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Why Political Science is an Ethical Issue

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Abstract: Many advocates of interpretive approaches to the study of politics emphasize that what is at stake is a conflict between "quantitative" versus "qualitative" methods. By contrast, we begin by suggesting that political scientists are free to use whichever method they find most useful for their research purposes. Instead of methodological reasons for making the interpretive turn, political scientists have ethical reasons for adopting this paradigm. In particular, interpretive approaches give political scientists: a better account of the nature and role of values in human life; a sense for how the historical past is ethically relevant; the ability to advance politically engaged sociologies; and a deliberative critique of technocracy. Political scientists should be free to critically engage, scrutinize, and even normatively evaluate human ethical positions.

Key words: interpretive political science; ethics; value neutrality; methodology; qualitative versus quantitative

Why Political Science is an Ethical Issue

Our goal is to clarify in what ways political scientists today are free to engage in the critical and evaluative study of ethics. This does not mean we believe political science is the same things as ethics or ethical critique. Political science, generally speaking, is concerned with the study and explanation of human behavior. This need not have overt ethical concerns. It is perfectly valid, for instance, for political scientists to simply set out to describe incumbency patterns in Congress or to poll contemporary religious attitudes. That is, political scientists can spend time refining factual claims and explanations. Nonetheless, we believe one of political science's valid methodological concerns might be ethical critique. That is, political scientists should be free to critically engage and normatively evaluate human ethical positions. How is this possible? This paper shows how an ethically engaged research agenda is generated by adopting an interpretive lens. Approaching political science from an interpretive perspective helps open a new field of inquiry.

Unfortunately, many advocates of interpretive approaches today believe the main conflict in political science is methodological. On one side are "quants," with their enthusiasm for mass surveys, statistical regressions, and decision theory models. On the other side are "qualies," with their passion for ethnographies, in-depth interviews, and textual research. Quants view themselves as hardnosed statistical analysts developing scientific theories of society implemented by policy experts (Mebane & Sekhon 1994). Qualies present themselves as humanists and cultural experts studying politics in a more egalitarian, deliberative way (Hajer & Wagenaar 2003, p. xiii). Each side views the other with skepticism. Each believes the other is responsible for the confusion clouding modern social science. All this hostility, we are told, is the result of something as seemingly dry and innocuous as methods.

Although this narrative is not without truth, we also think it's misleading. Yet it remains a widespread description of contemporary political science. In what follows we want to approach political science from a different perspective. Instead of a methodological debate between quants and qualies, we want to consider the philosophical differences between naturalists and anti-naturalists. This is certainly not the only way to view political science today but we believe it is useful for shedding light on why political scientists should be free to adopt ethical concerns.

We argue our case in four parts. First, we explain naturalism versus anti-naturalism as a philosophical and not methodological distinction. Recognizing this has an emancipatory effect on political science as the quant-qualie debate can give way to method pluralism. Political scientists are free to use what are sometimes dubbed "positivist" methods as well as qualitative approaches. Second, we argue that anti-naturalism gives political scientists a better account of the role of values in human life. Third, we explain how anti-naturalism reveals the ethical significance of history. Fourth, we link anti-naturalist political science to deliberative forms of democratic theory. Political scientists across the methodological spectrum have reasons to favor deliberative democracy (not just qualies). In this way our argument casts doubt on a common doctrine used to limit what political scientists study—namely, the dichotomy between facts and values.

1. Naturalism versus Anti-Naturalism

The naturalist versus anti-naturalist debate is only one way of thinking about political science today—but we believe it helps illuminate how political scientists are free to engage in ethical concerns. The first thing to understand is that interpretive political science isn't foremost about employing qualitative methods. To the contrary, qualitative and quantitative methods are

both tools for generating information about political reality and can be employed by researchers of all stripes (Bevir & Blakely 2016). This means political scientists are justified in transcending the qualitative-quantitative debate, using whichever methods most suit their research aims. The shift towards multi-methods voiced by many leading methodologists should therefore be embraced (Box-Steffensmeier, Brady, & Collier 2008; Gerring 2011; Goertz & Mahoney 2012; Goodin 2009; Chih Lin 1998).

By contrast, what is at stake in the naturalist versus anti-naturalist debate is philosophical. Naturalism is the view that social science explanation can be modeled on the natural sciences; while anti-naturalism is the view that it cannot. Anti-naturalists hold this position because they believe the two domains are distinct—one dealing with historical, contingent meanings and the other seeking ahistorical casual laws. Anti-naturalists maintain that the study of political reality is analogous to the interpretation of texts and requires narrative forms of explanation that are different from the kinds of explanation available in the natural sciences (Taylor 1985b). This philosophical claim needs a little unpacking.

The natural sciences are concerned with a Humean, *sufficient* causation, in which a set of prior conditions “X” are found to be in constant conjunction with a consequent set of conditions “Y” (so long as there are no intervening factors). For instance, as long as the right chemicals, temperatures, pressures, etc., are in place the star produces light or the acid is neutralized or the gas solidifies. The goal of the natural sciences in this capacity becomes identifying formal, ahistorical conditions that generate predictable outcomes that are generalizable into laws.

By contrast, in the case of human beliefs and actions an antecedent set of conditions “X” is never sufficient to produce a consequent belief or action “Y” because humans can creatively reason about their beliefs, deciding otherwise. A person presented with a decision (say, whether

or not to launch a missile that harms civilians) can foil expectations and make unexpected choices due to this creative capacity. Antecedents are never fully determinative of consequents. This means human actions are driven by a *contingent* form of causality—one where beliefs explain actions and those beliefs can be reasoned about in any number of ways (MacIntyre 1976; MacIntyre 1978). The social sciences are therefore concerned with interpreting meanings, not discovering ahistorical, constant laws.[1]

Ascribing this creative faculty to humans doesn't necessarily imply a doctrine of radical autonomy. Rather, as argued by Hans-Georg Gadamer (2004), humans exist situated against a background of inherited beliefs or traditions. Humans can and do creatively modify their inherited traditions in light of problems, desires, and needs they face. But innovation on one part of their traditions (say, inventing a new English word) is always done against the backdrop of other inherited beliefs (say, about grammar, semantics, and phonetics). Humans have the agency to modify traditions, but not the absolute autonomy to exist apart from all traditions.

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[1] Anti-naturalism's championing of contingency doesn't require rejecting causality altogether. Historically speaking, the critique of naturalism began by pitting causation against some other kind of explanation altogether. For example, while logical positivists like A. J. Ayer argued that scientific, sufficient causality was appropriate to both the natural and social sciences (Ayer 1952), intepretivists like Peter Winch instead claimed social science employed something other than causal explanations because human beings (unlike inanimate objects) had reasons (Winch 1958). However, anti-naturalism is closest to a third position championed later by those like Donald Davidson who argued that reasons are not opposed to causes but present a different kind of causality (Davidson 2006).

The inescapability of traditions is also important because it reveals that human agency is deeply historical. The goal of anti-naturalist political scientists again contrasts with the natural scientist. Where the latter seeks ahistorical, universal causal laws, the former tries to grasp the particular web of beliefs, the relevant inherited traditions, and the process of reasoning employed by creative agents within context. The human world—comprised of beliefs, actions, and practices—is expressive of contingent meanings developed through historical time (Taylor 2016, 264-284, 292-293). Thus, an upshot of anti-naturalism is that the social sciences are historical disciplines, concerned with telling the right story about human social reality not uncovering ahistorical laws (Gadamer 2004; Gibbons 1987; Rabinow & Sullivan 1979; Taylor 1985b).

A few important caveats need to be made on this line of thought. First, some people may want to combine naturalism and anti-naturalism but given our philosophical definitions the two are clearly incompatible. Nonetheless, we believe anti-naturalists should be much better about adopting a wide variety of methods, including those associated with more quantitative, "positivist" forms of inquiry. The claim that humans are meaning-making creatures doesn't mean political scientists are barred from using statistics, regression analyses, and mass polling if they find these useful for their research. In other words, there is nothing about anti-naturalism that keeps social science researchers from employing a hybrid approach, mixing quantitative and qualitative data collection. In this we agree with those like Bent Flyvbjerg who argue that determining which methods are suitable to a particular research project will depend on judgment within context (what Flyvbjerg calls "phronesis"). Flyvberg is right to argue that whether researchers employ large random samples, mass surveys, or detailed ethnographic studies depends on which questions they seek to answer (Flyvbjerg 2001, 87). We hasten to add,

however, that anti-naturalism encourages those favoring mixed methods to recognize that political science should always be practiced in a way that is attentive to meanings.

Second, anti-naturalism need not be held on an ontological basis. It is true that many of the most prominent anti-naturalists—especially those hailing from the phenomenological tradition like Charles Taylor and Gadamer—have argued that explanation in political science is based on intrinsic characteristics of the object of inquiry. So, Taylor famously argued that interpretive study in the social sciences is justified by the ontological claim that humans are "self-interpreting animals" (Taylor 1985c). But anti-naturalism can also be justified in other ways. For example, Ludwig Wittgenstein and Donald Davidson have emphasized the kinds of explanations that are appropriate to everyday human life as the grammar of a particular language (Wittgenstein 1958; Davidson 2006). These linguistic arguments are about the logic of conceptual languages and not ontology. Meanwhile other social scientists have instead turned to pragmatic arguments stemming from John Dewey to advocate an anti-naturalist approach (Fischer 2009). This means anti-naturalism need not rest on fundamental ontological claims about "the way human beings really are" or the belief that something inherent about humans compels studying them interpretively. Instead, political scientists might have linguistic or pragmatic reasons for embracing anti-naturalism (Bevir 1999).

Finally, although there may be philosophical reasons for favoring anti-naturalism over naturalism (MacIntyre 2007, chap. 8) we instead want to focus on how an anti-naturalist approach helps open fresh avenues of ethically engaged inquiry for political scientists. By focusing on how anti-naturalist political science might reveal new ways of studying ethics, we aren't denying that naturalists might use their approach towards ethical ends. For instance, political scientists who prefer naturalism can spend their time studying humans as if they were

mute physical objects and looking for general laws because, say, they want to help find a policy solution to the spread of AIDS in Africa. But we want to show how an anti-naturalist approach to politics—with its emphasis on the interpretation of meanings—allows political scientists to critically engage ethics and values in novel ways. In this way, an anti-naturalist focus helps widen research possibilities.

2. Anti-Naturalism and Ethical Values

One advantage of anti-naturalism is that it can help political scientists make more sense out of the nature of human ethical life. In particular, anti-naturalist theory helps political scientists avoid a false dichotomy in which values are either conceived of as an objective science or else as a relativistic, subjective phenomenon. Instead, anti-naturalism offers a conception of political science as having a critical role to play when it comes to studying values, while also affirming the inherent contestability of human ethical life. We begin by scrutinizing the dual naturalist errors of objectivism and subjectivism when treating values, before turning to anti-naturalism's alternative.

A number of the leading modern accounts of ethics operate on the tacit assumption that human normative life will eventually reach some kind of objective, normal science akin to physics, chemistry, and the other hard sciences (Williams 1985, p. 136). In particular, under the sway of naturalism, those concerned with ethics too often engage in a quest for what Thomas Kuhn dubbed a "normal science." Kuhn (1996, p. 10) defined normal science as "research firmly based upon one or more past scientific achievements … that some particular scientific community acknowledges for a time as supplying the foundation for its further practice." For example, in chemistry or physics today research is carried out within a wider accumulated set of

theoretical assumptions and foundations that are taken as more or less given. Introductory students can be taught from textbooks in which the foundations of the discipline are set for practitioners. In the natural sciences such agreed upon foundations are the norm. Those who study ethics, influenced by naturalism, often expect or at least hope for a normal science of human values analogous to the progress of the natural sciences.

The naturalist drive for a normal science is evident in the founders of some of the most influential theories of modern ethics. For example, a central premise of the utilitarian account of ethics is that the ultimate goal of human action is happiness defined as pleasure or preference maximizing. One of the classical figures of utilitarianism, John Stuart Mill (2001, p. 39), implied that this crucial assumption could be established in the form of an empirical "proof" from the observation of "fact and experience." A straightforward claim to empirically brute facts thus grounds Mill's utilitarianism. There is the belief in Mill (and much of utilitarianism thereafter) that ethics begins from a set of completely stabilized assumptions. After all, if chemistry enjoys stability around the periodic table, why shouldn't ethics find a similar foundational core around utility? As is well known, this set of empirical assumptions in utilitarian ethics had a massive influence on neoclassical economics and later rational choice theory. The conception of human agency developed by utilitarian philosophers was subsequently turned into an idealized model of rationality.

But utilitarian philosophers are not the only ones who try to ground a theory of human values on claims that are akin to a normal, objective science. Such naturalist tendencies are also found (albeit in different form) in utilitarianism's rival, deontology. Deontology holds that all ethical actions comply with universal rules of conduct or duties as formulated by an ideally rational agent (the word *deontology* literally means the study of duty). The founder of

deontology, Immanuel Kant, argued that any true duty could be universalized without contradiction. These duties were to "hold for every rational being … completely a priori and free from everything empirical in pure rational concepts only" (Kant 2012, pp. 26, 24). For example, Kant famously argued that lying was always morally wrong and that this could be determined by reason alone because this action could not be universalized. Ethics thus achieved foundations in what Kant called "apodictic" or absolutely certain duties that every rational agent could know. Where Mill argued the indisputable foundations of ethics were empirical, Kant claimed they were evident to reason. Yet the goal was remarkably similar: a normal science or knowledge achieved among all reasonable practitioners. Arguably those later influenced by Kant, such as John Rawls (1999, p. 226) sought a similar goal.

The first move when studying human values thus becomes to recognize they are objectively grounded in a universal framework. Social scientists might go on studying the empirical diversity of values in the world, but rational inquiry into ethics on its own terms demonstrates a quasi-scientific convergence. Such expectations can then fuel empirical expectations about the progress of history toward a unity of values as modernization and rationalization take place. Indeed, both Kant and Mill in their own ways expected the sociology of modernity to involve a kind of developmental logic. These developmental logics were treated with a great deal more skepticism by twentieth century sociologists, but they highlight the way certain assumptions about the objective status of ethics can inspire particular social scientific theories of modernization. There is a link between the expectation of a normal science of ethics and a vision of modernity as convergent on a final enlightened phase.

By contrast, anti-naturalism draws attention to the problem with expecting values will converge on a normal science. We saw anti-naturalism holds human beliefs and practices are

historically contingent. Individual agents form beliefs contingently and creatively situated within traditions. There is thus an inherit contestability to meanings that doesn't allow for convergence of the kind found in the natural sciences. Ethical systems are the fruit of contingent forms of causality that are contestable. The model for a good life or just society might be expressed in one way but can be challenged by a rival set of contingent meanings. Thus, anti-naturalism teaches political scientists and ethicists to expect contestability as ineliminable from human values.

In particular, anti-naturalism is skeptical of claims to an ahistorical, constant set of beliefs. Are all human beings really at bottom pursuing utility as pleasure or are they instead bound to an abstract ideal of rationality? The ahistorical claim to such beliefs is incompatible with the contingency of meanings. Sensitivity to the historical contingency of human belief reveals that such a model of rationality or the pursuit of utility obtains only within certain contexts. As Nietzsche (1982, p. 468) famously quipped regarding utilitarianism: "Man does *not* strive for pleasure; only the Englishman does." He equally could have quipped: "man doesn't strive to universalize ethical actions, only Kantians do."

The serious point behind Nietzsche's quip is that utilitarian definitions of happiness or Kantian views of duty are particular to a historical time and place. In other words, the beliefs that Mill took to be objectively constant and ahistorical are in fact contingent. Indeed, Nietzsche is drawing on a pessimistic strain of German Romanticism that doesn't seek universalizing maxims or utilitarian pleasure. Rather, Nietzsche believed some Europeans might pursue a heroic life while renouncing the pleasures and wellbeing of the rest of humanity. The point isn't whether Nietzsche's elitist ethical vision is objectionable (we believe it is) only that he is right to see the starting point for conceptualizing values is the field of contingent history and not Mill's or Kant's search for the stable assumptions of a normal science.

The form of causality appropriate to human agency thus has consequences for how political scientists conceptualize human values. History and contingency are central to proper conceptualization; a normal science akin to physics or chemistry is not. But there is another important way to draw this distinction between the natural sciences and knowledge of human values. Where many of the facts of ethics are part of a particular cultural and linguistic world, the natural sciences seek facts that exist outside any one of these worlds. In this vein, Bernard Williams (1985, p. 139) has drawn attention to the difference between what he dubs the "absolute conception" of facts appropriate to the natural sciences and the kind of knowledge possible within ethics. The "absolute conception" of facts in the natural sciences refers to some feature of reality that exists independently of our experience of it. The earth's circumference, the velocity of a falling object, the temperature at which a liquid turns into gas all exist independently of our perceptions of these phenomenon.

The proper conception of ethical values also involves claims about facts. For example, as Williams argues, there is a fact of the matter as to what counts as a *lie* or being a *coward* or expressing *gratitude* or exercising *brutality* within a particular cultural context. These facts about values, moreover, are identifiable by outsiders to a particular culture so long as they are familiarized with the relevant criteria (Williams 1985, p. 140). This means that within the horizon of a particular social world there are facts of the matter as to whether or not someone lied or was cowardly (albeit like all facts they might be disputed). However, apprehending these ethical facts requires what Williams—following Clifford Geertz—dubs "thick" knowledge of the cultures in question (Williams 1985, p. 140; Geertz 1973). Thick knowledge is a grasp of beliefs and actions within their nuanced webs of meaning and significance.

It follows that there's a deep disanalogy between the natural sciences and the world of human values. Namely, ethical facts (unlike their counterparts in the natural sciences) cannot be construed in terms of an absolute conception of the world. Ethical facts can and do guide humans through particular social worlds—for example, the world of Japanese culinary in a sushi shop in Tokyo or the realm of Latin American Catholicism in a cathedral in Bogota. But these facts about values cannot orient us within the practices of every social-cultural world. Indeed, even when highly homogenous societies exhibit a great deal of agreement about ethical facts (something uncommon in the age of globalization) they still don't attain a convergence of the kind achieved in the natural sciences because their ethical facts are dependent on contingent meanings, not constant and ahistorical causal features of the physical universe (Williams 1985, p. 152).

In sum, facts about values should not be treated as universally objective or translatable across cultural contexts. Facts about values do not travel across deep cultural diversity the way luggage or other brute objects do. One should not expect to find proto-Kantians or proto-utilitarians when studying different cultures and milieus. Nor should political scientists expect a logic of development through history to a final convergence on the underlying facts about values (some Fukuyaman "end of history").

Does it follow from these arguments that the proper way for political scientists to conceptualize values is full-blown relativism? Ironically, this opposite view is also often inspired by naturalism. In the modern social sciences it is sometimes attributed to Max Weber's (2004, pp. 279-280) famous claim that facts and values "are completely *heterogeneous*" such that "whenever a man of science brings in his own value-judgment, a full understanding of the facts *ceases*." Appeals to Weber (albeit probably misreading his own views) have been enormously

influential in spreading the doctrine that a true social science must treat values as subjective (Farr 1995). Here the naturalist idea is that values are not part of the factual, mind-independent universe but are completely mind-dependent. A firm distinction is therefore drawn between facts on one side and values on the other.

Again, anti-naturalism moves beyond this impasse by conceptualizing values in a different way. Too often when naturalist expectations are foiled political scientists shift into skepticism about the possibility of any objectivity on values whatsoever. But as others have argued at length, progress can be made in ethics through comparative forms of objectivity and reasoning. In this conception of objectivity a superior theory or tradition is not selected in absolute terms by appeals to foundational facts, but instead through comparing which theory presents an epistemic gain and "error-correction in relation to an earlier view" (Taylor 2014, p. 3; see also: Taylor 1995; Williams 1985). Ethical theories and social scientific theories share this form of objectivity.

However, there is a further feature of anti-naturalist philosophy that breaks from a simple reduction of values to the subjective and nonfactual. Namely, anti-naturalism clarifies how social scientific theories are unable to achieve complete neutrality on ethical questions. The central point here is that neither naturalism nor anti-naturalism can remain ethically or politically innocent because they are inherently evaluative of ethical forms that draw on their rival to understand human action. More needs to be said to clarify this crucial point.

Anti-naturalism—although foremost a theory about how to study human behavior—is not ethically neutral. This can be seen both in its critical enterprise and in its inspiration of positive, substantive approaches to ethics and political theory both of which we will examine. However, from the outset it is also crucial to state that anti-naturalism is not allied or fixed by logical

chains to any particular ethical tradition. Instead, it eliminates certain approaches or ways of thinking about ethics. In other words, anti-naturalism can tell us what a justifiable ethics is *not*. Specifically, anti-naturalist insight undermines ethical theories that rely on social scientific naturalism for their notions of human agency. Such theories of values are objectively worse than those that do not rely on naturalism.

The insight that human beliefs are historically contingent does eliminative work in the field of ethics as to what sorts of selves we ought or ought not to pursue. Naturalist conceptions of selfhood and values are excluded from consideration. Definitely off the table are any ethical theories relying in some essential way on naturalist social science to make good on their claims. This is almost certainly the case for some varieties of utilitarianism as well as sociobiological accounts of human moral life.

Consider utilitarianism first, which tries to maximize pleasure for the greatest number by calculating the consequences of particular actions (Smart 1973). For this reason, utilitarianism is often entangled in making mass-scale predictions about cause and effect. For example, will enacting a particular educational policy on standardized testing maximize or minimize the pleasure of the greatest number within society? What about employing automated speed enforcement traps to keep drivers from violating the speed limit? Does launching a particular war increase or decrease utility? Answering such questions requires having some strongly predictive knowledge of cause and effect in the case of human beliefs and actions. The social reforms sought by utilitarians are thus closely tied to the ability to produce predictive scientific results in the social sciences (Nekrašas 2016, p. 88). This is because for utilitarians the value of actions lies "in their causal properties of producing valuable states of affairs" for pleasure (Williams 1973, p. 84).

Yet the contingency of causality in human agency entails that no observer (no matter how benevolent and disinterested) can strongly predict outcomes. This contrasts with prediction in the natural sciences, which is based on the ability to identify certain antecedent conditions that are sufficient for generating a consequent set of results. But no such causal bond is available in the case of human beliefs and actions. Indeed, no one—not even utilitarian philosophers—has such strongly predictive knowledge of human affairs.

We have singled out utilitarianism for the purposes of illustration, but this critique holds true for any account of ethical life that depends on social scientific naturalism to strongly predict human actions—from social Darwinism to "scientific" strains of Marxism. Consider, for instance, E. O. Wilson's reduction of human ethics to evolutionary structures. Wilson argues that human marriage bonds across different cultures are a function of an ahistorical sociobiology. Due to a "flattened sexual cycle" with an intensified menstruation period there is a uniquely "continuous female attractiveness" which "cement[s] the close marriage bonds that are basic to human social life" (Wilson 2000, 548). The claim that human sexual relations will predictably fit an ahistorical pattern due to these evolutionary features neglects the contingency with which humans create new cultural practices of courtship (for example, recent declines in monogamous marriage and the spread of "hooking up").[2]

So anti-naturalism gives criteria for evaluating and choosing between accounts of human ethical life as objectively better and worse, without logically binding researchers to any one particular tradition of ethics. A related way anti-naturalism does this is by critiquing ethical

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[2] A similar point might be made about behavioral economics and its claim to predict social preferences and other-directed behavior in ahistorical scenarios like the "dictator game" (Kahneman, Knetsch & Thaler 1986).

systems that reduce beliefs, desires, motives, and preferences to an ahistorical, essentialist fixed core. Under the influence of naturalism, history and its empirical diversity become obstacles to ethical and social scientific inquiry alike (Williams 1985, p. 106). Complex webs of belief, meaning, and significance come to appear as stumbling blocks on the road to achieving scientific status. Once again, this distortive naturalism can be illustrated by looking at two of the most influential schools of modern ethics, utilitarianism and deontology.

We already saw how utilitarianism bases itself on the assumption that human action should be guided by maximizing the greatest pleasure for the greatest number, while Kant proposed the goal of ethical life is to follow the universal duties of reason. The problem with both traditions, in this respect, is a reduction of human ethical life to following rules or what others have dubbed "moralism." It appears in both cases that the goal of ethics is discovering which rules, maxims, or calculus to follow for decision-making. Moralism marks a narrowing of what counts as ethics by modern philosophers who have focused on rules and obligations. As Williams (1985, p. 128) put it "theorists have particularly tended to favor the most general expressions used in ethical discussion—good, right, ought" instead of thick conceptions like lie, coward, or gratitude in part because they have been driven by the "reductionist belief" that the former concepts contained the "more specific ethical conceptions." So naturalism becomes the vehicle for narrowing ethics to a perennial, ahistorical set of concepts and rule following concerns. Ethical motives (insofar as they can be properly called "ethical") are always and in all places concerned with, say, maximizing utility or universalizing moral maxims. Human ethical agency is reduced to a set of ahistorical motives that lose sight of historicity and contingency.

Taylor has also been key in criticizing the naturalist reduction of ethics to morals. In particular he has observed the way this naturalist drive towards reduction is evident in Kant's

search for a set of formal rules that can sufficiently guide human action. A formal imperative that gives criteria for universalizing moral maxims or an imagined original position outside of all historically contingent beliefs captures the ethical mind. Thick, historical languages "get marginalized or even expunged altogether" in favor of an "epistemologically motivated reduction and homogenization of the 'moral'" (Taylor 1985a, p. 234). In this way, "a naturalist account of man [that] comes in the wake of the scientific revolution" encourages "eschewing what we might call subject-related properties" or those that cannot be accounted for from an absolute standpoint free of all historically embedded perspectives (Taylor 1985a, p. 242). Once again, anti-naturalist insights give political scientists a fuller account of values in human life. The reduction of ethics to morals proves to be the contingent result of a particular set of traditions within modern societies—not the universal starting point of a normal science of ethics.

Anti-naturalism thus reveals the naturalist drive towards reduction and ahistoricism to be premised on a deep confusion. Historical contingency is neglected. So anti-naturalism and political scientists committed to it cannot remain indifferent in the field of ethics. Rather, without chaining adherents to a particular view of ethics, anti-naturalism does critical and eliminative work, disqualifying normative theories that rely on naturalist conceptions. It follows that political science's view of values should neither be a normal science nor value relativism. Rather, anti-naturalism allows political scientists to engage ethical phenomena in subtle and complex ways. For example, political scientists can conduct research into the contingent origins of particular ethical systems, unmasking claims to ahistorical necessity. They can also avoid and critique end-of-history sociological theories.

3. Anti-Naturalism and the Ethical Significance of History

Anti-naturalism gives political scientists an account of values that avoids naïve objectivism on one side and problematic relativism on the other. But in addition to a critical and eliminative project, anti-naturalism also gives political scientists a constructive aim. This constructive side makes clear the ethical significance of the human past, which otherwise political scientists might treat simply as a vast field of bygone facts—like a massive archive or dataset. By contrast, anti-naturalism highlights the way humans adopt various expressive frameworks. The study of the past thus becomes a way to open up new possibilities for human identity.

Anti-naturalism assumes human beliefs are situated against a background of traditions. This implies ethical meanings are historical in nature. Because ethical life is historical in this way, anti-naturalist political science research into the past can generate, inspire, and reveal new untapped sources for ethics and politics. This means history is not a mere hindrance to theory building due to its empirical diversity and complexity. Nor is history simply a descriptive set of past cases. Rather, history contains certain ethical and political potentialities. Indeed, some of the most important ethicists of the last two centuries have made this creative turn towards the recovery of history as a vital source for ethics. A few brief examples of actual ethical programs that take into account anti-naturalist insights will make this point clear.

One of the path-breaking works in an anti-naturalist approach to ethics was undoubtedly Friedrich Nietzsche's "The Uses and Abuses of History for Life," in which he insisted that history was not merely of antiquarian interest but bore ethical significance. Famously, Nietzsche argued that humans live a historical existence insofar as the past is always actively present as a set of inherited meanings and practices that he called "horizons." History has ethical "uses" according to Nietzsche (1983, pp. 57-123) because it is a source of inspiration and criticism for

our own specific ethical and political inheritances. In his famous genealogy of morals, Nietzsche constructed a historical sociology to carry out this critical and inspirational task. So he attacked the assumption that "unegoistic" moral intuitions are a universal feature of ethical life. Instead, he saw these as originating in ancient Jewish and Christian cultures, later becoming secularized through the Enlightenment. History could show that what is thought of as an ahistorical, constant feature of human ethical belief is actually contingent upon a particular set of cultural developments. Likewise, Nietzsche (1989) sought inspiration in Homeric Greek hero ethics of self-affirmation and anti-egalitarianism. The point is not to promote Nietzsche's ethical vision but to note how anti-naturalist insight makes a critical and vindicatory sociology of values possible.

Perhaps Nietzsche's most famous acolyte, Michel Foucault, insisted that historical sociologies could be put to ethical uses by denaturalizing what is considered natural and rendering contingent what is believed to be constant. Foucault (1977; 1988) thus worked for much of his life to show that modern institutions like the asylum, hospital, school, and prison were the result of particular cultural histories, and not inescapable features of human political life. But Foucault likewise believed that historical sociology could be put to inspirational or vindicatory uses in the search for values to orient human life. Thus, Foucault (1984, pp. 45-46) encouraged his readers to adopt a "limit attitude" that treated the past as a source for "experimental" values. In the latter part of his life, Foucault (2001) immersed himself in study of ancient Greek and Roman values as part of an effort to formulate new conceptions of self for the present. Political scientists can follow Foucault in writing ethically engaged sociologies of the political institutions of modernity and searching for alternatives.

Nietzsche and Foucault return to history to formulate an ethics that breaks with many of the values of the Enlightenment, Christianity, and Judaism. But this need not be the case. Taylor has also taken this historical turn in order to discover deeper ethical sources for the project of modernity and some Enlightenment values. He has also argued that the recovery of Christian humanism is a better ethical source for modern commitments such as democracy and human rights (Taylor 2011). Although far more condemnatory about modernity, Alasdair MacIntyre (2007) has constructed historical sociologies to argue that Aristotle's virtue ethics provides the most promising alternative to what he sees as the moral incoherence of late capitalist societies. Thus, the return to history made possible by anti-naturalist conceptions of political reality can take various rival forms depending upon which traditions are tapped—for example, Heidegger's (1993, p. 242) call for a return to history to overcome modern "homelessness" or Philip Pettit's (1997) attempt to revive the tradition of ancient republicanism. Political scientists might follow these examples or open novel evaluative, historical sociologies of human ethical and political life.

In sum, through the lens of anti-naturalism history is no longer simply antiquarian or an empirical data set but a source of rival and contestable human meanings. This doesn't mean anti-naturalism binds researchers to any one particular ethic or substantive vision. Anti-naturalist political scientists need not become champions of Greek thought before Socrates like Nietzsche and Williams (2008), limit avant-gardists like Foucault, neo-Aristotelians like MacIntyre, or Catholic social democrats like Taylor. The positive content of ethics is left for future researchers to continue to sort out and debate. But what should be clear are the ways in which anti-naturalism makes it possible for political scientists to study the past in an ethically engaged form.

4. Anti-Naturalism and Democratic Theory

We have suggested that anti-naturalism opens new possibilities for political scientists in the study of values and ethics. Anti-naturalism conceptualizes values as always contestable and contingent, never a full-blown normal science, but also not relativistic. This contrasts with naturalist inspired conceptions of values as either quasi-scientific or subjective. We want to conclude by showing how anti-naturalism and its conception of political science and values makes possible a deliberative theory of democracy.

Once again anti-naturalism's impact on values—this time democratic values—centers on the contingency of beliefs. Naturalism, because it claims to advance a predictive science of society, can legitimate top-down, abstractly representative and elitist forms of power. This means that in democracies there is a tendency by naturalists to favor rule by experts and technocrats. This contrasts with anti-naturalism's rejection of a predictive science of human behavior. Indeed, because anti-naturalists hold that human beliefs are contingent in form, their social theory can legitimate more deliberative and participatory political forms.

Specifically, anti-naturalism shows how the philosophical frameworks guiding empirical research are not politically neutral, but are implicitly evaluative of certain ways of organizing power. This is because political science theories never simply observe reality but also play a role in shaping it. Gadamer (1975, p. 316) was one of the first to recognize that "the chief task" of anti-naturalism in politics is to guard "against the domination of technology based on science … the idolatry of scientific method and the anonymous authority of the sciences" and so vindicate "the noblest task of the citizen—decision making according to one's own responsibility—instead of conceding that task to the expert." We want to briefly give readers a sense of the critical, deliberative politics anti-naturalism helps undergird.

Currently the dominant paradigm for politics in North Atlantic societies is a form of representative democracy bolstered by naturalist experts and advisors (Bevir 2010; Blakely 2016). In the early twentieth century new kinds of ahistorical and formal naturalism became highly integrated into the study of the state. This was a departure from late nineteenth century views of the state, which pictured politics progressing through fixed developmental phases (Bevir 2006). Suddenly, students of politics turned away from developmental stories to ahistorical models, correlations, and classifications said to hold across cultures and epochs. Political phenomena were accounted for by appealing to formal analyses, functionalist logics, psychological types, and idealized models of human rationality (Everdell 1997; Porter 1995; Ross 1991; Schabas 1990). From these efforts law-like generalizations were formulated.

But this set of intellectual developments was also tightly related to actual changes in power and authority within the flesh and blood world of politics. One of the first groups to realize this fact was the first British New Left. This was a group of intellectuals headed by figures like E. P. Thompson, Raymond Williams, and Stuart Hall who hoped to articulate a more humanistic socialism (Kenny 1995; Dworkin 1997). What was unique about this movement was the critique it generated of both liberal democracies and communist regimes for relying on naturalist theory.

In the Soviet Union, a particularly crude form of Marxism authorized a hierarchical organization of the state, in which technocratic party elites engineered society according to supposedly inescapable laws. As Joseph Stalin (1940, pp. 15, 30) put it, society could be explained "in accordance with the laws of movement of matter." This was because "the origin of social ideas, social theories, political views, and political institutions should not be sought for in the ideas, theories, views and political institutions themselves but in the conditions of the

material life of society" (Stalin 1940, pp. 20-21). In this way Stalinism encouraged Soviet leaders to treat humans as mute objects susceptible to scientific manipulation. Leaders of the New Left like Thompson (1957) thus denounced Soviet statism as a pseudo-scientific authority that belittled human agency and justified mass violence.

A parallel set of criticisms was launched against naturalist authority in capitalist societies. So, a young Alasdair MacIntyre (1998, p. 36) articulated a scathing critique of the institutions of capitalism as being hierarchical due to "enormous faith in the 'levers' of social engineering." According to MacIntyre, a technocratic science elevated bureaucrats, corporate managers, and other naturalist experts into power. In this way, life in liberal democracies was threatened by a politics in which the "mode of understanding human beings resembles the mode of understanding natural objects in that to understand is to control" (MacIntyre 2008, pp. 145-146). Against naturalist forms of power in both communist and capitalist countries, the New Left tried to advance a more democratic and humanistic position. Thompson (1961, p. 33) insisted on the creative "activity and agency" of humans as an alternative to the mechanistic politics of the age.

Anti-naturalist studies of the state are thus not merely value-neutral descriptions but can imply a critique of certain ways of organizing power. For instance, anti-naturalism is critical of the turn since the 1970s towards "governance" strategies that handoff traditional state power to markets and networks (Bevir 2010). This turn towards governance was part of a broader shift away from state welfare functions and doubts about the efficacy of the state in the face of globalization. The problem is that the naturalism that so worried the British New Left has merely transformed and not disappeared. Recent scholars of the state have argued the new governance strategies draw on two social science paradigms that remain naturalist—the first a variant of

rational choice theory calling for markets and the second a sociological institutionalism advocating networks (Harvey 2005; Rhodes 1997; Bevir 2010).

Is there any alternative to naturalist forms of power and technocracy? We want to conclude by briefly suggesting features of a more anti-naturalist, deliberative, and democratic theory of society. Against a mechanistic claim to naturalist, elite authority, anti-naturalism has a rival way of legitimating the organization of power in democratic societies. This rival approach is humanistic and participatory—centered on pluralism, devolution, and dialogue.

Because anti-naturalism highlights the contingent and contestable features of human identity it also brings attention to the diversity of human beliefs even when they fall under larger shared categories like race, class, nation, ideology, or creed. Anti-naturalism encourages political scientists to disaggregate monolithic caricatures of identity by being sensitive to the nuances of meaning and belief (e.g. there are many Islams not just one Islam). The point here is that this feature of anti-naturalism suggests a pluralist approach to democracy in which the diversity of citizenship identities is recognized by allowing opportunities for participation, deliberation, and collective choice at the community level. Rather than treating citizens as homogeneous institutional actors or reducing them to ahistorical categories, anti-naturalism encourages seeing citizens as existing in a plurality of traditions and cultures.

Pluralism in turn suggests devolution of aspects of democracy to diverse associations. Taking the local knowledge and beliefs of citizens seriously means creating more sites for deliberation, formulation of policies, and connection with one another. Presently calls for local participation are often reduced to consultation that sets the grid and parameters of how citizens are brought into the process. By contrast, the anti-naturalist insistence that understanding beliefs requires engaging their cultural context encourages listening to citizens' views. This doesn't

necessarily mean doing away with representative democracy (a move whose viability is questionable) but it does mean making new spaces for citizen self-rule that are sensitive to context. Political scientists can play a key role in researching and communicating such contexts across publics.

This ties in closely to a final point—namely, an emphasis on dialogical policy formation. At present there is too often a monologue of policymaking driven by elite representatives who consult one another or economic and political technocrats who impose a "science" of society. By contrast, anti-naturalism makes clear the centrality of narrative understanding for grasping human beliefs and actions. This is because the genre needed to explain the contingent causes that comprise human agency is a story or narrative. Narratives explain how particular beliefs, actions, practices, or events come about against the background of inherited traditions. Narrative history (not naturalist laws) is thus the explanatory form when dealing with politics.

Anti-naturalism thus implies democracy should become more about telling stories. Citizens, policymakers, and politicians have more equal access to this basic genre for explaining human actions. The genre of storytelling does not require a claim to scientific expertise. A democracy built on interpretive storytelling means that civic debates cannot be legitimately plucked into a domain of naturalist formalism and expertise. We must deliberate and dialogue in the form of competing narratives. Political science can again play a role in informing the public and building narratives—but as dialogue partners not as keepers of a science.

Too often under the influence of naturalism, political scientists treat theories as instrumentally clean and uncontaminated by the world of values they venture out to study. It is as if political science existed completely outside of the world of politics. But anti-naturalism opens a more nuanced and complex approach to the relationship between values, politics, and social

theory. Because political science helps inform and shape the world, the theories generated by political science have important evaluative implications for politics and democracy. There simply is no clean split between political experts and ordinary citizens. Future political scientists, inspired by anti-naturalism, might delve further into both the critique of technocracy and the study and support of deliberative alternatives.

5. Complicating the Fact-Value Dichotomy

Anti-naturalism gives political scientists new ways of conducting ethically engaged research—including both critical and vindicatory historical sociologies, critiques of technocracy, and the support of deliberative dialogue and understanding. Note that any of these research avenues could employ quantitative and qualitative methods (from mass surveys and statistics to ethnographies and in-depth interviews). There is nothing philosophically barring these alliances, only practical judgments to be made.

What are not straightforwardly ethically neutral are the underlying philosophies guiding political science research. Yes, a naturalist might still use law-like generalizations that treat humans like mute objects to advance deliberative democracy or egalitarian ideologies. Likewise, anti-naturalism might be harnessed for hierarchical and anti-democratic forms. But an anti-naturalist approach cannot remain neutral about claims to justify authority within society in naturalist, technocratic terms. In other words, the anti-naturalist approach to political science implies and even justifies criticism without absolutely binding political scientists to one particular ideology or political tradition.

All this amounts to a complication of one of the longest standing assumptions of modern social science: the idea that there is a strict dichotomy between facts and values. Inaugurated by

David Hume, this doctrine has taken many forms, but the basic idea is that the study of facts is logically distinct from the study of values. Beginning from factual premises no evaluative conclusion can be deduced and vice versa.

The foregoing arguments make clear that the relationship of facts to values is much more nuanced than this strict binary allows. In this way, anti-naturalism might help contribute to the wider critique of the tendency to segregate empirical or factual knowledge about the world from normative or evaluative claims. Anti-naturalism opens the door for political scientists to conduct ethically engaged political sociologies, histories, accounts of values, and critiques of technocracy. Not all political scientists need take this route, but for those who do, new worlds of exploration are waiting.

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