

my 6th book, "The Police State of Medicine."

Bennett also refers to David Brunori, a contributing editor to "State Tax Notes," as a "graduate school dropout." This implies that Brunori was a failed graduate student rather than choosing not to undertake the statistical training that is required in political science graduate programs.

Self-Justification by Numbers

Stephen Earl Bennett, a self-described empiricist and "quantoid," has stepped out from behind the numbers to speak, not as a measuring stick, but as a human being engaged in defending the worth of his studies to the human mind. His article has an element of the personal as is fitting for someone making a case for his own self-respect and educating others about what does and does not deserve admiration and esteem. Loyal to the empirical study of politics, Bennett argues that the attempt to make political philosophy the core of the discipline "should fail."

In order to justify himself and the scientific study of politics, Bennett harkens back to Almond and Verba who put out the "call" to which Bennett answered, 'here I am'. The higher calling was to test "classic themes in political science with empirical data" and the "inspired" Bennett has been dutifully and respectfully verifying ever since. There is nothing beyond Bennett's critical powers of truth telling; he has all the confidence in the world in declaiming on the proper place of the entire unempirical tradition of political philosophy which includes Plato, Cicero, Machiavelli, Burke, Tocqueville and all the rest of the philosophers of the Dark Ages who did not have the benefit of the higher calling. But perhaps the pursuit of knowledge requires a little less inspiration and a bit more philosophy.

One would think that a hardheaded verifier of truth like Bennett would be able to zero in on the criticisms of empiricism to see if it can be verified. But loyal to his empiricism he sidesteps the whole question of empiricism, which of course cannot be empirically verified or empirically known and is therefore incorrect according to its own criteria of knowledge. Bennett's duty to verify (as distinct from understanding) has only one self-imposed restriction: not to call into question the truth of the call itself. Has he been following and spreading the message of false prophets?

Mr. Bennett also questioned Gregory Kasza's professional competence by saying "If Kasza were a better political scientist, he would know enough not to blame quantitative research for young people's declining interest in public affairs."

These comments are uncalled for, unprofessional and verge on libel. I think that Mr. Bennett owes the

scholars and writer that he impugned and the readers of *PS* a written apology. I also hope that in the future, the editors of *PS* will ensure that contributors follow the accepted norms of professionalism and avoid making personal attacks on colleagues.

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Bennett fails to defend empiricism against the arguments that it narrows the mind, is unsuited for the study of politics, is self-contradictory, and dogmatically supports values that it hides and does not make open to questioning and examination. In addition, he fails to confront the argument made by both Kasza and myself for the necessity of evaluating the meaning of the just society and of human ends. True to his belief in the irrelevance of philosophic inquiry, Bennett tries to confront the argument for the necessity of political philosophy by treating it as part of a survey of opinions; and true to the superficiality of surveys he tells us what every half informed member of the profession already knows. The habit of mind to verify is not easily overcome in the case of Bennett. I offer as verification 52 references for a 2 page discussion, his caveat to the reader that he has referred to articles which they can easily verify, and the self-satisfaction of a man who believes he has mastered his material and has served it up to enlighten his uninformed audience with facts from the front lines (Bennett 2002). He even invites his readers to check the report for themselves if they like, which would no doubt help verify Bennett to himself. He is proud of his competence but competence in citing and summarizing is very different from understanding.

Competence at surveys of opinions is not enough when one's own religion is under attack, and so Bennett finds himself on unfamiliar terrain where he must take a stab at philosophy. He is in need of depth and so he must become reflective. He must engage in self-justification. Could it be that the natural and human way of confronting an opinion including one's own opinion is to think about it? Bennett's first steps in the world of reflection are shaky. The trustworthy reporter and verifier of facts begins his evaluation of the claim that political philosophy should be the core of political science by completely misunderstanding

that claim. The claim is that the study of politics requires thought about the ends of government. For example, the ends of a liberal democracy are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness whereas the end of a theocracy is piety. A political science that cannot understand how these beliefs form and inform their respective social orders does not understand the nature of those social orders. Furthermore, a political science that does not judge between orders and try to discover the best order is both perverse and dishonest because there is no such thing as a non-evaluative science. The mere use of social science to study society is already a claim against piety.

How then does Bennett treat the claim that political philosophy is the core of political science? He treats the claim as if it was a campaign ploy to get power and that the claim is therefore properly judged by whether it has a constituency who will support it. Following on the heels of this perverse understanding of the claim is his refutation of his own imaginings. He argues that political philosophy does not have a chance to make it to the academic White House because it lacks the necessary constituency. Feminists do not want to read books written by dead white males and "quantoids" don't like to be called names. Yes, this passes for refutation and analysis in Bennett's world of political science. He replaces reflection and argument with an opinion poll of the favorable and the unfavorable. And thus sits Bennett triumphant over his own straw man thinking he has tangled with philosophy. Verify his reasons for yourselves folks (178).

Bennett comes from a school and a generation that thinks they invented political science. They flatter themselves as tough guys who look at behavior and facts rather than cheap talk about justice, but they are really domestic cats. They are believers in democracy to a man and Bennett makes it clear that he himself is a man of the people (178). He will

never try to understand democracy by evaluating its ends and its claims to justice. He is too close to it; he is a part of it, and so he marches forward as if democracy is unambiguously legitimate and even constitutes reality. Asking the people what they think seems totally natural to Bennett. Holding them up to standards of reason does not. He does not understand that there is a whole tradition of philosophy that had to justify their sovereignty, interpret nature, recognize legitimate ends of government, and create institutions to protect those ends. He has no perspective on democracy and therefore does not understand the thought which is its formative cause. He does not know how political philosophers like Locke and Montesquieu educated founders and how they in turn formed the democracy he is supposedly studying. Even with respect to studying the gritty day-to-day power struggles

between the people and their leaders, quantitative analysis is inferior to political thought. One page of Aristophanes is more insightful (and will prove to be more enduring) than all the contemporary quantitative studies combined because Aristophanes had an unmatched genius for characterization, not to mention depth of understanding. Political scientists would be better served by reading Aristophanes and developing capacities for seeing political characters and their problems than learning quantitative methods.

Bennett thinks that the alternative to his own gruff, straight shooting, man of the people character is the politically correct Ivy League snob and activist whose high-minded morality is hypocritically elitist, vain, and self-serving (178). If this is the other alternative, all the more reason why political philosophy should be the core of the discipline.

Political philosophy avoids the narrowness and crudeness of quantitative analysis without falling victim to the fanaticisms of moral indignation and the empty vanity of moral fashions. Political philosophy is an exercise in justifying oneself in relation to society that deepens and disciplines while refining. If political philosophy should not become the core of the discipline, it will certainly not be because it deserves to fail.

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Response to Libby and Kremer

My assertion that the “Perestroikans” offend some who might favor disciplinary change has upset some folks.

Mr. Libby does not refrain from writing “mindless number crunching” (2001, 203), but he gets into high dudgeon when he and others of his ilk are on the hot seat.

Libby claims that he still does research. If APSA is dominated by quantitative research, as Libby believes, it has not crimped his style.

Libby takes umbrage at the word “dropout.” The *Oxford American Dictionary* stipulates that someone who entered a program but did not finish is a “dropout.” If words are eliminated because self-styled censors do not like them, we have taken a long step toward Orwell’s “New Speak.”

Kaymak (2001) writes that Kasza is a “spokesman” for “Perestroika.” A “spokes person” becomes a lightning rod. Kasza’s claim that, “it is no wonder

that undergraduate enrollments have plummeted in step with the hegemony of hard science” (2001, 598) leaves the mistaken impression that enrollments fell because Political Science is dominated by quantoids. Co-variation does not establish causation.

Before he seeks to characterize another person, Mr. Kremer should learn about that individual. Had he done so, Kremer would have learned that I read those Dead White Males he mentions and others, including Aristotle. (Given his attempt to collect every polis’s constitution, Aristotle may have been a crypto quantoid.) My research assesses Americans’ competence as democratic citizens, which requires me to read authors such as Plato, Machiavelli, de Tocqueville, Walter Lippmann, Eric Hoffer, Dennis Thompson, and Neil Postman.

In short, some quantoids seek to test propositions derived from political

philosophy with data. That is how *The Civic Culture* achieved fame, which leaves quantoids unashamed.

The two central points of my essay remain. Despite claims they favor “ecumenism” in methods, “Perestroikans” are hostile to quantitative scholarship. Some “Perestroikans” over-weening pride alienates other scholars.

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References

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