

ily. Human beings are the world champions of cooperation beyond kinship, and we do it in large part by creating systems of formal and informal accountability. We're really good at holding others accountable for their actions, and we're really skilled at navigating through a world in which others hold us accountable for our own.

Phil Tetlock, a leading researcher in the study of accountability, defines accountability as the "explicit expectation that one will be called upon to justify one's beliefs, feelings, or actions to others," coupled with an expectation that people will reward or punish us based on how well we justify ourselves.⁸ When nobody is answerable to anybody, when slackers and cheaters go unpunished, everything falls apart. (How zealously people punish slackers and cheaters will emerge in later chapters as an important difference between liberals and conservatives.)

Tetlock suggests a useful metaphor for understanding how people behave within the webs of accountability that constitute human societies: we act like *intuitive politicians* striving to maintain appealing moral identities in front of our multiple constituencies. Rationalists such as Kohlberg and Turiel portrayed children as little scientists who use logic and experimentation to figure out the truth for themselves. When we look at children's efforts to understand the physical world, the scientist metaphor is apt; kids really are formulating and testing hypotheses, and they really do converge, gradually, on the truth.⁹ But in the social world, things are different, according to Tetlock. The social world is Glauconian.¹⁰ Appearance is usually far more important than reality.

In Tetlock's research, subjects are asked to solve problems and make decisions.¹¹ For example, they're given information about a legal case and then asked to infer guilt or innocence. Some subjects are told that they'll have to explain their decisions to someone else. Other subjects know that they won't be held accountable by anyone. Tetlock found that when left to their own devices, people show the usual catalogue of errors, laziness, and reliance on gut feelings that has been documented in so much decision-making research.¹² But when people know in advance that they'll have to explain themselves, they think more systematically and self-critically. They are less likely