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Do Voters Vote against Their Interests?

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Title: Do Voters Vote against Their Interests?

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Not just during the United States Presidential election of 2016, but throughout the world of the past and present, the voting behavior of the electorate is problematized. Are the votes fairly tabulated? Literally, and figuratively are ballot boxes stuffed or votes withdrawn? Are voting results prepared in advance to be presented as is or modified somewhat based on the actual voting. Is the electoral process modified through placement of voting locations; complexity of ballots and manual or mechanical voting; intentionally confusing similarities and difference of the names of candidates and parties as well as referendum items; and doctored lists of registered voters, and laws on eligibility to register and the registration process to minimize and maximize the voting impact of different subpopulations? And then there are yet other matters related to the appropriateness of electoral colleges, voting districts, propaganda, disinformation, and new directions in the application of social media.

But even if everything is above board, what explains the seeming frequency with which voters vote for candidates, programs, and policies unlikely to support their interests and often enough to work against them? The explanation is simple, they don't. Instead, their primary interests can be but are often quite different than objective calculations bearing on employment, interest and tax rates, debts and deficits, and health, education, social services, and foreign and national security policies.

Let's take the case of voting for an authoritarian candidate or leader with dictatorial tendencies. The German sociologist Max Weber wrote on *charisma* which can exert an attractive force inviting an ineluctable vote (1). The Hungarian and Viennese psychoanalysts, respectively, Sandor Ferenczi and Anna Freud wrote on *identification with the aggressor*, which can lead to voters vicariously basking in a power pretended to be theirs (2). The German social psychologist, philosopher, and psychoanalyst Eric Fromm wrote on an *escape from freedom*, which lightens the load of voters having to critically think or do much thinking at all as long as certain elements of *freedom from* and *freedom to* are met (3). The German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel wrote on *master-slave relations*, which, even if unconsciously, identified an intense, reciprocal power of the inferior over the superior as well as the more obvious superior over the inferior (4). The Austrian-British psychoanalyst Melanie Klein wrote on *projective identification*, through which an inferior can unconsciously force part of that inferior's self, often something difficult to contain, into the self of a superior who serves not only as a receptacle but actually constitutes what has been projected (5). And a host of contributors to intellectual traditions from ancient Sumer, India, China, Greece, to modern times have written on the uncritical response of the masses to leaders who come and go often leaving no more than that described by the English poet Shelley in *Ozymandias* (6).

A lyric from The Who's *Won't Get Fooled Again* is 'Meet the new boss, Same as the old boss' (7). The newest variants of social media and cyberstrategies still address the timeless psychological challenge of playing the voters in political play.

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Keywords: Counterintelligence. Deception. Elections. Information War. Lies. Master. Propaganda. Slave. Truth. Voting.

Abstract/Description: This article describes some basic psychological constructs which may help 'explain' why some voters seem to vote against their own interests.

Disciplines: Other Psychology, Philosophy, Political Science, Other Political Science, Psychology, Defense and Security Studies, International Relations

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