CONCEPT FORMATION IN NORMATIVE AND EMPIRICAL STUDIES: TOWARD RECONCILIATION IN POLITICAL THEORY

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Despite the fact that the study of politics has become increasingly empirical, quantitative and "behavioral" in recent years, and despite the apparently increasing tendency to feel that whatever meaningful debate ever existed between the behavioralists and the anti-behavioralists has ended, should end, or at least has become irrelevant since a more sophisticated and empirically productive behavioralism now predominates in virtually all fields of the discipline, the methodological debate continues, diminished perhaps in quantity but not in intensity.

This essay is based on the assumption that the antagonists concerned with the methodological issues raised by the "new science of politics" have but rarely focused precisely on the arguments raised by their opponents. A second motivating assumption is that nothing constructive, conciliatory or conducive to the integration of the discipline can be done "until the issues have been squarely confronted on the basic and general plane of philosophy. . .". A thorough analysis of all of the meaningful issues involved can only be a task of long-range proportions. But in the hope of bringing about some degree of communication, if not reconciliation, it is my intention in this essay to bring one of these issues into sharper focus, to show that almost despite themselves, some of the critics and proponents of the "new science of politics" have addressed themselves to the problem of concept formation, and that despite their proclaimed differences are talking at cross-purposes about a similar problem. Indeed, it will be seen that the conflict between the "traditionalists" and the "behavioralists" is utterly dependent—in the area of concept formation—upon an outmoded positivistic interpretation of behavioral science and a misguided reaction on the part of some political theorists to that obsolete conception.

Concept formation as a general problem in philosophy, however, is extremely complex inasmuch as it covers questions of definition, classification, comparison, measurement, and empirical interpretation. To achieve our immediate and ironic purpose, however, it is desirable to restrict the analysis to the questions of definition and especially of the criteria of classification to be used in developing the basic concepts of political science, concepts of the attributes of political phenomena. Not only is it necessary to resolve this question prior to engaging in the questions of comparison and measurement, but it is primarily on this most basic level that it is possible to see most clearly the nature of the misunderstandings held by the antagonists on both sides of the controversy about a behavioral science of politics. Once we understand how we develop criteria of identity and classification, problems such as comparison become relatively simple on the conceptual level and permit us to concentrate our energies upon the application of our concepts and techniques to the data we wish to compare or measure.

I. THE "NEW SCIENCE OF POLITICS": OVERT BEHAVIOR AS A PRINCIPLE OF CONCEPT FORMATION

There are two extreme positions that have been taken regarding the nature of concept formation during the recent history of the social sciences. One is the view characteristic of the earlier forms of positivist and empiricist philosophy according to which "any scientific statement, however abstract, could be transformed,
by virtue of the definitions of its constituent terms, into an equivalent statement couched exclusively in observation terms: Science would really deal solely with observables.” As John Stuart Mill suggested, “the backward state of the moral sciences can only be remedied by applying to them the methods of physical science, duly extended and generalized.” For the purpose of scientific inquiry, at least, the behavioral political scientist in the eyes of his critics treats as non-existent all psychic phenomena, especially the valuing activities of human beings, and his concepts must be technical concepts, as remote from everyday, common sense constructs as possible.

Arthur Bentley, of course, is the most emphatic exponent in the recent history of political thought of the idea that the study of politics should confine its inquiry to “observables” or, as Herbert Hochberg puts it, to “overt behavioral patterns.” “My epistemological point of view,”


*This view of what is implied by the behavioral position is appropriate in regard to J. B. Watson’s work, but not with respect to the work of contemporary behavioral scientists. And even exponents of radical behaviorism, while rejecting introspection as a research method, did not deny the existence of conscious mental states. See Ernest Nagel, The Structure of Science, op. cit., pp. 477, 480.


Bentley claimed, “is admittedly naive, as naive, I hope as the point of view of the physical sciences; I nowhere lay any stress on the difference between the conscious and the unconscious. . . .” This statement, it should be observed, does not refer to the techniques of the physical sciences, or to the logic of scientific procedure in general. Bentley is stressing a particular way of looking at phenomena, a way of constructing concepts of the objects of inquiry in the science of politics. In a very general sense, Bentley’s claim of epistemological identity with the physical sciences is quite justified. The “viewpoint” of the physical scientist is indeed not that of introspection, and color and sound have no meaning in his explanations except in terms of wave lengths, which are theoretical constructs interpreted in terms of the observed behavior of material entities.

Theoretical constructs interpreted in terms of the externally observed behavior of humans is the similar goal of Bentley’s political science. For Bentley, ideas and feelings, like color and sound, may be immediately experienced by subjects but cannot be the “raw material” of a science of politics. What, he asks, are “the practical realities” for which these feeling and idea factors stand?

. . . we readily see that they stand for certain regularities . . . in activity stated as individual conduct. For instance, if a child is kind to its cat it is apt to be kind to its dog. We indicate the tendency by calling the child kind-hearted.

However, while these feelings and ideas put themselves forth to be definite dependable things, experience proves that they only conform roughly to the actual activity that can be observed . . . from the standpoint of the feelings we can observe nothing more than unreliable, poorly defined tendencies of activity to correspond to them. Kindness to cat or dog is not accompanied by kindness to snake or mosquito.

When we get to the application of these feeling and idea elements to social interpretation, our difficulties become greatly increased . . . The words commonly used for feelings and ideas break down, and for the social researcher ideas and feelings must be made so definite in meaning . . . that they fit the facts of the case like shadows. . . .

The concepts used by the social scientist must correspond not to the meanings imputed to


their own conduct by the subjects themselves but rather must be constructs referring and corresponding to the external activity of the subjects as observed by the social scientist. "If we can get our social life stated in terms of activity, and of nothing else. . . . we have at least reached a foundation upon which a coherent system of measurements can be built."10 This is the position also of Charles E. Merriam, G. E. G. Catlin and other early proponents of behavioral political studies.11 Essentially the same position has been expressed in more recent polemic. David Apter, for example, argues for the development of "research theory" that is based upon concepts not derived from common sense. "Much of what seems to be a maze of jargon in social science," he points out, "is a direct result of the effort to cut through so-called common sense terms which, upon intensive probing, prove themselves to be of limited usefulness."12 Apter feels that the epistemology that is implicit in most political research has been that of "historicism," or the attempt to discover the ideas of an historical period and the "structures" in which they are expressed.13 The historical approach, unfortunately, has placed undue emphasis on the uniqueness of an age and therefore also on the idea that the age can best be understood through participation in "the social processes on one's environment." Contrary to this approach, Apter contends that "the only way in which questions can be phrased in terms of their maximum significance is to articulate the body of research theory to which the problem is relevant."14 This, in turn, can best be done by developing abstract models of interaction.15 The variables in these models, of course, will be only those which can be scientifically studied and which are significant in terms of the scientific problems which interest the scholar or the profession, rather than in terms of the political problems important in political life.

II. THE "OLD POLITICAL SCIENCE": VERSTEHEN AS AN INSTRUMENT OF EXPLANATION

At the opposite extreme from the radical behaviorists, who maintain the thesis that concepts in the science of politics are to be developed by the observer on the basis of his perception of the overt actions of his subjects, are those who have argued in favor of what is usually called the "verstehen operation."16 Until recently there was little question but that the term verstehen referred to an explanatory technique, the "method" of empathy, or to the intuitive imputation of motives to human agents other than oneself on the basis of one's understanding of one's own motivation. It is the attempt to "understand" social behavior by imputing "springs of action" to the actors involved in it by means of an imaginative identification of the social scientist with the participants in the social situation under analysis. The "external" observation of social behavior, of "patterns of action," from this point of view is at best extremely limited in applicability, and at worst utterly fruitless. The political and social sciences, it is argued, should not, or cannot, be molded along the methodological lines of the physical sciences.

As Theodore Abel describes the "verstehen operation"17 it involves the assumption that the social scientist has within the universe of his experience feelings or emotions which he has subjectively correlated with certain behavior he himself manifested in the past. The social observer also associates, often but not always quite logically, certain groups of value concepts with others—for example, a value concept asserting the value of life might be associated with other attitudes such as, but not necessarily, pacifism.

toleration, and opportunities for individual fulfillment. Then these feelings which are meaningfully associated with each other in the individual are used by him as an investigator to "explain" the behavior of others.

In political science, Leo Strauss, expanding in large part upon the methodological position of Max Weber, agrees with him that human conduct cannot be understood "... without being aware of the standard of judgment that is inherent in the situation and accepted as a matter of course by the actors themselves. ..." He draws a strong distinction between what he calls "the new science of politics" and the old, or Aristotelian, political science on the basis of several criteria, including the notion that "... Aristotelian political science views political things in the perspective of the citizen [prior to judging or evaluating those various perspectives on the basis of "... a more comprehensive and a clearer grasp of man's natural ends and their natural order. ..."] whereas the new political science "... looks at political things from without, in the perspective of the neutral observer ..." Weber himself, of course, believed that verstehende was a method that enabled the social scientist to avoid injecting value judgments into his studies by accepting the self-interpretation of his subjects in the construction of ideal types to be utilized in explanation. For Strauss, however, this aspect of Weber's approach creates a corrupt methodology for the social scientist, for he then falls "victim to every deception and every self-deception of the people one is studying. ..." This is also the position taken by Eric Voegelin, David G. Smith, Charner Perry, Harry V. Jaffa, Henry S. Kariel, to a lesser extent Bernard Crick and, with the emphasis upon methodological as opposed to historical relativity, by Robert M. Barry. From this viewpoint, then, objectivity is impossible, and Weber's own work is an illustration of the fact that it cannot be achieved. In trying to avoid value judgments, Weber merely developed his analyses on the basis of the conceptual framework of his own society, his own historical milieu. Such historical relativity vitiated Weber's attempt to achieve a value-free social science. Verstehen, coupled with the desire to avoid the corruption of historical relativity, forces the social scientist, qua scientist, to make value judgments of a moral kind.

This position is also part of the broader methodological stance taken by Robert M. MacIver, who has argued that the verification of hypotheses in the scientific study of politics takes place on two levels. First of all, statistical analyses and related techniques are to be employed to determine whether and to what extent the phenomena under investigation are associated with other phenomena. All hypotheses must pass those tests before they can be considered for further study. Those hypotheses which meet this requirement must then be analyzed on the second level, where the political scientist tries to discover whether the association or correlation is meaningful. At this level the evidence is

... the depositions, avowals, confessions, justifications, and other testimonies offered by agents, participants, or witnesses, professedly or ostensibly giving their own answers ... to the question of causation ... We must here essay the task of projecting ourselves by sympathetic reconstruction into the situation as it is assessed by others. ...

An even more radical criticism of the idea of a strictly behavioral science of politics that is based on the notion that common-sense criteria determine the concepts of the study of politics has been put forward by Charner Perry. It is more radical because it assumes that the application of the scientific method to a given subject matter


... involves a transformation of the subject matter, a substitution of one point of view and set of terms for another ... briefly, for the common sense universe of discourse ... there must be substituted a system of terms, concepts or categories which abstract from human purposes, needs and ideals, in Veblen's terms, concepts which disclose a 'colorless impersonal sequence of cause and effect.'

Because in social behavior language is not merely an instrument, external to the behavior, "but is rather the essential stuff or structure of the behavior, ..." common sense is teleological and anthropomorphic whereas science, though it originates in common sense, "... in its explicit theory ... uses terms and distinctions which are detached from reference to human desires, needs, or activities." This difference, according to Perry, makes it impossible to apprehend social behavior in the categories necessary in science. While there have been many attempts to describe social action in terms appropriate to natural science, especially in recent years by the behavioralists, Perry considers them all abortive because the distinctions and preconceptions of common sense have quickly reimposed themselves even when mutilated by a strained terminology. Taking the position that he does, it is necessary to stress the fact that Perry is not in his own eyes arguing for the subjective character of political inquiry. He often speaks of the "knowledge" and "facts" we have of political behavior, and toward the end of his analysis he specifically raises the question, How do the terms of social science have objective reference? He answers, however, in terms similar to those of the other critics of "the new science of politics," for he believes that to describe behavior adequately one must do so in terms of norms, in terms of the purposive activity involved, in terms of the common-sense perspective of the agent.

III. VERSTEHEN AS A PRINCIPLE OF CONCEPT FORMATION

Among philosophers the meaning of the term verstehen is still at issue. That interpretation which treats it as referring to how one knows or explains the motives of others, that is, to intuition as an instrument of scientific explanation, has been increasingly called in question. Verstehen, to philosophers who hold this view, such as Nagel and Hempel, is considered to be a subjective process because they hold that understanding the motives of another man's action by means of this procedure depends upon the private, uncontrollable, and unverifiable intuition of the observer. Recent criticism of this view emphasizes an aspect of the concept verstehen that is most significant for the problem of concept formation. It also brings the concept closer to its usage as originally established by Max Weber.

Contrary to Nagel and Hempel, one critic asserts that "social scientists, such as Max Weber ... call Verstehen subjective because its goal is to find out what the actor 'means' in his action. in contrast to the meaning which this action has for the actor's partner or a neutral observer." Verstehen literally means simply of Philosophy," Journal of Philosophy, 50 (1953), 154-157; Lavine's reply, "What is the Method of Naturalism?" Journal of Philosophy, 50 (1953), 157-161. A year later Carl Cohen joined the debate with an article on "Naturalism and the Method of Verstehen," Journal of Philosophy, 51 (April 1, 1954), 220-225.

Alfred Schutz, "Concept and Theory Formation in the Social Sciences," Journal of Philosophy, 51 (April 29, 1954), p. 265. Underlining added. Schutz further observes that the controversy about verstehen "... suffers from the failure to distinguish clearly between Verstehen (1) as the experiential form of common sense knowledge of human affairs, (2) as an epistemological problem, and (3) as a method peculiar to the social sciences." Type (2) represents the way the critics of verstehen deal with its meaning, that is, as a problem in how we know, in general, viz., by intuition or by observation. Type (3), on the other hand, assumes that the logic implicit in the physical and the social sciences is the same, and treats the term as referring to a problem in method peculiar to the social sciences. That is to say, granted that the logic of all the sciences is the same, nevertheless, social reality, the "object of inquiry" in the social sciences (interaction, intersubjectivity, language) requires a method of observation (and therefore a type of concept formation) suitable for those objects, a method that observes actions as they are meant by the actors and not that observes actions with meanings imposed by the observer.

to understand or to comprehend, and thus both usages are plausible. The interpretation of the term by Schutz, however, stresses the goal, or object, of understanding—the actor's meaning—rather than the process of understanding in the mind of the observer.  

This revised interpretation of verstehen, by treating the "subjectively intended meaning" of an action as a problem in concept formation within the social sciences rather than a problem of how we know in general, by intuition or by observation, makes it possible for proponents of the necessity for taking the meaning of action into account to agree with the logical positivists about the nature of the logic of the social sciences. Schutz, for example, agrees with Nagel that all empirical knowledge depends upon discovery through processes of controlled inference, must be capable of being verified by anyone who will execute the proper experiment, and that any method that would require the scientific observer to select and interpret facts in terms of his private value system would never produce a scientific theory.  

Nevertheless, he submits that to the best of his knowledge no "...social scientist of stature...ever advocated such a concept of subjectivity as that criticized by Professor Nagel. Most certainly this was not the position of Max Weber." And he goes on to assert that Nagel and Hempel...are prevented from grasping the point of vital concern to social scientists by their basic philosophy of sensationalistic empiricism or logical positivism, which identifies experience with sensory observation and which assumes that the only alternative to controllable and, therefore, objective sensory observation is that of subjective and, therefore, uncontrollable and unverifiable introspection.  

This identification of experience with sensory observation in general and of the experience of overt action in particular excludes a great many of the more significant dimensions of social reality from all possible inquiry, as Schutz makes clear by listing several examples:

a) Even an ideally refined behaviorism can only explain the behavior of the observed, and not of the observing, behaviorist. (This, he says, has been shown by George H. Mead in Mind, Self and Society.)

b) The same overt behavior (say, a tribal pageant as it can be captured by the movie-camera) may have an entirely different meaning to the performers of different tribes. What interests the scientist is precisely whether it is a war dance, a barter (trade), the reception of a friendly ambassador, or something else of this sort.

c) 'Negative actions,' that is, intentional refraining from acting, escapes sensory observation. (See Max Weber's Theory of Social and Economic Organization, p. 88.) Not to sell certain merchandise at a given price is doubtless as economic an action as to sell it.

d) As W. I. Thomas has shown in Social Behavior and Personality (E. H. Volkart, ed., 1951, p. 81), social reality contains elements of belief and conviction which are real because so defined by the participants and which escape sensory observation.

e) Finally, and this is deemed most important by Schutz, the postulate of sensory observation of overt human behavior takes as a model a particular and relatively small sector of the social world, namely, situations in which the acting individual is given to the observer in what is commonly called a face-to-face relationship. But, there are many other dimensions of the social world in which situations of this kind do not prevail—e.g., mailing a letter assumes faith in a vast system of social relationships we do not observe; as does reading an editorial about the French fearing the rearmament of Germany. In all these cases we know what is meant without observing overt behavior.

In order to take into account all of the di-

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p. Winch makes the similar claim that critics of Weber have misunderstood him. Winch claims that Sinn is the subjectively intended sense or meaning which an act has for the actor, and verstehen is to understand that, and not to have some special inner sense, or intuition, of causal relations. Weber explicitly asserted the necessity of verifying hypotheses through statistical laws based on observation of what happens. Peter Winch, The Idea of a Social Science (New York: Humanities Press, 1958), pp. 117-119, 112-113.

1 Alfred Schutz, op. cit., pp. 260-261.

dimensions of social reality, therefore, Schutz argues that the social scientist must make use of his "common sense knowledge of everyday life." "This is so, because the world (the natural and the social one) is from the outset an intersubjective world and because . . . our knowledge of it is in various ways socialized."34 Having nothing to do with introspection as a method opposed to scientific verification, verstehen is a result of processes of learning or acculturation. Moreover, according to Schutz, it is by no means a private affair of the observer which cannot be controlled by other observers. In his interpretation, verstehen is controllable and determinable at least to the same extent as, for example, the private perceptions of facts and the "intent" of the defendant in trials for murder.35

34 Alfred Schutz, op. cit., p. 263. This "intersubjectivity" appears quite clearly as Schutz points out, in the self-correcting process of scientific inquiry itself. Science is a social enterprise, "but the postulate to describe and explain behavior in terms of controllable sensory observation stops short before the description and explanation of the process by which scientist B controls and verifies the observational findings of scientist A and the conclusions drawn by him. In order to do so, B has to know what A has observed, what the goal of his inquiry is, why he thought the observed fact worthy of being observed, i.e., relevant to the scientific problem at hand, etc. This knowledge is commonly called understanding. The explanation of how such a mutual understanding of human beings might occur is apparently left to the social scientist. But whatever his explanation might be, one thing is sure, namely, that such an intersubjective understanding between scientist B and scientist A occurs neither by scientist B's observation of scientist A's overt behavior, nor by introspection performed by B, nor by identification of B with A." Ibid, p. 262.

35 Ibid., p. 264. The "intersubjective (objective) nature of this learning process is analyzed by Schutz in "Common Sense and Scientific Interpretation of Human Action," Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, 14, No. 1 (September, 1953), p. 12. He relates the origin of common constructs to the understanding imparted by communication, which in turn depends on "a community of time and space" between the persons involved. And the latter implies that a certain sector of the outer world is equally within the reach of each person, and that they can interchange positions to acquire the perspective of the other. Significantly, Schutz cites Charles H. Cooley and George Mead on this matter.

The similarity, if not identity, between "so-
cept formation described above—namely, that classifications of social action must be in terms of concepts which are meaningful to the agent as well as to the observer—is therefore the only course of action open to the student of social behavior and institutions. But this in no way implies a non-behavioral position regarding the problem of verification. It is not that a different way of knowing (namely, “scientific” as against “intuitive”) is at the basis of the differences between the physical and the social sciences, but that the object of knowledge is different. The social sciences must develop concepts of the intentional dimension of social reality. Thus, as Natanson recognizes, the “subjectivism” of Weber’s postulate of interpretation does not mean that private, unverifiable elements are involved in the verification of hypotheses. As he quite correctly puts it, “it is concerned rather with the conceptual framework within which social reality may be comprehended.”

IV. THE PRACTICE OF CONCEPT FORMATION IN THE BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE OF POLITICS

The methodological principle that the concepts of the political scientist must be meaningful to the actor as well as to the observer is a principle that is exemplified in contemporary behavioral research without upsetting the verifiability principle. It would be impossible within the scope of this article to cite as evidence in support of this statement all relevant instances of empirical research accomplished since the turn of the century. Nevertheless, the conclusion that behavioral research conforms to this principle would seem to be justifiable if the two general types of inquiry, as illustrated by work which is accepted as representative by leaders of the behavioral movement, were indeed found to conform to this principle of concept formation.

Attitude Studies. One broad area of inquiry which has become prominent among behavioral students of politics has been the study of orientations toward the political process. In this area socio-psychological phenomena such as motives, attitudes, and opinions are analyzed and used to explain such types of behavior as party preferences, voting participation, and the psychological bases of political extremism. The individual is the source of these types of primary data although often the analysis is developed in terms of the significant groups in a given society.

The study of attitudes and motives (relative to political ideology) is conveniently illustrated in the research done in this area by Herbert McClosky. The report which describes these investigations into the relationships between personality attributes and conservative ideology succinctly and lucidly indicates that the procedures used in the formation of his basic concepts are completely in accord with the methodological principle which we have argued is a necessary assumption in social and political inquiry. Recognizing that the term “conservatism” is an important and common one in political life, and one that is used in different contexts to refer to the ideas of Burke, laissez-faire liberals, critics of the New Deal, or Republicans of any persuasion, McClosky admits that the definition that he has chosen to employ in his research, and the measure that was constructed from this definition, will not be satisfactory to everyone. However, the major point of interest to us is not the content of his definition but the manner in which he went about constructing it and the subsequent scales based on it. He began this construction by attempting “to extract from the tradition of self-styled conservative thought, and especially from the writings of Edmund Burke, a set of principles representing that tradition as fairly as possible. We have concentrated,” he explains, “upon those attitudes and values that continually recur among acknowledged conservative thinkers and that appear to comprise the invariant elements of the conservative outlook.”


Ibid., p. 30.
From these rather vague generalizations culled from conservative literature McClosky went on to isolate an "initial pool of 43 items"—that is to say, a tentative set of fairly brief and straightforward statements embodying what he thought were elements of conservative doctrine. This entire set of items was then submitted, "through survey methods, to a large general sample of persons in the vicinity of the Twin Cities who were asked to state, in relation to each item, whether they agreed or disagreed." This was done in order to select items which clustered sufficiently "to convince us that they belonged to the same universe, . . ." to reduce the number of items, and to insure consistency among them. With the twelve-item conservatism measure that emerged from the analysis of the results of this survey, McClosky found that he could rank people from extreme conservatism at one end to liberalism on the other in a manner very close to the ranking obtained using the original 43-item pool.

In addition, the procedures used to validate the scale, like those used to construct it, exemplify the methodological principle previously stated. In order to determine the degree to which the scale measured what it purported to measure, McClosky submitted subsets of items from the twelve-item conservatism scale

. . . to an advanced class in political theory, whose members had no prior knowledge of the study or its purposes. Each student was asked to supply a name or label for the group of statements and to write a paragraph explaining or justifying the label he had chosen. Of 48 students participating, 39 volunteered the word *Conservatism* as best describing the sentiments expressed in the statements, five offered names that were virtually synonymous with conservatism (e.g., traditionalism), while two supplied other names and two did not answer.43

Thus, just as McClosky developed his original propositions ("items" in the questionnaire which defined the operational concept of conservatism) out of statements drawn from the traditional doctrines of conservatism, so he also validated the concept of conservatism by determining whether living persons who were presumably aware of the contemporary definitions of conservatism in the tradition of political thought and in American society shared the same concept of conservatism. Undoubtedly it would be possible for a "crude behaviorist" to claim that all that this study is based on is the assumption that a conservative is someone who is defined by a series of marks on a certain sheet of paper. "Conservatism is what conservatism tests test," one might say, echoing the well-known tautology about IQ tests. This, however, was not McClosky's assumption. His introductory remarks clearly indicate his assumption that conservatism, like liberalism, is a set of ideas that are actually efficacious in orienting human behavior and have been, and are, historically existent. Conservatism is not, that is, merely a scientific construct, a classification developed in the minds of scholars in the hope that it might serve as an index of future behavior, much as a high score on an IQ examination seems to serve as a sign of future high performance in college.

On the contrary, conservatism is primarily a complex of notions that is actually operative in political life and McClosky's "Conservatism scale" is an attempt to measure, in the sense of ranking, a number of individuals along what is assumed to be a real attitude dimension. By forming his basic concepts on the basis of the expressions of conservative ideas given him by both past and present social actors or agents who are active, at least intellectually, in political life, he has insured that his eventual explanations of political preference, belief, and affiliation are based on concepts which are meaningful to those agents as well as to the scientific observer.

Attitude studies such as McClosky's thus indicate how it is possible to form, through the development of scales, objective concepts of so-called subjective meaning-structures. In the science of politics, as in all empirical sciences, the concepts we are dealing with have intersubjective validity and are not merely introspective, and the propositions we are dealing with—though there is an element of *verstehen* in their constituent concepts—are verifiable through methods that are similar in all the sciences.44

"In addition to examining the contributions in the science of politics toward understanding the "orientations toward politics" which we have been discussing, Heinz Eulau's *Political Behavior* examines research done on the "agents and techniques of political power" and on activities going on in the "arena of political decision-making." The first is concerned with leadership studies, studies of the "mechanisms" by means of which influences are mobilized and transmitted. Often these studies are simply historical-descriptive analyses of social origins, religious affiliations, etc. See pp. 184–193. Where they are not, they are similar to the studies
Participation Studies. Another major type of inquiry is that which studies modes of political participation. For example, in a research study done a few years ago to determine how the Standard Oil Company (N.J.) stands with the American public, it became important to also find out who are most articulate in their feelings about big corporations and most concerned to attack or defend them. Since it was necessary to segregate the people who are relatively active in relation to national political issues from those who are relatively inactive, it was first necessary to define what "political activity" would mean for the purposes of this study.

While we are not interested in the content of the definition, the procedures followed in developing it are relevant. In defining "political activity" the authors first wrote out a large number of questions which they thought would throw light on an individual's political behavior, and then they tried these questions out "in personal interviews with a test national sample of American adults. Some of the questions were found not to work well in doorstep interviews, and were discarded. Others were found to yield results so closely intercorrelated that one question could in effect stand for several others."

For our purposes, it is important to note that some questions were found to mean the same as several others, and could, in fact, be used in place of several other questions. The criteria of identity utilized in forming this concept of "political activity" were developed in terms that were as meaningful to the agents as to the observers on two levels. The first level is the level of language which is shared by agent and investigator; and, while this point is often neglected, this is what makes it possible for the scientist to "rough-up" a set of preliminary questions with the assurance that they will have at least a minimum of mutual significance and utility. But, secondly, we can also see in these studies that a conscious attempt was made to reduce the questions to the fewest which are most meaningful to the respondents, which most correspond to what they conceive of as "political activity." Aside from "face validity" (meaningfulness on the shared language level), the authors only claim that the resultant set of questions works well "in the sense that the questions are comprehended and answered with apparently little exaggeration by people of all educational levels and political persuasions." What does this mean but that the investigator and the agent both understood the meaning of the questions, and that the investigator in some way felt that he knew that the agent understood?

Participation studies of this sort are relatively simple versions of the more complex studies which have come to be called studies of "community power structure." While some of these studies make use of a certain amount of participant observation, they all depend almost wholly on interviewing. Included in the interview schedules are always questions designed to measure what Herbert Simon calls "beliefs as to where legitimate power lies." In a recent study of participation in a small community, for example, "the sample was asked to nominate others as 'generally more influential,' and influential in regard to school matters, local government affairs and community welfare policies. . ." In addition, in regard to these same issues, the respondents were asked to designate potential policy advisors by asking them: "Whom could you go to among your personal acquaintances, or persons you feel you could go to, for advice as to what should be done in regard . . ." to these issues." The use of questions of this type indicates, again, that the political scientist wants and needs to develop concepts which are as meaningful to the agents as to the investigator. Answers to questions such as "Whom could you go to among your acquaintances for advice? . . ." obviously assume notions in the mind of the agent asked about the rule or norm of behavior that he is following in this context. "Though I am not now in the process of actually seeking such advice," the answer might be, "I make it a rule to consult X." Even in those cases in which the answer must be descriptive of past behavior—as in answer to the question, "whom have you consulted during the past year on issue Y?"—it

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"For example, Julian L. Woodward and Elmo Roper, "Political Activity of American Citizens," reprinted from this REVIEW, 44 (December, 1950), 872-885, in Heinz Eulau, and others (eds.), op. cit., p. 133.

"Loc. cit.

should be clear that the question implicitly assumes that the principle according to which X has been consulted about Y continues to hold. For if, at the time the question was asked, the agent or respondent no longer intended to consult X, the proper answer would be, "I did see X, but now I distrust his judgment and will no longer consult him." At that time, X is no longer an influential in this respect. Clearly, in no case do we actually see the agent consulting X, nor do we know that his visit is to be identified as "a consultation about policy Y" unless he tells us that that is the meaning it has for him and for X. This "meaning," since it involves concepts (normative), can only be "discovered" by having them expressed in the form of statements or propositions—which is why interviews and questionnaires are so widely used in the social sciences, and why anthropologists entering upon the study of some exotic society must learn the language and saturate themselves in the traditions and history of the society. The latter is the only way that they can understand the patterns of action which are the institutions of the society. "Patterns of activity," therefore, actually are normative concepts communicated to the investigators by the agents. Survey re-

In a recent methodological study of anthropology S. F. Nadel wrote that it is invariably necessary for the anthropologist to go into the field and make himself "familiar" with the culture (usually primitive) that he wishes to study and overcome its strangeness by "something like an intellectual assimilation." Significantly, he stresses the fact that the study of the native language will probably have to precede the study of culture and social life. Since the meaning of terms and sentences of this new language cannot be gotten by counting the letters or words "scientifically" but must be learned, Nadel is obviously implying that before any of the "objective" controls used by anthropologists can be applied the investigator must learn the meaning of the concepts, and therefore of the institutions, of the new culture. S. F. Nadel, The Foundations of Social Anthropology (Glencoe: Free Press, 1951), p. 6. Underlining added.

It is also relevant to note the criteria Nadel suggests for isolating different types of so-called action patterns. "We have long held," he states, "that the order of things to which social institutions belong is built up through collecting together standardized action patterns on the grounds of their aim contents. . . . It might also seem that the people we observe themselves have names for these 'summaries' of related action patterns—'marriage,' 'family,' 'chiefship,' 'property,' and the like. All such names . . . stand for normative con-

search, field studies or participant observation are techniques of applying the methodological principle that behavioral concepts, or constructs of "what is to count as doing the same thing," are derived from the normative concepts held by the subjects studied.49

V. THE RECENT REVISION OF BEHAVIOR THEORY

The thesis we have been supporting can be placed in a larger context by considering some of the recent changes that have occurred in behavior theory proper—that is, in the psychological theory of human behavior. These changes apparently have been neglected by both the opponents and the theoretical proponents of behaviorism in the study of politics.

Charles E. Osgood, in a recent analysis of some of the major trends in psychological theory, revealed the agreement among psychologists that the basic principles of simple stimulus-response (S-R) psychology are insufficient (but not necessarily wholly invalid) for an adequate analysis of human behavior.50 In his lucid summary of the development of behavior theory in psychology, Osgood declares that the psychologist has always thought of himself as limited to observing what goes into the human organism, or "stimuli," and what comes out of it, or "responses." Between these two points at which observation is possible, there lies what he calls a "no-man's land of speculation." This "area" is, at least for the physiologist, the nervous system; sometimes psychologists have referred to it as "the little black box" in which stimuli are focused and in which, it is assumed, responses are created. Now, according to early behavior theory concepts; the institution represents, for the actor, a rule or norm, and has that kind of reality, that is, the non-spatial and in a sense timeless validity of concepts." Ibid., p. 107. Underlining added.

In addition to Peter Winch, loc. cit., see Michael Argyle, The Scientific Study of Social Behavior (London: Methuen, 1957), pp. 14–26, where it is pointed out that the social scientist has two general types of measuring instruments all his own, namely, the different kinds of interview and questionnaire, and the techniques of controlled observation (the types we have discussed), and where it is also stated that investigators must be "... well steeped in the culture of the group members, ..." to insure the correctness of their interpretations of the results of their tests and observations.

... the psychologist's task is to explain and predict relations between and among his two sets of observables, stimuli and responses, and to do this he must make certain assumptions about what goes on in the little black box. In other words, psychological theory, as contrasted with psychological observation, is made up of hunches about how the nervous system operates.\(^\text{31}\)

Over the last century, however, psychologists found that a variety of phenomena appeared again and again in the midst of their traditional inquiries which proved embarrassing to the old single-stage (S-R) conception of behavior. These were symbolic phenomena, or "representational mediation processes." In their attempts to come to terms with these phenomena, Osgood points out that psychologists have produced a slow refinement in the rules of procedure by which they made and tested their "hunches" about what went on in the "little black box." His description of these developments is interesting, amusing, and succinct:

In nineteenth-century psychology the characteristic procedure in theorizing was to simply postulate a new entity or mechanism whenever some new regularity was discovered. Whenever something needed explaining, a new explanatory device was stuck inside the little black box, and it rapidly became chock-full of ill-assorted and ill-digested demons. For every nameable phenomenon of human behavior a different 'faculty' would be posited to explain it; for every nameable motive, a different 'instinct' would be listed as its explanation. And ... Freud had big, flat-footed Super egos stomping around on red slippery Ids, while cleverly anxious little Egos tried to arbitrate. Thus ... the little black box was filled with a wonderfully diverse collection of explanatory devices, just about as many as there were things to be explained. This could fairly be called 'junk-shop psychology.'

In direct revulsion against this brand of theorizing, a group of American Behaviorists around the turn of the century went to the other extreme, claiming that the psychologist was better off if he made no assumptions whatsoever about what went on in the little black box ... . This viewpoint toward theory has come to be known as 'empty organism psychology.' According to this view ... there is absolutely nothing in the region between S and R, and what is there is none of the psychologist's business.\(^\text{32}\)

Gradually it became necessary for psychologists to postulate some sort of intervening variable between S and R. They had to put some-thing back into the "little black box," as it were, in order to explain their observations. The contemporary behaviorist therefore has postulated an intervening or internal response-like process which produces self-stimulation. In other words, "... modern 'mediation psychology' sets up within the organism a replica of the S-R model, and it assumes that the same laws governing single-stage S-R process apply to both stages of the mediation model."\(^\text{33}\)

Osgood goes on to develop much more complicated models of this mediation process, but the point remains the same. The observed behavior not only of humans, but also of animals, suggests that it is necessary to assume that often external stimuli arouse some intervening process which in turn produces a certain behavior—"'problem solving," 'learning," etc.—which is partially independent of the stimulus. Osgood mentions several facts in both animal and human behavior which cannot be handled with a single-stage S-R model.\(^\text{34}\) The term generally used to refer to this intervening process is "symbolic mechanism"—but, though the phrase seems Hobbesian, the methodology appropriate to a study of symbolic behavior indicates that a mechanistic analogy is inappropriate. As Osgood states, this type of theory ... places a premium on developing methods of indexing representational states, e.g., measuring meaning, particularly in human organisms. My own research ... has been directed chiefly along these lines. Dealing with language responses themselves—which, after all, are supposed to be "expressions of meaning"—we have been trying to discover a limited number of basic factors or dimensions along which meaningful reactions vary and hence can be measured.\(^\text{35}\)

It seems to me that in "dealing with language responses" Osgood—and other modern behaviorists dealing with somewhat different problems—must operate in a context of shared meaning with their "respondents" or "subjects." That this is the case is indicated by an example given in Osgood's article of a study of abstract "assigns," that is to say, symbols or terms whose meanings are literally assigned through repeated association with simpler signs having direct behavioral reference.\(^\text{36}\) This implies that

\(^{31}\) Ibid., pp. 217–218.

\(^{32}\) Ibid., pp. 219–220.
meanings can have an existence independent of immediate physical stimuli. As Osgood points out, it is precisely this which makes possible imitation, identification, and the sharing of personality and culture traits. Furthermore, it is precisely this learning process that lies at the bottom of all types of social behavior. And it is this capacity of personality to construct "equivalences" (which refer to the same fact that Peter Winch called the need and the ability to formulate rules) which lies at the bottom of concept formation in everyday life as well as in the professional life of the behavioral scientist. Thus, the philosophical objection of Peter Winch to behaviorism—that the social scientist must base his judgments of identity, his classifications, and therefore his entire conceptual scheme on the judgments of identity (or the meaning) attributed to their own and others' behavior by the subjects studied themselves—is a valid criticism of what Osgood has called the "single-stage S-R process" or early behaviorism, but it provides only a philosophical clarification of modern behavior theory.

Thus, both the present practices of behavioral students of politics and contemporary behavioral theory have converged toward a rediscovery of mind in the sense of assuming representational states whose meaning is expressed by language responses. No longer is mind nothing but a "subjective entity" to be discarded from scientific inquiry according to the program of Bentley and the "radical behaviorists." And the techniques which have been developed to rank individuals along attitude dimensions according to their meaningful statements (not, it should be noted, to "measure" the concepts in their heads) do not merely apply the methods of the physical sciences to the "moral sciences" as Mill and his intellectual descendents hoped would be possible. No physical scientist is ever required in his studies to ask questions of his objects of inquiry as part of the process of concept formation; yet, this has become in practice and in theory a fundamental principle of behavioral research.

VI. CONCLUSION

The notion that it is possible and sufficient to observe overt patterns of social interaction in the same way it is possible to observe the pattern of tracks left in the snow by some winter stroller belongs to the doctrines of early behaviorism as exemplified in political theory in the writings of Bentley. Although it is no longer present in either the theory or practice of behavioral science, it remains a vestigial feature of the idea of a science of politics in the minds of some of its critics. These critics have advocated the thesis that the study of politics cannot eliminate common sense notions of events and behavior and the distinctions made in ordinary language.

However, a critical understanding of the notion of verstehen, which has been put forth as the method of discovering common-sense meanings, led to the conclusion that indeed the political scientist must base his judgments of identity, and therefore his classifications, on the judgments of identity (or the meaning) attributed to their own and others' behavior by the subjects or agents who are being studied. Participants in the social situation itself "define the situation," that is, define the underlying norms guiding action, and therefore also the institutions and "patterns of behavior" that the political scientist investigates. But we also concluded that developing criteria of identity and forming concepts is a problem of semantics, and thus a philosophical problem. Therefore, our procedures at this level of rational activity do not change the fact that, once those concepts have been formed and made use of in the construction of scientific hypotheses, the procedures or methods for verifying hypotheses are logically the same in the social as in the physical sciences.

39 We may agree with Nagel and with Schutz that all of the empirical sciences must be objective "in the sense that their propositions are subjected to controlled verifications and must not refer to private uncontrollable experience." Alfred Schutz, op. cit., p. 270. We may also agree that in the empirical sciences, theory means "the explicit formulation of determinate relations between a set of variables in terms of which a fairly extensive class of empirically ascertained regularities can be explained . . ." (and that) "neither the fact that these regularities have in the social sciences a rather narrowly restricted universality, nor the fact that they permit prediction only to a rather limited extent, constitutes a basic difference between the social and the natural sciences, since many branches of the latter show the same features." Ibid., pp. 260-261. See also Ernest Nagel, The Structure of Science, pp. 484-485.

See also Donald Davidson's defense of the notion that explanation by motives is a species of causal explanation rather than incompatible with it: The Journal of Philosophy, 60 (November 7, 1963), 685-700.

A careful analysis of the various meanings of "meaning" and "understanding" which makes clear how a scientist can "understand" say, religion, as an observer without "understanding" it as a believer is presented by May Brodbeck in "Mean-
ing and Action," *Philosophy of Science*, 30 (1963), 309–324. Professor Brodbeck also argues our thesis that participation in a culture is necessary to achieve *both* these (and other) kinds of "understanding"; yet that the use of a common language for communication is not incompatible with the viewpoint of the scientific observer. Both articles are reprinted in May Brodbeck (ed.), *Readings in the Philosophy of the Social Sciences* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1968), pp. 44–78.

The methodology of political science then becomes: "How is it possible to form objective concepts and an objectively verifiable theory of subjective meaning-structures?" How this is possible, as well as evidence for the fact that modern behavioral scientists actually do form their concepts on the basis of concepts that are meaningful to the agents being studied, was illustrated by examining some recent behavioral research.68


A difficult problem arises, however, as soon as this viewpoint is accepted. That is the problem created by the possibility that an actor might himself be wrong regarding what he is doing or intending to do. Neurosis, obtuseness, malice, lack of knowledge regarding possible unintended consequences all make it difficult for the social scientist to equate an individual’s expressed intention with the "real meaning" of his act. On the surface it would seem that modern research technology does cope with this problem through proper questions and analysis of answers. On the other hand, the problem of unintended consequences especially would seem to push one on from the level of concept formation to the level of explanation. In either case, the problem seems sufficiently complex and related to other aspects of theory construction to warrant separate investigation.