non-decisions.³⁶⁴ Therefore, we have a warrant to study power in many realms, where it creates both winners and losers. And, of course, we have good examples of power research along these lines, such as Larry Bartels, *Unequal Democracy* (2008),³⁶⁵ and Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson, *Winner-Take-All Politics* (2010).³⁶⁶

Furthermore, we are heirs to humanistic thinking, such as during the Constitutional Convention, about how to make a system that will work well or, at least, not badly.³⁶⁷ On this point, we were advised to think constructively by Austin Ranney, APSA president in 1975, when he advocated what he called “political engineering.” On political engineering, Ranney said, “I mean the application of empirically derived general principles of individual and institutional behavior to fashion institutions intended to solve practical political problems.”³⁶⁸

Some colleagues will say that advice from the Temple’s roof, on how to live together better, will gain little or no traction in a modern society that favors scientific analysis and definitive conclusions. In which case, we should stick to that analysis and those conclusions. I, too, fear that traction from the roof is hard to come by. But, following Richard Rorty, I hope it will sometimes appear.

And besides, because I am not sure what sort of good society, ideal in every respect, I could ever suggest – I will come back to that difficulty in a moment, with Judith Shklar – what I am really proposing for roof-sitters is something less ambitious. What I am proposing is that, with a bird’s-eye view from above, some political scientists will highlight destruction and damage, that is, will highlight the social and ecological costs of unmitigated creative destruction. If we will do that, we will keep on public display conditions and consequences that, if enough citizens will notice them, may be taken into account when, in the spirit of humanism, voters and legislators may consider moving on from where we are now.

It is a question of taking up intellectual slack. Mainstream economists, politicians, business people, journalists, think tankers, and others in favor of growth via creative destruction

know that some destruction occurs. But they tend not to worry much about it. They will continue to assume that the system is basically effective, in which case we need mainly to fix not the system but the people in it.³⁶⁹ What the winners believe, then, is that destruction may be inevitable but also positive, because it creates an ever-growing number of things to buy and sell, thus driving up GDP and the community's welfare. Therefore, in a neoliberal world, people should adjust to the system rather than vice-versa.³⁷⁰ In a word, so much for the Luddites.

Against Tyranny

For what I propose, inspiration surrounds us, because strange and dangerous trends vex the Age of Populism and broadcast urgency. However, whoever wants to highlight the downsides of creative destruction must consider *how* to proceed.

To that end, we should start by reflecting on a thesis proposed by Judith Shklar, who was president of the APSA in 1990.³⁷¹ In her 1989 essay, "The Liberalism of Fear," Shklar stood with those people in modern history – she called them liberals – who, since the Enlightenment, have advocated overthrowing various forms of what they regard as tyranny against freedom.³⁷² These manifestations of tyranny differ from generation to generation, from witch trials to slavery, to colonialism, to lynchings, to concentration camps, to misogyny, and more. And therefore liberals of one era, say John Locke, do not necessarily highlight the evils that shock another, say Isaiah Berlin.³⁷³ But to Shklar the main point was that tyrannical practices stimulate *all* liberals to criticize the existing order and work to improve it. In her opinion, that is what the *philosophes* did, that is what the American Founders did, that is what Abraham Lincoln did, and that is what Franklin Roosevelt did.

Most importantly, Shklar did not describe liberals as promoting an ideal society, complete with philosophical theories that pinpoint the meaning of life and justify specific institutions and practices.³⁷⁴ What unites liberals, she thought, was their fear of terrible acts, of coercion, of oppression, of

discrimination, of confinement, of domination, and of other appalling conditions that citizens should condemn. In other words, what unites liberals is not what they are *for* but what they are *against*. As Shklar said, liberalism does not “offer a *summum bonum* toward which all political agents should strive, but it certainly does ... begin with a *summum malum*, which all of us know and would avoid if only we could.”³⁷⁵

Without intending to do so, Shklar in effect suggested what some political scientists might do by way of offering advice from the Temple of Science’s roof. Hers was, after all, a common-sense view of social responsibility, as if, when some situation seems sufficiently tyrannical, sufficiently dangerous, sufficiently painful, and sufficiently unfair, it should be publicly criticized and condemned. That is, we do not need to formulate a theory or a philosophy of what exactly must be censured and what exactly should come next. We need, though, to focus on acts and circumstances that are obviously cruel.³⁷⁶

Let’s put all this another way. There are many good people in America who praise economic growth, and some of them know that the creative destruction that fuels such growth can damage Americans who, for one reason or another, cannot keep up. But much of this awareness is abstract, is a matter of theory, is a fleeting idea, is an occasional twinge rather than a persistent foreboding that arises from direct and distressing confrontation with the painful dislocations of economic growth.³⁷⁷

In these circumstances, there is room for a rooftop project, for some scholars to highlight what actually happens, and to whom, as a result of economic creativity. If, when conditions will be sufficiently known, voters and journalists and politicians will enlist to mitigate them, then perhaps some of the powerful resentment that met the Sanders and Trump campaigns in 2016 will abate.³⁷⁸

For Realism

Ergo, we don’t need to practice epochal political philosophy from the roof. Even in its absence, a sensible and pragmatic

emphasis on the facts can make large and commendable contributions to social improvement.³⁷⁹ Nevertheless, we must still ask ourselves, in professional terms, how to proceed *methodologically*.

On this score, we can follow the lead of political theorists like Ian Shapiro. For Shapiro, objectivity and professionalism, and rigorous investigatory procedures, must guide our research and teachings. But we must beware, he says, of using methodologies that are fashionable among colleagues but do not necessarily explain events accurately. Instead, we should embrace what Shapiro calls *realism*, where it is the questions we ask rather than our methodologies that are likely to direct us to facts that will lead to useful findings.³⁸⁰ Or, in a variation of the same thesis, we should choose our research topics not according to the *methodology* at hand but depending on the nature of the *problem* we wish to explore.³⁸¹

If that is so, and here I extrapolate, we have arrived at an in-house formula for framing the anti-tyranny issues that Shklar recommended we study. If it is *problems* that we aim to analyze, we should not shrink from investigating many unjust *situations* – for example, much of creativity’s destruction – that now plague American life. In short, among political scientists, even as it is respectable to invest time and energy to use and refine various research procedures, including rational choice theory and functionalism, it is also respectable to examine circumstances that appear to constitute a problem. Thus, it is problem-driven research that appears in books such as Jacob Hacker, *The Great Risk Shift: The New Economic Insecurity and the Decline of the American Dream* (2006),³⁸² and Suzanne Mettler, *The Submerged State: How Invisible Government Policies Undermine American Democracy* (2011).³⁸³

What Should We Challenge?

In the Age of Populism, some political scientists should participate, as democrats and Enlightenment liberals, in the already

lively public conversation about neoliberalism. By itself, an inclination to participate there does not tell us exactly how to proceed. Nevertheless, we have considered two parts of what I think is a reasonable response to that question of how. In Shklar's terms, we should be especially motivated by what we regard as obvious instances of *tyranny*. And in Shapiro's terms, we should frame our research projects more to address urgent *problems* than to extend methodological *projects*.

There is, however, a third part to the issue of how political scholars might join the public conversation on neoliberalism in populist circumstances, and it is this: *Which* problematic conditions should we explore? There is no simple answer to this question, because acts of creative destruction take place in many realms of life, therefore we must direct our attention depending on which of those acts seem most destructive and/or most damaging. On that score, however, there are two areas of inquiry in which findings will be useful at least for contradicting the calm assurances of neoliberals who say that present conditions in America are what we should expect and also beneficial to society as a whole. A few words about these, and we will move on in Chapter 7 to consider how political scientists might confront the Age of Populism effectively within an appropriate *narrative*.

Real People

The first area to be investigated pertains to the *individual* in modern society. Neoliberalism assumes that *homo economicus* is the typical modern person, calculating rationally and pursuing subjective utility. Such people are driven, by circumstances and expert advice, to define themselves in terms of what the market will bear.³⁸⁴ Outstanding actors among them, according to mainstream economics, will take the lead, as entrepreneurs, in creating new practices and products, to spur economic growth and thrive by competition.

Is this a realistic description of the people who live in America, or anywhere? "Not really, but who cares?" – I am

paraphrasing Milton Friedman, Nobel Prize winner (economics, 1976). A scholarly model's assumptions don't have to be accurate, Friedman claimed, if its predictions are useful.³⁸⁵

However, the matter is a great deal more complicated than that if one asks, useful for *what*? And also, useful to *whom*? Surely much of the modern economy – producing climate change, producing massive employment shifts, producing undemocratic surveillance, producing the *precarariat*,³⁸⁶ producing click-bait politics, producing “epistemic rot,”³⁸⁷ undermining cherished traditions, shrinking the middle class – is far from useful for many citizens. In those circumstances, to *really* prosper together, we are entitled to *realistic* descriptions of *real* people, some of them winning and some of them losing, but all of them, nowadays, playing in a game recommended to us by people who, unlike Aristotle, think we all are, and should be, *homo economicus*.

So one area of inquiry for some political scientists who are worried by downsides of creative destruction, and who want to mitigate that destruction, is the age-old question of human nature. What do we know about *real* people as opposed to those *postulated* in the neoliberal vision of modern society, with its abstract formulas that assure us that this is the best of all possible worlds?³⁸⁸

Here is where political science's wide-ranging warrant for studying all sorts of *power* can send us to learn from other columns in the Temple of Science, from columns such as sociology, anthropology, business administration, philosophy, history, psychology, and literature. From those columns we can see that scholars and scientists have already discovered a great deal about what real people are like, and therefore much informed thinking may bear on what treatment they deserve from other people.

For example, who are the real people who make everyday life possible? Given the work they perform, do some of us owe them, ethically speaking, more than what we currently pay them?³⁸⁹ How do real people behave? For example, how do they

deal with the constant pressures of economic competition?³⁹⁰ What are their motivations? For example, is profit their only reason for working or are some of them driven by a sense of vocation to serve others?³⁹¹ How do real people handle modern complexity? For example, how do they deal with the huge variety of goods now offered in stores and online?³⁹² And what are the talents of real people? Obviously, some of us are naturally good at making money while others are naturally good at producing art and literature. But if the latter are paid poorly or not at all, who will beautify our surroundings and inspire our souls?³⁹³

Furthermore, if we are already talking about real people, what does it mean to say that they are rational or not, more or less? In the neoliberal world, some people look like they choose to behave irrationally, in which case perhaps they deserve to become losers.³⁹⁴ But is that a fair assessment, or is it simply to measure their behavior by what economists say rationality is? After all, most people have an understandable rationale for what they do in their own circumstances, whereas the “rationality” that mainstream economists promote, adding up to GDP, may sanction circumstances entailing harsh efficiency (including temporary work without paid social benefits, such as driving for Uber), which exist in the modern economy and confront many hapless citizens.³⁹⁵

Real Markets

The second area to be investigated pertains to *markets*. Many shortcomings of neoliberalism, which recommends creative destruction, flow from assuming that existing markets are actually natural markets, from which progress, prosperity, and well-being emerge as if all that government has to provide is, roughly speaking, law and order to maintain contracts voluntarily entered. In truth, though, markets in the *real* world do not naturally exist. They flow from tax laws, traditions, personal habits, political pressures, court decisions, budgets, government regulation, and more, which shape what goes into

them and what comes out of them.³⁹⁶ Therefore, together with what we know of *real individuals*, some of us should study how *real markets*, rather than theoretical markets, can be improved.

On the one hand, talk about real markets can start from what they are not. That is, they are *not* markets as described in paper-and-pencil models of economic competition. If American markets worked the way those models assume that markets do, they might allocate gains and losses equitably. But real markets don't work that way, as if the deserving succeed, economic growth climbs, and all boats rise (everyone wins).³⁹⁷ Real markets don't always have many buyers, they don't always have many sellers, they don't always have identical products, they don't always have mobility for all factors of production (labor, capital, data, technology, etc.), they don't always have easy entry and exit, and they don't always have complete information.³⁹⁸

In other words, in the world we live in, which can be studied and challenged, fairness and neutrality may be postulated but there are always real people who possess, or strive to achieve, economic advantages. For example, sometimes they are born to effective parents, who send them to private schools, and sometimes they grow up not in slums but in suburbs full of soccer moms. Sometimes they exercise more mobility than other people can, and sometimes they acquire more information than other people have. Sometimes they buy out other sellers, sometimes they use patents to prevent competitors from arising, sometimes they expensively advertise their wares, and so forth.

Furthermore, in many cases, winners may succeed in building advantages into the way their market-centered society operates, say with low inheritance taxes, with buybacks to increase the value of their stocks,³⁹⁹ with a Federal Reserve Bank that favors creditors over debtors,⁴⁰⁰ and with no government supervision of derivatives. After which they will prosper greatly, and their children will be "born on third base."⁴⁰¹

On the other hand, talk about real markets can start not from what an abstract model says they are, which they *are not*,

but from what they actually *are*, which means looking at the advantages they may be conferring, day after day, on some people as opposed to others.⁴⁰² From this perspective, neo-liberalism entails government decisions about what Robert Reich calls five “building blocks” of capitalism. These are *property*, that is, what can be owned or not; *monopoly*, that is, how much market power is permissible or not; *contract*, that is, what can be bought and sold, and how; *bankruptcy*, that is, what to do when purchasers don’t pay; and *enforcement*, that is, making sure that everyone observes the rules laid down by these government decisions.⁴⁰³ What decisions have already been made in these areas, we should ask, and who do they favor?

Driverless Cars

To study those five building blocks of real markets diligently is to encounter many of the downsides of creative destruction. I will leave those for my colleagues to catalogue, but just one example may suffice here to illustrate the importance of keeping track of such downsides and investigating them constantly so that, hopefully, they will be widely discussed and their effects mitigated.

“Autonomous vehicles” are being developed by the wealthiest high-tech and car companies, including Google, Apple, Amazon, Tesla, Mercedes, General Motors, and Ford.⁴⁰⁴ There is little or no popular demand for this product.⁴⁰⁵ Nevertheless, to justify their intent to supply us with autonomous vehicles whether we want them or not, entrepreneurial corporations with deep pockets claim that their new product, when it will become feasible, will avoid mistakes made by human drivers. If that is the case, we are told that – if workable vehicles are successfully developed, and if society will tax itself to pay for the expensive infrastructure needed to guide them electronically along America’s roads – these vehicles of the future will save a significant number of lives by preventing traffic accidents.⁴⁰⁶

In truth, this is mainly an argument of convenience. Large corporations do not have consciences but are designed to seek

profits.⁴⁰⁷ To that end, workable driverless vehicles have the potential for generating *stupendous* profits – actually, not just stupendous but *colossal* – because, in the process of installing those vehicles, *tens of millions* of American car and truck owners will be compelled, like it or not, to pay to replace what they are now driving.⁴⁰⁸ The costs of this creativity will spread to the support system for cars and trucks, entailing closure of gasoline stations, neighborhood garages, parking lots, and accessory stores, and forcing the reconfiguration of roads, houses, factories, stores, and offices.⁴⁰⁹ It is hard to estimate how much consumers will have to spend on the driverless replacement vehicles; it is hard to estimate how many workers will have to find new jobs (some servicing and deploying the new machines); and it is hard to estimate how much society will have to pay to refashion its present patterns of rural, suburban, and urban life.

That horseless carriages (especially cars and tractors) replaced transportation and farm horses was an earlier case of creative destruction. At that time, millions of American blacksmiths, hackney-men, harness makers, footmen, farriers, carriage makers, hostlers, saddlers, wheelwrights, draymen, grooms, stable owners, breeders, knackers, and auctioneers gave way to people who worked for car manufacturers and auxiliary services.

Some progress was surely achieved.⁴¹⁰ But what was the price in personal stress, anxiety, and despair? No one knows. As decades passed, it is probable that most of these displaced people found other jobs, many in manufacturing. Thus over time, we usually assume that they substituted one sort of employment for another.

But how long did that substitution take? And how much suffering did the people who participated in substitution endure while it unfolded?⁴¹¹ And how many years will substitution require this time around? And will that happen completely, with everyone finding new employment even though many good American jobs are being outsourced and, in factories and offices, automated out of existence?

Some pundits nowadays suggest that permanently unemployed or underemployed citizens might be allocated some kind of guaranteed income, although not much.⁴¹² But will that provide recipients with meaning in life? That question deserves to be asked plainly and repeatedly. To put the matter in terms we have already considered, why is America permitting the “autonomous vehicles” project to go forward for the benefit of *shareholders* without taking into account the interests of people who we might regard as *stakeholders*?⁴¹³