Political Science Publications Lack Metatheory

There is an important gap in the study of political philosophy and moral theory in political science publications. The articles lack assessment of what I call metatheory, that is, non-deductive standards for how theories are structured and evidence is used. For instance, discussions of the Platonic dialogs tend to ignore the possible problems in using what Aristotle later called primary premises and in analogous reasoning. Instead, they proceed as if this classical metatheoretical position is self-validating.

There are two ordinarily good reasons to doubt my standing in making this claim. Whatever reputation I may have within political science, it is not in the field of political philosophy and philosophy proper. Moreover, an article detailing this argument was turned down by the *American Political Science Review* and two other journals.

Therefore, I hope that I will be forgiven for providing evidence that my credentials in philosophy, and particularly the philosophy of science, are respectable. Before I do this, I want to make two things clear. Professor Sigelman and the other editors made correct decisions within the framework of the review process. Nor do I object to the reports of the reviewers. It is now clear to me that I paid insufficient attention to clarifying a position with which they were unfamiliar.

Shortly after my book *Science, Language and the Human Condition* was published, I received a letter from Nobel Laureate Peter Mitchell who introduced himself to me and said he agreed with my analysis of the relationship between philosophy and science. He told me he was setting up a meeting on the philosophy of science, in which he had a special interest. He was inviting Karl Popper and other leading writers and requested my participation. Edmond Wright, a philosopher at Oxford, wrote that the book was to be "greatly welcomed." Gerhard Vollmer, a philosopher at Giessen, wrote "Kaplan masters an incredibly wide field of knowledge."

But that was twenty years ago and I am now in my eighties. Many suffer declines by this age and, given the repeated dismissal of my article, I began to wonder whether I had lost the ability to function at a professional level. So I emailed a copy of a revised version of the article to Patrick Heelan, who had written a very welcome review of the previous book but with whom I had never previously been in communication. I said the article had been turned down repeatedly and asked for a frank evaluation.

For those who do not know of him, Heelan is the William A. Gaston professor of philosophy at Georgetown. In addition to his doctorate in philosophy, he did postdoctoral work in theoretical physics with Nobel Laureate Erwin Schrodinger at Dublin and with Nobel Laureate Eugene Wigner at Princeton. I quote Heelan with permission: "I agree with what you say and more or less with the reasons you give."

I next sent the article to a journal where I thought the odds of acceptance would be improved because the editor is a philosopher, a friend, and a colleague. Because he is a philosopher, he knows of Heelan's great distinction. Because he is a friend, he would trust my statement that there has been no professional, personal, or institutional relationship between Heelan and me.

He sent it to two additional philosophers for review. One said that my position on objectivity failed because Wittgenstein had proved that no reasoned ground permits a choice from among competing paradigms. So, I tightened the argument to show the specific faults in Wittgenstein's analysis and in Foucault's as well, and the editor decided to publish it.

The article, "Evolving Human Nature and Objective Moral and Political Obligation," is in the December 2002 issue of the *International Journal on World Peace*. I invite my colleagues in political science who are interested in political philosophy to read it and respond.

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Time to Bury Reverse Coat-Tails Myth

James E. Campbell's generally perceptive analysis of the 2002 midterm elections in the April 2003 issue ("The 2002 Midterm Election: A Typical or an Atypical Midterm?", pgs. 203–208) erred in repeating the outdated "rule" that the number of House seats that the president's party loses in the off-year is directly proportional to the president's margin of victory two years earlier.

We can measure the president's margin either by his percentage of the overall popular vote—let's call this the Vote Percent—or by the difference between his vote percentage and that of his major-party runner-up—the Vote Margin. In the case of George W. Bush in 2000, of course, the Vote Margin was negative.

By either measure, the correlation to which Campbell refers began disappearing decades ago. Dividing the post-World War II period roughly in half, the Pearson's correlation coefficient between the Vote Percent and the off-year House drop from 1946 through 1970 was a hefty +.665 (although since N = 7, it is not statistically significant). From 1974 through 2002, it was only +.020. The correlation between Vote Margin and off-year House drop from 1946 through 1970 was +.690; from 1974 through 2002 it was +.389.

Most of the explanations for reverse coat-tails, including those that Campbell mentions, assume a stronger partisanship among the electorate than has been the case in recent decades. This helps explain why the last two off-year elections saw gains by the president's party in the House. In both cases, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush enjoyed high performance ratings, which have become more important than reverse coat-tails in explaining off-year outcomes. It is time to bury the myth of reverse coat-tails.

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https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096503002932 Published online by Cambridge University Press

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