

THE RESTORATION OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

Ryan J. Barilleaux
Miami University, Ohio

Contemporary political science, which is dominated by a behaviorist paradigm, has made many contributions to our knowledge of political institutions and behavior, is limited by its commitment to positivism. It needs to return to the study of virtue, to an appreciation for natural law, and to develop a new paradigm to organize and unify the study of political phenomena.

Early in 1969, outgoing Vice-President Hubert Humphrey, having lost his bid for the presidency but determined to recover a future in politics, returned to his native state of Minnesota. He was intent on returning to Washington as a senator, but in the meantime he would have to wait for the ebb-and-flow of electoral cycles to make that possible. So he inquired at the University of Minnesota's Department of Political Science about whether that institution might be interested in having him teach a course or two on politics. The answer came back that the faculty of the Department did not think that Mr. Humphrey had much to say about contemporary political science. After all, he had not published his work in a refereed journal and the M.A. in political science he had received at Louisiana State University was by now hopelessly out of date.¹

Several years later, the American Political Science Association bestowed on James Q. Wilson its prestigious James Madison Award, an honor that recognizes one scholar's exemplary work in applying knowledge obtained through political science to real-world problems. By tradition, the recipient gives a public address at the annual meeting of the Association, and Wilson used the occasion to gently tweak his colleagues by pointing out that the venerable Madison would never have received

the award himself. After all, Wilson pointed out, he had never published in a refereed academic journal. Wilson then went on to make several points about what is wrong with much of contemporary political science. He observed that contemporary political science is caught up in a quest for mathematical precision in the analysis of politics, focusing much scholarly attention and consuming many pages of journal space with models based on a kind of pseudo-calculus. Wilson admonished his colleagues to return to the kinds of questions that stimulated the thinking of Madison, Tocqueville, and other practitioners of political analysis.² These thinkers were not interested in mathematical models of politics, but in answering important questions about how to establish, maintain, and defend a good political system.

The older mode of analysis represented by Madison, Tocqueville, and others is what is known as *traditional political science*. As James Ceaser described it an eloquent plea for its revival, "For the authors of *The Federalist* and for Tocqueville, the *science of politics* or *political science* was, in its practical sense, knowledge directed at ascertaining the factors that maintain or destroy different forms of government."³ This mode of analysis examines important and fundamental issues about politics in order to search for, build, and maintain a good regime in which human beings can live their lives in a manner consistent with their nature.

Wilson's remarks reveal the state of the discipline of political science, which has made itself nearly irrelevant to the art and practice of politics. Where once Philip of Macedon hired Aristotle to teach the young Alexander, budding Humphreys, Bushes, and Kennedys largely ignore academic political scientists when they want to

prepare for public life or seek counsel about politics. Indeed, political scientists have been eclipsed by a professional class of “political operatives” whose advice is considered far more valuable to practicing politicians than the mathematical models that prevail in much of the discipline of political science.

Obviously, it wasn’t always this way. In his *Nicomachean Ethics* (I.2), Aristotle teaches that politics is the most authoritative science, and statesmen often looked to political philosophy for lessons about statecraft. In the twentieth century, however, political science abandoned its heritage in favor of more “modern” modes of thought, and in consequence it has strayed far from its roots in philosophy, ethics, and the practical issues of statecraft. No wonder that when filmmaker Ken Burns produced his documentary *Congress: The History and Promise of Representative Government* (1987) to mark the bicentennial of the national legislature, he interviewed lots of journalists, politicians, and historians, but no political scientists. (Actually, he did interview James Macgregor Burns, who is a political scientist, but billed Burns as an historian.) None of the “big names” in the academic study of congressional politics seemed relevant to a film that was intended as a meditation on the role of the legislature in democratic government.

Of course, not all political scientists have succumbed to the “physics envy” that marks much of the discipline, and even within the American Political Science Association that has been a movement to break away from the tyranny of the quantitative methodologists (known, with tongue planted firmly in cheek, as the *perestroika* movement). There are also many political scientists, mostly disciples of Eric Voegelin and Leo Strauss, who take political theory seriously. But the

establishment of the discipline remains dominated by behaviorists seeking ever more precise—and ever more irrelevant—mathematical models of political phenomena. We might call it Hubert Humphrey's Revenge. We might also see that it is time for a change.

The change that needs to occur in the discipline is no less than the restoration of political science. The intellectual study of politics has much to offer citizens and leaders, but only if it is political science properly understood. For those who want to see political science maintain a place among the human sciences that can contribute to the good of humanity, and especially for those interested in building a Catholic social science, restoration is the order of the day.

CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL SCIENCE

Contemporary social science is dominated by behavioralism, an approach that took form most clearly after World War II and overturned more traditional means of analyzing humans and their societies. In political science, the tenets of behavioralism came to be crystallized in a set of principles known quite self-consciously as the Behavioral Creed.

As defined by Albert Somit and Joseph Tanenhaus in their authoritative history of American political science,⁴ the Behavioral Creed contained eight key "articles of faith" (the use of a religious metaphor is apt):⁵

- 1. Political science can ultimately become a science capable of prediction and explanation.*
- 2. Political science should concern itself primarily, if not exclusively, with phenomena which can actually be observed, i.e., with what is done or said.*
- 3. Data should be quantified and "findings" based upon quantifiable data.*

- 4. Research should be theory oriented and theory directed (usually accomplished through the development of hypotheses that can be tested against empirical data).*
- 5. Political science should abjure, in favor of "pure" research, both applied research aimed at providing solutions to specific, immediate social problems and melioratory programmatic ventures.*
- 6. The truth or falsity of values (democracy, equality, freedom, etc.) cannot be established scientifically and are beyond the scope of legitimate inquiry.*
- 7. Political scientists should be more interdisciplinary.*
- 8. Political science should become more self-conscious and critical about its methodology.*

These articles gained dominance in the discipline in the 1950s and 1960s. In some academic political science departments, faculty and graduate students were required to subscribe to (indeed, sign) some version of the Creed. In other departments, battles between the behavioralists and their adversaries--the traditionalists (who tended to focus on the danger of attempting a "value-free" social science)--lasted until well into the 1960s. In the end, however, the behavioralist party became the ruling party in the discipline, opposed only by pockets of resistance in a few places.

Since the late nineteenth century, political science had been a secular enterprise. With the rise of behavioralism, the discipline became (like nearly all other academic disciplines) aggressively and self-consciously secular in orientation. In other words, it had little room for those who did not share the religious skepticism of positivism. Those who wanted to discuss "values" usually took recourse in the study of political philosophy, often under the influence of scholars such as Leo Strauss (who hailed the Greek classics as the only source of wisdom) or Eric Voegelin (who favored what he called "pre-Reformation Christianity" but openly criticized the Church for what he considered excessive dogmatism). At the other end of the political spectrum, a number of scholars adopted Marxist analytical

concepts--whether implicitly or explicitly--and were allowed to work within the "mainstream" of social science because of Marxism's self-described "scientific" analysis of human society.

The study of political institutions, such as the American constitutional system or its components, was largely dominated by the behavioralists. For many aspects of political institutions, this orientation did not create problems. Studies of the organization, powers, and operations of the three branches of American government often examine technical political and organizational problems rather than questions of ultimate ends. But for other aspects of political institutions, such as the kinds of issues raised in assessments of presidential performance or the policy outcomes of government, questions of ends and means could not be ignored. In consequence, contemporary political science found itself called upon to deal with issues that it claimed were beyond its scope.

HOW DO YOU TACKLE ULTIMATE QUESTIONS WHEN YOU DENY THAT THERE ARE ULTIMATE QUESTIONS?

Contemporary political science has made great strides in advancing our understanding of the workings of political institutions. Scholars learned much about the way in which Congress is organized and Members conduct their business, about how presidents make and carry out decisions, about how the Supreme Court decides cases, and about how the bureaucracy shapes and implements the policies of elected officials. The increasingly sophisticated methods employed to undertake all this research could be truly impressive (and at times ludicrous), offering researchers tools to move beyond the impressionistic kinds of studies that often characterized traditional political science.

Yet the behavioralist approach ran headlong into a number of problems inherent in its very assumptions. For example, scholars found that their research

often raised questions that their sophisticated methods could not even begin to answer: questions about the ends to which political power is employed, about what kinds of political action are justified and under what conditions, and about how to evaluate individual political actors, groups, and political systems. With an explicit separation of "facts" from "values," such questions were technically off-limits. Many scholars thus ended their studies by pointing out that the most important questions were beyond the scope of their research; others editorialized about the answers on the basis of their own preferences.

In my own work, I found myself running headlong into the limits of contemporary political science. My early work examined the issue of evaluating presidential performance in the conduct of foreign policy.⁶ Without boring the reader with a reconstruction of my research, I will get to the point at which the contemporary approach failed: I found that the approaches and methods of the political science I had been taught in graduate school could not answer the questions that it pointed to as most important.

Proceeding from a study that sought to assess presidential success or failure in a series of case studies of foreign-policy conduct, my research indicated that the kind of evaluation I was attempting to develop—and that others told me it would be useful and important to conduct—required answers to questions about what the ends and means of presidential actions.⁷ In other words, in order to evaluate what a president had done in foreign affairs, we could not limit our assessment to a utilitarian idea of leadership as success for failure in achieving express goals. Rather, it became apparent that we had to make judgments about "where presidents wish to lead us, by what means, and at what cost."⁸

Behavioral political science is not equipped to make these judgments. It eschews a discussion of "values," yet its own methods lead to the conclusion that it is values that really count in politics. But then it cannot go where it points its

practitioners. Furthermore, to discuss "values" is to raise questions about ultimate ends in politics and life, which inevitably lead us to questions about God.

Certainly, questions about appropriate ends and means of government policy can and must be conducted within the everyday world of politics. But the problem that faces the political community—and the scholars who work in it—is that the behavioralist view of the world is incomplete and therefore incapable of leading to the truth. A behavioralist analysis of the presidency can tell us much about the organization of the White House and the instruments of executive power, but it ultimately fails on the question of the uses to which political power is put.

Consider what would happen if President George W. Bush were to convince Congress to balance the federal budget by slashing funds for the elderly, Head Start, and other social service programs, and advise doctors to let Medicare patients “do us all a favor and die.” Of course, most political scientists would say, such a scheme would be inhuman—but it is not political science that teaches that lesson. After all, the Behavioral Creed told us that "values" are beyond the scope of legitimate inquiry. What, then, are political scientists to do? They can allow their methods to score a presidential success for an inhuman action and maintain their pristine analytical neutrality, or they editorialize by introducing their own values into their work while pretending not to do so.

Each of these responses can be found in the array of presidential rating studies mentioned above. Some analysts maintain a strict neutrality that leads them into strange conclusions about what is political leadership, while others engage in editorializing under the guise of positivism. Either way, these scholars end up in the same borderlands in which secular political science points to ultimate questions but cannot itself go.

Does this mean that we can discard contemporary scholarship out of hand? No, but we need a good sense of its utility and limits. Moreover, we need to see how

a restoration of political science can assist in resolving the sorts of problems that the contemporary discipline sets up for itself.

THE UTILITY AND LIMITS CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL SCIENCE

Contemporary political science is like so many other of man's intellectual enterprises: impressive for its cleverness and sophistication, disappointing for its limitations. Academic research as it is conducted by the vast majority of scholars can teach us important lessons, but it cannot teach us the most important ones.

Utility

There are two major contributions that contemporary political science makes to our understanding of political institutions. It makes contributions to our understanding other aspects of politics as well.

*1)Insights into the structure and operations of political institutions--*These insights are not trivial, because they can help us to understand why government does what it does and how to make it work better.

*2)Insights into the costs and tradeoffs involved in the various forms of political institutions--*Political science research has shown us how different electoral systems affect political outcomes, how the separation-of-powers system has influenced government policies in the United States, how different representational schemes affect which groups have influence in a political community, and how the form of government can affect the long-term stability and prosperity of a political community.

*3)Insights into public opinion and political behavior—*Again, in a democratic political system, such insights are important. Nevertheless, knowing a lot about how people think and how they behave politically does little for explaining why they think

and act as they do, or how to distinguish between opinion and behavior in free societies and authoritarian societies.

Limits

Despite these contributions, contemporary political science faces three sharp limitations in advancing our understanding of the political world.

1) *The divorce of "facts" and "values" renders political science ineffective for answering some of the most important questions about politics--as noted above, it cannot sort out the legitimacy of different ends and means adopted by governments. As far as secular social science is concerned, there is no difference between the Nazi Final Solution and the Clinton health-care reform plan, except in the scope of the undertaking. To be fair, we should acknowledge that it is this limitation that most troubles the practitioners of contemporary political science: they are troubled by an approach to the study of politics that does not make room for distinguishing between charity and genocide. Yet they have no effective way to remedy their problem.*

2) *Behavioralist political science is not value-free--this is a problem that occurs more in the practice of political science than in its conception. Because the behaviorist approach does not distinguish between one government policy and another, researchers often place their own biases at the center of their work.*

Consider a recent volume assessing Bill Clinton's presidency, *The Clinton Presidency: First Appraisals*, edited by Colin Campbell and Bert Rockman.⁹ According to its publisher, that book became a best-seller (by textbook standards) on the date of its release, indicating that it is well in the mainstream of contemporary political science.¹⁰ One of the central chapters is an ostensibly objective assessment of President Clinton's management of the White House by Colin Campbell, a political scientist at Georgetown University. Professor Campbell's essay is riddled with a variety of assumptions, value-judgments, and other statements that belie the scientific neutrality of secular social science. For example, Campbell writes disapprovingly of

the 1980s as "a period in which neoliberals began to look longingly across the Atlantic at Margaret Thatcher."¹¹ Then he passes judgment on the Reagan and Bush administrations in terms that can be described as ideological: Reagan "did great damage" to American government that resulted in "an exacerbation of malaise and distrust."¹² These conditions set the stage for the election of George Bush, who incurs Campbell's wrath for misdirecting the attention of European leaders away from the crisis in the Balkans to deal with Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait.¹³ Any of these statements may or may not be true, but none of them is value-free science.

Other examples compound the problem. Consider articles published in *The American Political Science Review (APSR)*, the flagship journal of political science. According to the official values of the discipline, the feminist and environmentalist agendas are accepted as given. In June 1994, *APSR* featured an article by Courtney Brown of Emory University on "Politics and the Environment," which opened with the statement that "The relationship between presidential elections in the United States and the degradation of the environment is not thoroughly understood."¹⁴ In the next issue, Lyn Kathlene of Purdue University analyzed "Power and Influence in State Legislative Policymaking."¹⁵ She begins by effectively defining the influence of women in state legislators as the success of the feminist women; later, she attributes the limited influence of female state legislators to "our culture and the social construction of male power."¹⁶ The science practiced in this leading journal of the discipline is shaped by ideology.

When the ideological positions of scholars are passed off as science, the result is a kind of radical individualism in morals (which is certainly consistent with--and perhaps at the base of--contemporary American culture) in which each researcher creates his own definition of good and bad policy, right and wrong action. The

practice of secular social science thus becomes a kind of editorializing through hidden--or not-so-hidden--assumptions.

3)Contemporary political science is ultimately blind to questions of ethics and behavior among political actors--this problem became very real for secular social scientists in their discussions of events such as Watergate, Iran-Contra, and the Whitewater affair. Limited to issues of success/failure, legality, or constitutionality, secularists have little to say about right conduct by political actors. After all, if we are ultimately the only judges of our own "private morality" (as one popular expression puts it), then so long as we do not commit a criminal act we are free to do what we please.

The upshot of these strengths and limitations is that secular social science makes a very real contribution to our understanding of the political world, but alone it is insufficient for leading us to the truth. That is why there is a palpable need to restore political science to its roots in philosophy, ethics, and statecraft.

TRADITIONAL POLITICAL SCIENCE

Until the rise of behavioralism, the central concerns of political science were framed by three issues raised by Aristotle in his *Politics*. Not all thinkers in this tradition arrived at the same conclusions, but their focus on the same concerns formed the great tradition of political science as an intellectual discipline. As James Ceaser has outlined it, traditional political science consists of three main elements: a knowledge of place; a general political science of regimes; and, the political science of a particular place.¹⁷

1)A Knowledge of Place: Traditional political science is not an art of reasoning in a vacuum. Rather, it seeks knowledge within a context: historical circumstances,

geography, and the character of a nation or people. An consideration of the American regime, for example, would be grounded in the history, geography, and "genius" of the American people. This context is intended to prevent the sort of abstracted reasoning that pervades exercises in women's studies, multicultural studies, and other efforts to fit all human institutions on a Procrustean bed of "race, gender, and sexual orientation."

2)General Political Science: A knowledge of place does not mean that traditional political science keeps its gaze to the ground and never looks toward the sun. It is also concerned with more general issues: regime types, the factors that support or undermine different regimes, and the general human nature that characterizes people in all regimes. In contrast to plastic notions of human nature found in most Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment thinking, practitioners of traditionalism accept human nature as it is.

The general part of traditional political science looks to different types of regimes and seeks to discern the factors that help them to work or fail. It examines how human nature interacts with each regime type and what benefits and hazards exist for people living in different types of political systems.

3)The Political Science of a Particular Place: The final part of traditionalism is the search for knowledge about the working of a particular regime at a particular time. It involves applying the knowledge from the first two elements to a specific place. For example, an analysis of the state of the contemporary American regime could provide cautionary insights for the citizens and policy makers of the United States.

If Ceaser is right about the basic outlines of traditional political science--and I believe that he is, because he is pointing to the influence of Aristotle in Western thought--then it is a mode of analysis consistent with Catholic thought. Traditional political science is an application of human reasoning, but does not exalt reason, abstraction, or ideology. It can be used to apply principles of Catholic social teaching, which are employed with a sense of the context of time and place. It can be used to restore political science to its rightful place as an authoritative science, and it requires a sense of the importance of virtue.

THE POLITICS OF VIRTUE

The idea of virtue is one of the oldest in Western thought, and came to be thought unnecessary or dangerous only in the ideological revolution of the twentieth century. As long ago as Plato, the four cardinal—or political—virtues were seen as prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude. Traditional political science—what Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Shakespeare, Thomas More, James Madison, and Abraham Lincoln all knew—was built in part on these virtues. Contemporary political science wants to remember James Madison as a kind of proto-Ayn Rand: one who celebrated self-interest and rejected the idea of virtue. But Madison saw virtue as essential to the success of free government, and counseled only that designers of political institutions take into account the reality of political self-interest (in the form of factions). But where does the teaching about the threat of factions come from? It permeates Aristotle's *Politics*, and it is the case that James Madison was looking for a new solution to a very old problem. Despite the efforts of some contemporary interpreters of Madison to have it otherwise, the Founder recognized the importance of virtue.

Return to the Study of Virtue

Political scientists need to return to a study of virtue. Traditional political science understood the role of virtue, and even contemporary secular philosophers grasp its importance as well. Take, for example, Andre Compte-Sponville's book *A Small Treatise on the Great Virtues*, which was a bestseller in France and has received much attention here. This book argues that we must study, admire, and practice virtue in order to have civilization, and Compte-Sponville examines a list of virtues that affect everyday life. His treatise is a reminder that virtue has long been part of the Western tradition, that it is compatible with a free society, and that it does not imply a thought police or an inquisition. Among sociologists, the followers of Pitirim Sorokin likewise point to virtue and altruism as the foundations of society.

Contemporary political scientists are out of touch with reality, both political and philosophical reality. The return to virtue is not a step backward, but a step forward. To be fair, many political scientists today understand the importance of virtue—the disciples of Strauss and Voegelin, as well as Christians such as J. Budizewski (whose book *The Nearest Coast of Darkness* is subtitled “Vindicating a Politics of Virtue”)—but these scholars have been “marginalized” (to use a trendy term) by dismissing them as merely political theorists. Other scholars have also attempted to integrate the wisdom of traditional political science into modern research. One, Ethan Fishman, has gone so far as to apply an “Aristotelian approach to presidential leadership.” His book on *The Prudential Presidency*¹⁸ is a rare and welcome exception to the behaviorist mainstream. All of these developments are hopeful ones, but they are movements against a larger tide of behavioralism.

Political theory or philosophy is at the heart of political science, and the preceding discussion of the limits of the mainstream of contemporary scholarship reminds us that behavioralism points to ultimate questions while denying that there

are ultimate questions. So political science is left with a dilemma: continue down the track of behavioralism and point to questions for which behavioralism has no answers, or admit the limits of behavioralism and restore political science to its authoritative place by recovering the study of virtue and ultimate questions. The solution to the dilemma, I believe, is obvious.

What would a political science that acknowledges virtue look like? It would look more like traditional political science, even if it were now equipped with quantitative techniques for measuring those political phenomena that are truly measurable. It would look less like pseudo-calculus and more like the best policy analysis that has been undertaken in recent years by various “think tanks” around Washington. These institutions employ explicit values in their analyses of public policy, and use evidence and reason to arrive at judicious judgments about public affairs. The work of “policy analysts” may often be blighted by the tendency of many to employ a materialistic cost-benefit analysis to public questions, but at least these analysts are clear about the standards they use to evaluate policy and their studies are interesting exercises in prudent judgment. Their work is reminiscent of the P.G. Wodehouse line about why Bertie Wooster admired the House of Commons for prohibiting peers from membership—at least, Wooster observed, the Commons drew the line somewhere.

There are those among us political scientists who have not forgotten the importance of virtue, and who still read Aristotle and other scholars in the great tradition of political science. Political science as an academic discipline has much to learn from these scholars, and it can be restored when behavioralists see that the parameters of the Behavioral Creed describe a narrow and unrealistic world.

The Catholic Contribution

Peter Kreeft once observed that the atheist makes the mistake of believing that his universe is larger than the theist's, because his is a universe that does not need God in order to operate. Kreeft's response is that the theist's universe--especially in the cosmology of the Judeo-Christian tradition--is actually the larger one, because it includes everything in the atheist's universe plus the spiritual realm. The same is true for Catholic social scientists: our world includes everything in the secularists' universe, plus the spiritual realm beyond the borderlands of conventional scholarship.

The Catholic contribution to social science generally and political science specifically is to help scholars make the final ascent--as the mountaineers call it--toward the truth. Catholic theology and social thought provide a moral compass to search through the borderlands of social science, as well as serious and sophisticated understanding of universal standards of justice (the natural law). By bringing in the spiritual realm--i.e., by talking about God--Catholic social scientists can make sense of what secular social science finds imponderable, such as questions about the propriety of different ends and means of political action.

There are many issues for which the Catholic study of political institutions can provide answers unavailable to secular social science. One example might be in the assessment of presidents. How can we evaluate George W. Bush's performance in office, or that of Bill Clinton? We can weigh the costs and benefits of different initiatives and actions of his administration, and different observers can rationally disagree on final record of accomplishments and failings of the Bush or Clinton administrations. But a complete assessment of the Bush presidency must take into account the costs and benefits of unseating the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq, and of overturning the Clinton administration's aggressively pro-abortion policies. Likewise, evaluating the Clinton presidency requires attention to the amount of time, energy, political capital, and public money that his administration put into

promoting what the Holy Father calls the "culture of death." The Clinton administration not only lifted the "gag order" on abortion counseling in federally-funded clinics, but actively promoted abortions and contraception both in the United States and abroad. The failed Clinton health-reform proposals would have made abortion on demand a federally subsidized activity that even Catholic employers might not have been able to withhold from their workers on grounds of conscience (although this point was never fully resolved). In the end, Bill Clinton's tenure in office did serious damage to the cause of life in the United States. Has George W. Bush's administration promoted the cause of life? The answer is more positive, but final results are not yet in.

Even in areas where Catholics legitimately disagree, such as on other aspects of the Clinton health-reform proposal or Bush proposals to change overtime pay rules or cut taxes, Catholic teaching and social thought provides a foundation on which to build analyses of government operations, policies, and ideologies. Catholic leaders have made it clear that some proposed policies--such as cutting off funding for welfare mothers having children out of wedlock--are morally unacceptable. In other cases, statements on public questions by the Public Policy and Church Affairs Committee of the Society of Catholic Social Scientists (e.g., on health care reform, and on the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child)¹⁹ have helped to provide clear thinking on important policy questions. On a larger front, work such as Stephen Krason's Catholic analysis of liberalism and conservatism can help provide fresh insights into the political debate in the United States.²⁰

The Catholic contribution to the study of political institutions specifically and politics and society more generally is an important one. It is not mere sectarianism: it is a more complete search for the truth. Catholics can play an important role in the restoration of political science.

An Agenda for the Restoration of Political Science

The restoration of political science is not some antiquarian exercise in turning back to old books and ignoring the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Rather, it is an enterprise engaged in recovering the insights and contributions of traditional political science. Catholic political scientists can play an important role in this recovery because their intellectual tradition is so connected to traditional political science, and because Catholic social thinkers have been so busy in our time studying what the Holy Father calls the “whole truth about man.” Catholic scholars have much to offer to a restored political science, and what follows is an agenda for the recovery of our ancient discipline:

1) Rediscovery of virtue: It is not a foregone conclusion that modern social scientists cannot learn. Take for example the recent “discovery” of the importance of civil society. For decades, political scientists focused almost exclusively on the state, and those scholars who studied groups in society (e.g., interest groups, parties, social movements) tended to treat them as appendages of the state or in terms of their influence on the state. In recent years, however, there has been an almost Tocquevillian interest in the importance of civil society. Robert Putnam, author of *Bowling Alone*—one of the most talked-about books on civil society in the United States—was recently president of the American Political Science Association. Civil society is now a hot topic in political theory and political sociology. The intermediary institutions of society—the family, civic associations (including bowling leagues), churches, neighborhoods, youth organizations, and other non-state gatherings of people—are once again recognized as important. But what is it that

creates and sustains these associations? A certain amount of self-interest, yes, but it is virtue that is the real glue of civil society.

The rediscovery of the importance of civil society points to the importance of virtue. Hard-nosed political scientists need not fear that virtue is some sort of airy abstraction or idealistic dream; virtue is a fact and a social necessity. Secular social scientists such as Putnam and his colleagues can go far in identifying the problems that develop when virtue declines (hence the decline of citizen associations that he summarizes with the term “bowling alone”), but where Catholic scholars can be helpful is directing their secular colleagues to the great tradition—from Plato and Aristotle to Aquinas and Shakespeare and George Washington and Tocqueville and Maritain and John Paul II—that has meditated on the importance of virtue in society and how to cultivate it.

2) *Rediscovery of natural law:* It is hard to understand why the idea of natural law, once at the core of Western thought, is not embraced today. After all, our contemporary public discourse is filled with implicit invocations of natural standards of justice. The discussion of the abuse scandal among the American Catholic clergy is one example: there is no one who disagrees with the notion that there is something inherently disordered about the sexual importuning of minors by adults. Why not? Because it is “just plain wrong,” to use the conventional explanation. Likewise, former President Bill Clinton liked to use a similar rationale when he found something morally repugnant—it was “just plain wrong.”

How can anything be “just plain wrong” unless there are natural standards of right and wrong? Many commentators have made this observation, although

contemporary American society resists the logical consequence of this type of thinking. The idea of natural law is ridiculed by most of our cultural elites, even as they denounce what they disapprove of—whether it is the oppression of Tibet, female genital mutilation in certain societies, the restrictions imposed on Muslim women, segregation, slavery, damage to the environment, SUVs, and so on—as “just plain wrong.”

Why are invocations of natural law so common, while the idea of natural law so suspect? The answer is simple: natural law thinking requires rigor, and it means that one cannot simply pick and choose what to find right and what to find wrong. To think about natural law is to move from denouncing the Taliban for keeping girls out of school to serious thinking about why activities such as abortion are wrong. Natural law thinking runs contrary to the selective moral indignation that is a hallmark of our time.

Nevertheless, natural law thinking is important and necessary to the restoration of political science. Catholic scholars know this to be true, but so do others as well. Pope John Paul II has given us powerful encyclicals and other teachings on natural law. J. Budizewski, an evangelical Christian, has written eloquently and accessibly on natural law in books such as *Written on the Heart* and *What We Can't Not Know*. Catholics and their allies in the cause of natural law must continue pointing to the importance of this tradition and logic to help restore political science.

3) *A new paradigm for social science:* Since the Behavioral Creed became the Decalogue for modern political science, its principles have shaped the thought and

work of political scientists. If political science is to be restored to its place as a discipline that has much to say about humanity and politics, then a new paradigm is needed to replace the reigning behavioral one.

There are several contenders for this honor. The intellectual disciples of Leo Strauss offer his approach to politics as an alternative paradigm, and there is much that is appealing about Straussianism. Straussianism takes the lessons of classical political philosophy seriously, it takes the words and works of thinkers and statesmen seriously, and it understands the importance of virtue. But one problem that Straussianism presents for Catholics (and others) is that many of its practitioners seem to think that only in a *polis* can humanity meet true happiness. That implies more than just a thick political community; in the case of some it implies a civil religion that is not consistent with Catholicism (Catholics never quite fit into the old generically Protestant civil religion that once dominated American political culture). But there is much to admire in Straussian political science, if it can be developed in such a way that it does not exclude orthodox Catholicism.

Another alternative paradigm can be found in the work of Eric Voegelin, who identified himself as a “pre-Reformation Christian” and whose worldview was far more consistent with Catholicism. Voegelin’s *The New Science of Politics* offers an interpretation of history and politics that is explicitly Judeo-Christian, and his method focuses on political ideas and writings. But Voegelin’s work is not very accessible, even for many scholars, and will require much interpretation. Moreover, there are many elements of politics that Voegelin himself did not explore and which

would need to be addressed for his work to offer an alternative paradigm to behavioralism.

A third and promising possibility lies in integralism, i.e., an integral approach to social science such as is found in the work of Pitirim Sorokin. Sorokin is almost unknown to political scientists, but he and his work have many characteristics that could make him appealing to contemporary political scientists—his work is interdisciplinary in nature (which is what behavioralism also claims to be), it is as much empirical as philosophical, and it is the product of an intellectual who was once chair of the Sociology Department at Harvard and president of the American Sociological Association (so the godfather of the paradigm has the right credentials to appeal to snobbish American academicians). But there are elements in Sorokin's work that seem to be more wishful thinking than social science (especially in his later work on peace in the international system), and these need to be addressed by his disciples and interpreted for a new audience. Integralism is an empirical paradigm for social science that takes virtue seriously, takes the wisdom of what Voegelin called "the Mediterranean tradition" seriously, and offers a coherent account of humanity that is consistent with the Catholic worldview. Political scientists need to become better acquainted with integralism, and students of Sorokin need to explain his work to political scientists.

Conclusion

Catholics are not the only ones who are interested in the restoration of political science. Many within the discipline have found fault with its course since

the triumph of the Behavioral Creed. But Catholics can play an important role in the restoration of the discipline if they contribute to developing an alternative to behavioral political science. Given the agenda described above, it is clear that Catholic political scientists have much to offer: they have a theology and a tradition of social thought that appreciates virtue and respects natural law, and they can aid in building a new paradigm for the social sciences (such as integralism) that will give a coherent account of the “whole truth about man” in terms that social scientists can understand. There is much work to be done.

¹ Humphrey was vindicated after his death. The University of Minnesota is now proud home to the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs.

² James Q. Wilson, “Interests and Deliberations in the American Republic,” *PS: Political Science & Politics* XXIII (December 1990): 558-562.

³ James W. Ceaser, *Liberal Democracy and Political Science* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), p. 24. Emphasis is in the original.

⁴ Albert Somit and Joseph Tanenhaus, *The Development of American Political Science* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1967).

⁵ The following points are drawn from *ibid.*, pp. 177-9.

⁶ Ryan J. Barilleaux, *The President and Foreign Affairs: Evaluation, Performance, and Power* (New York: Praeger, 1985); and, *idem.*, “Evaluating Presidential Performance in Foreign Affairs,” in George Edwards, Steven Shull, and Norman Thomas, eds., *The Presidency and Public Policy Making* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985), pp. 114-29.

⁷ *Idem.*, “Presidential Conduct of Foreign Policy,” *Congress and the Presidency* 15 (Spring 1988): 1-23.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

-
- ⁹ Campbell and Rockman, *op. cit.*
- ¹⁰ The publisher, Edward Artinian of Chatham House Publishers, made that claim to the author at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, Illinois, September, 1995. The statement was part of a sales pitch, but clearly intended to boast about the academic reputation of the book and its contributors.
- ¹¹ Colin Campbell, "Management in a Sandbox," in Campbell and Rockman, *op. cit.*, p. 55.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, p. 55.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 55.
- ¹⁴ Courtney Brown, "Politics and the Environment: Nonlinear Instabilities Predominate," *American Political Science Review* 88(June 1994): 292.
- ¹⁵ Lyn Kathlene, "Power and Influence in State Legislative Policymaking: The Interaction of Gender and Position in Committee Hearing Debates," *American Political Science Review* 88 (September 1994): 560-576.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 573.
- ¹⁷ Ceaser, ch. 3.
- ¹⁸ Ethan Fishman, *The Prudential Presidency* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2001).
- ¹⁹ Public Statements of the Public Policy and Church Affairs Committee of the Society of Catholic Social Scientists, 1993-95 (Steubenville, Ohio: Society of Catholic Social Scientists), mimeo.
- ²⁰ Stephen Krason, *Liberalism, Conservatism and Catholicism: An Evaluation of Contemporary American Political Ideologies in Light of Catholic Social Teaching* (Catholics United for the Faith, 1991).