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**THE PAROCHIALISM OF THE
UNIVERSAL,
OR BEWARE OF AMERICAN POLITICAL
SCIENTISTS BEARING GIFTS***

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“I have seen the future and it works.”

-Lincoln Steffens, in an oft-quoted 1919 letter written upon his return from visiting the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

“... for Hegel the highest and final stage of the world-process came together in his own Berlin existence.... he has implanted in a generation leavened throughout by him the worship of the ‘power of History’, that practically turns every moment into a sheer gaping at success, into an idolatry of the actual.... But the man who has once learnt to crook the knee and bow the head before the power of History, nods ‘yes’ at last, like a Chinese doll, to every power, whether it be a government or a public opinion or a numerical majority....If each success has come by a ‘rational necessity,’ and every event shows the victory of logic . . . then down on your knees quickly, and let every step in the ladder of success have its reverence.”

-Friedrich Nietzsche, *On The Use and Abuse of History for Life* (Chapter 1.8), 1874

I am an American political scientist who is also the editor of an official “flagship” journal of the *American Political Science Association*. And I want to discuss some current developments in American political science that trouble me. But instead of claiming to “represent” American political science, I want to problematize this identity, in three ways: (1) by raising questions about the way this specific discipline seems to be heading (progressing, modernizing, or perhaps regressing); (2) by challenging the intellectual authority of certain disciplinary leaders to speak for the entire discipline of American political science much less the discipline of political science or political

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inquiry more generally, and (3) to do this with a particular mindfulness of the fact that I am engaging fellow political scientists who are not American political scientists but *Romanian* political scientists. My purpose is twofold: to share a perspective on some current developments in American political science, and to raise some more general questions about political science, publicity, and public life that are both disciplinary and political, and can only be answered in practice, by practitioners who are mindful and reflective and who, to quote Hannah Arendt, are not simply doing what their teachers tell them to do but who are *thinking* about what they are doing.

Because these questions can ultimately be answered only in practice, in many ways the answers at which we arrive will differ depending on the different practical situations in which we find ourselves. Here differences of national tradition and historical experience matter—and there is no denying that academic disciplines arise differently in different countries with different university systems and different histories of state development. At the same time, it would be foolish to essentialize the “national” dimensions of political science. For there are many different forms of association and experience that bear on the work that we do. And ideas, and the intellectuals who hold them, are constantly moving, diffusing, migrating. Indeed, in many ways we are part of a global network of political science that exceeds any national borders and identities. At the same time, due largely to accidents of birth, we occupy different places in this global network, which is also, alas, a global hierarchy.

I occupy a privileged position in this hierarchy. It would be bad faith for me to deny it. At the same time, I try to use my position to broaden conversations and to question conventional wisdoms. And if one purpose here is to tell you about certain developments in the U.S. that trouble me, a second is to join with you in real conversation about what these things might mean for you.

And here my polemical takeaway point is simple: the kinds of intellectual “modernization” offered by American Political Science furnish some real benefits, especially technical ones; but they do not represent the riddle of history solved. (And if there is any place where the worship of History should be revolting, it is here.) And indeed they have their own pathologies, and thus have their own internal critics. It is my hope that political scientists *not* from America—Romanian political scientists, Czech political scientists, Brazilian political scientists, Egyptian political scientists, Burmese political scientists, Nigerian political scientists—can learn from the debates taking place in American political science, and can also contribute to these debates. More importantly, it is my hope that we can all, together, contribute to nourishing a global disciplinary network that is truly ecumenical, pluralistic, and relevant.

Recent Developments in U.S. Political Science

It is almost impossible to overstate the diversity and plurality of U.S. political science. APSA—the *American Political Science Association*-- has over 45 organized sections and publishes two flagship journals—the *American Political Science Review* and *Perspectives on Politics*-- and approximately twenty organized section journals (ranging from *Politics and Gender* and the new *Journal of Race, Ethnicity and Politics* to *Political Analysis*, *Political Behavior*, *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, and the new *Journal of Experimental Political Science*). There are a great many ways that political scientists analyze the world and generate interesting understandings, theories, and explanations of the world—which I prefer to call *perspectives on politics*.

At the same time, the dominant tendency in American political science ever

since the so-called “behavioral revolution” of the late 1950’s has been the development of ever more sophisticated methodologies and ever more specialized inquiries. If you open up what are considered by disciplinary elites to be the “big three” of American political science journals—the *American Political Science Review*, the *American Journal of Political Science*, and the *Journal of Politics*—you will discover that almost all of the articles published in these journals employ either sophisticated statistical methods, formal modeling, or, increasingly, randomized experimental research. You will also discover that unless you are quite adept in using these methods, you will find it very difficult to read and understand most of what appears on the pages.

Approximately 15 years ago, APSA decided to create a second flagship journal to feature a wider range of political science research and writing. *Perspectives on Politics* was one important part of a broader process of rethinking that has taken place in American political science over the past two decades, mirroring similar processes that have unfolded in other social science disciplines (such as the movements for “Public Sociology” and “Post-Autistic Economics”). This rethinking was most recently spurred by the highly publicized “Perestroika” movement within the discipline, which sought to promote greater methodological pluralism, greater transparency and openness in disciplinary institutions, and for some also greater “relevance” (See the symposium centered on Gunnell, 2015).

Perspectives on Politics was created in response to this intellectual ferment. One impulse behind the journal’s founding was the felt need for the discipline to have a broader public profile, and a venue that, in the words of founding Editor Jennifer Hochschild (2003), “reaches across and outside our discipline and seeks to draw all of its members, and others, into a conversation about politics, policy, power, and the study thereof.” As Robert Putnam noted in his 2002 APSA Presidential Address, “The Public Role of Political Science,” this impulse was hardly new in the discipline, which has experienced continual cycles of argumentation pitting “scientific rigor” against breadth of approach and “relevance,” and has progressed through the unfolding of this productive tension. As Putnam wrote: “in all the social sciences, waves of scientism and activism have succeeded one another in a dialectic process . . . we are nearing the end of a period in which activism has been de-emphasized and even de-legitimized by our professional norms.” Putnam’s address made the case for a political science that is sophisticated, systematic, and rigorous and at the same time has “a greater public presence” and significance (2003).

If one impulse behind the journal was a felt need for the profession to address matters of public consequence, another was the sense that political science had become hyper-specialized and balkanized, consisting of subgroups of scholars who spoke only to each other in increasingly private languages, to the detriment of both collegiality and real intellectual *progress*. Gabriel Almond articulated this concern in his widely-cited 1988 *crie de coeur*, “Separate Tables: Schools and Sects in Political Science,” which bemoaned the fact that increasing numbers of young political scientists were vacating the broad “cafeteria of the center” in favor of the exotic specialties on offer at “separate tables (1988).” Almond wrote as a former leader of the “behavioral revolution” now reflecting on a revolution gone astray, a self-described former “Young Turk” who had come to feel that his own broad theoretical background and wide-ranging interests had marked him as a “dinosaur” in a discipline enamored of “virtuoso mathematical and statistical displays” and other forms of esoteric expression. Almond’s rhetorical appeal to a “vital center” that was in danger of extinction indeed harkened back to the *early* days of behavioralism, and to what Ira Katznelson (2003) has labeled its interest

in “political studies enlightenment.” It was none other than Almond’s behaviorist colleague David Easton, who wrote, in a 1951 *Journal of Politics* article entitled “The Decline of Modern Political Theory,” that: “our value framework becomes of crucial significance for what is generally viewed as empirical research. It influences the kind of problems we select for research and the way in which we interpret results . . . unless the latter is constantly aware that he himself does make value decisions, and that his research is inevitably immersed in an ethical perspective, he is apt to forget that social science lives in order to meet human needs. By shying away from his own role as a value builder, as well as analyzer, the research worker is less apt to identify the crucial problems of human life in society that require examination. In part, this search for an amoral science and its correlative hostility to a creative redefinition of values accounts for the feeling today that social science lives isolated in an ivory tower (1951: 36, 58).” The parallels between the intellectual situation Easton described in 1951, and the post-behavioral pathologies bemoaned by Almond in 1988, are striking. The fact that the critical descriptions were offered by former leaders of the discipline’s move toward a more “scientific” profile who are regarded as heroes of the political science “mainstream” is telling. It underscores the *centrality* of this journal’s mission to our discipline’s core commitments.

Perspectives on Politics was created to foster the kind of scholarly reflexivity, and broad mindedness, that Easton extolled, and that *APSR* editor Lee Siegelman endorsed, in 2002, when he called for a greater “intellectual diversity [that] endows political science with vibrancy, energy, and openness to new and often challenging perspectives (2002).” It also reflected the thinking behind the APSA Task Force on Graduate Education created in 2002 by President Theda Skocpol, which underscored the advantages of social scientific specialization, but also highlighted the pressing need for political scientists to “communicate clearly to each other and to broader publics” why and how their inquiries promote “improved understandings of substantively important features of human life (2004: 3).”

Perspectives, in short, represented something new that in fact was also something of a throwback, to a time, not that long ago, when political scientists across the discipline, regardless of subfield, methodological orientation, or political perspective, could talk meaningfully to each other about their work, and could open the pages of their discipline’s “flagship journal” and read everything or almost everything—not just article abstracts or introductions, but *entire articles*-- with genuine understanding and *interest*.¹¹ At the dawn of the twenty-first century, American political science, only a century old in institutional terms, seemed to have outgrown such broad disciplinary understanding. The size of the profession, the increased sophistication and specialization of political science research, and the heightened sense of epistemic expertise that attended the “maturation” of political science as a profession and a discipline, made it increasingly difficult for political scientists to do and to share their “best” research in ways that were broadly intelligible even to their own disciplinary colleagues. The discipline, in short, seemed to have lost its core—a common, public language of concepts and concerns capable of facilitating serious critical engagement, mutual understanding, and intellectual learning across the field as a whole, and thus indirectly beyond the field.

In its 13 years of operation, *Perspectives on Politics* has been enormously successful. We regularly and efficiently fill over 1200 pages per year. Our article submissions have

1 I am speaking here about intelligibility; the discipline has a history of being quite “exclusive” in its disinterest in questions of class, race, and gender.

climbed dramatically, from around 150 per year when I assumed editorship, to over 250 per year now (there are other journals that receive more submissions; but only half of our pages are dedicated to articles; we publish over 300 reviews a year of over 400 books; and many of these appear in special formats). Perhaps one sign of the interest in the journal is the fact that *Perspectives* went from being unranked by the Thomson-Reuters Citation index to being ranked number 9 in 2012 to being ranked number 2 in 2014, behind only the *APSR*.² Most importantly, I believe that we are a high *quality* journal that is read widely and taken seriously by our readers.

At the same time, there has recently emerged a new form of positivism in the discipline, associated with a very different conception of political science than the one to which *Perspectives* has been linked from the start.

What do I mean in speaking of a resurgent neo-positivism? I mean, very simply, a reenergized and dynamic commitment to the idea that the most important challenge of a “progressive” political science is to promote “scientific rigor,” methodological hyper-sophistication, and expert authority. This takes many forms. But the general approach is outlined in Gary King’s 2014 “Restructuring Social Science: Reflections from Harvard’s Institute for Quantitative Social Science.” As King observes: “The social sciences are in the midst of an historic change, with large parts moving from the humanities to the sciences in terms of research style, infrastructural needs, data availability, empirical methods, substantive understanding, and the ability to make swift and dramatic progress. The changes have consequences for everything social scientists do and all that we plan as members of university communities (2014: 1).” King’s argument centers on the recent progress of quantitative social science. Driven by intellectual ingenuity and “the enormous quantities of highly informative data inundating almost every area we study,” quantitative social science is growing intellectually—in terms of the capacity of scholars to analyze vast quantities of data in innovative ways—and institutionally—in terms of the development of new research communities centering on this progress. This is transforming, and modernizing, the sociology of knowledge: “Social scientists are now transitioning from working primarily on their own, alone in their offices-- a style that dates back to when the offices were in monasteries-- to working in much more highly collaborative, interdisciplinary, larger scale, labstyle research teams (2014: 2).”

Importantly, for King this is not merely an advance for quantitative research; it portends the “end of the quantitative/qualitative divide” in social science: “The information collected by qualitative researchers, in the form of large quantities of field notes, video, audio, unstructured text, and many other sources, is now being recognized as valuable and actionable data sources for which new quantitative approaches are being developed and can be applied. At the same time, quantitative researchers are realizing that their approaches can be viewed or adapted to assist, rather than replace, the deep knowledge of qualitative researchers, and they are taking up the challenge of adding value to these additional richer data types (2014:3).”

2 To be clear, such rankings offer a very crude and reductive approach to the concerns about *quality* that ought to animate any self-respecting journal; they rest upon an approach to scholarly writing that places an emphasis on relentless citation; and they are particularly ill-suited to judging the impact of a journal that places a premium on the serious reviewing of books, for book reviews are rarely cited in scholarly articles, and while books are often cited, the journals that publicize these books and help them enter the scholarly discourse are unrecognized in such citation systems. In addition, there are serious gender and network biases at play in the citation business. For these reasons, at *Perspectives* we do not place much credence in citation metrics, even as we are happy to cite them for those colleagues who are impressed by such things.

This general approach to “adding value” via new forms of methodological rigor lies behind some recent developments in the American Political Science Association that are “high profile” in terms of their institutional cache, but are not well understood by the large numbers of colleagues who are uninvolved. These developments have the potential to significantly reshape the way the discipline thinks about publication and about publicity, promoting a conception of publication as the dissemination of specialized research findings rather than as the sharing of ideas and arguments, and promoting a conception of publicity as the spreading of “information” to interested “consumers.”

The most important development for our purposes is the recent APSA elevation of the theme of “DA-RT,” an acronym for Data Access and Research Transparency. To their credit, the leaders of this initiative, Arthur Lupia and Colin Elman, organized a fine symposium explaining the initiative in the January 2014 issue of *PS: Political Science and Politics*. The symposium contains contributions by a range of colleagues representing both quantitative methods and qualitative methods, and also includes as Appendices relevant documents of an “Ad Hoc Committee” of APSA scholars who have been pressing for greater institutional attention to the issue. What is “DA-RT?” In a nutshell, it is an effort to codify, institutionalize, and reinforce a more “rigorous” practice of data access and research transparency in political science. As Lupia and Elman explain in their symposium introduction, the initiative was motivated by “the growing concern that scholars could not replicate a significant number of empirical claims that were being made in the discipline’s leading journals. There were multiple instances where scholars would not, or could not, provide information about how they had selected cases, or how they had derived a particular conclusion from a specific set of data and observations. Other scholars refused to share data from which others could learn. Still others would have been willing to share their data, but failed to archive them in effective ways, making their information unavailable for subsequent inquiries (2014:19).”

While this initiative sounds straightforward, it is more complicated, and consequential, than it seems. On the one hand, it is presented as a common sense effort to promote better scholarly sharing (Lupia and Elman note that “The view that social science is a group activity, requiring inter-subjective knowledge being created using public processes that are warranted to add value, is common to virtually every scholarly tradition”)—the kind of thing that in principle no serious scholar could be against. On the other hand, it is linked to some very elaborate plans to codify and enforce uniform standards of citation, data archiving, and indeed the presentation of evidence, all in the name of greater analytic and empirical rigor.

DA-RT seeks to enhance “the legitimacy and credibility of scientific claims,” among political scientists and in the broader world of knowledge “consumers,” by upgrading the methodological purity of research procedures.

But it is linked to no particular scholarly problem. Have major arguments about any particular domain of inquiry or any broad theoretical perspective—historical institutionalism? Rational choice institutionalism? Theories of democratization? Theories of civil war onset and duration? Theories of gender inequality?—been damaged by the purported lack of sufficient standards of data transparency? Have the standard practices of political science publishing—prepublication double-blind peer reviewing, demanding processes of revision and resubmission and further review, and ongoing post-publication processes of scholarly critique—failed to “remedy” weaknesses that have been discerned in particular pieces of research? These questions

are never seriously addressed by DA-RT proponents, who appeal to general principles of science, combined with the fact that similar forms of scholarly “modernization” are apparently being promoted in other social scientific disciplines (Psychology is always the principal example).

It is very important to note that this effort involves leading *qualitative* methodologists, like Colin Elman who, writing with Lupia, insists that DA-RT is something that *all* serious political scientists should embrace: “Our prescriptive methodologies all involve extracting information from the social world, analyzing the resulting data, and reaching a conclusion based on a combination of the evidence and its analysis . . . Sharing information about these assumptions, decisions, and actions is necessary for scholars to place one another’s meanings in a legitimizing context. DA-RT is motivated by this premise—the principle that sharing data and information fuels a culture of opening that promotes effective knowledge transfer (2014:20).” In his contribution to the symposium, entitled “Transparency: The Revolution in Qualitative Research,” Andrew Moravcsik (2014) carefully makes the case that DA-RT is essential to qualitative approaches to political science research—which he defines as “the use of textual evidence to reconstruct causal mechanisms across a limited number of cases—and represents “a fundamental precondition for other advances in qualitative work.” Moravcsik, like most of the contributors to the symposium, recognizes that qualitative and quantitative approaches typically draw on different kinds of evidence, and that DA-RT must attend to these differences. At the same time, he also makes clear that what joins DA-RT proponents is a commitment to heightened methodological rigor. The historical discussions of Perestroika show that the push for methodological pluralism was linked to a broader push for intellectual openness, attentiveness to a broader range of themes and approaches, the desirability of more plain talking across differences, *and* the importance of more nuanced relationships between scholars and the “human subjects” that they study. Yet Moravcsik, like Elman, focuses on a much narrower concern: “the revitalization of qualitative methods in recent years has focused on various tools for promoting research transparency. These include data archiving, qualitative data-basing, hyperlinks, traditional citation, and active citation.” His point: qualitative methods may differ in some respects from quantitative methods, but in the end they share a common commitment to the idea that *political science at its core is a form of data analysis*.

Data—what I would prefer to call *forms of empirical evidence*—are obviously central to political science research and writing, whether this empirical evidence is statistical, ethnographic, archival, or literary (and nothing that I say here represents a critique of the use of empirical or quantitative methods, which are for many political scientists—though not all-- the most important means of substantiating arguments). And clearly high-level political science scholarship ought to and does require that arguments be supported by relevant data and also involve both the citation and *engagement* of relevant scholarly interlocutors. DA-RT advocates have very little to say about promoting “intellectual engagement,” which of course is more nebulous—as well as more interesting and important—than methods of citation. And they simply assume that a fundamental weakness of contemporary political science is a lack of seriousness about data that requires major changes to professional ethics statements and major journal editorial policies to promote *and enforce* more rigorous “data transparency.”

The DA-RT initiative is animated by a preoccupation with methodological purity, and an interest in institutionalizing new forms of expectation *and evaluation* of scholarly work. Behind these commitments is a particular view of social science—that it

is not a never-ending contest between *perspectives on politics* but instead about the *veridical* understanding of the world as a set of objective processes. Almost a century ago, John Dewey (1929) referred to this conception of science as a “quest for certainty.” There are many reasons, both epistemological and practical, to be suspicious of this quest. And it is an interesting fact of our recent intellectual history that while such a view had fallen out of favor among many with the waning of “positivism,” in recent years it has experienced a resurgence, this time abetted not by philosophers but by quantitative and qualitative *methodologists* who are joined by a commitment to methodological rigor as the preeminent source of political science’s credibility.

These are weighty intellectual issues that warrant more discussion and debate within our profession. And the question at issue is not whether “transparency” is a good thing—for who would argue in favor of hiding or of deceit? It is whether the lack of transparency is really the problem it is being made out to be; whether there are substantial costs—to intellectual vitality and to the willingness to take intellectual risks in the name of being interesting-- to enforcing new norms of transparency; and whether methodological rigor is really the primary thing that political scientists ought to be worrying about today.^[3]

These are not merely philosophical questions. On September 18-19 2014, a Workshop on DA-RT was convened by APSA and hosted by the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), with support from Syracuse University’s Center for Qualitative and Multi-Method Inquiry and the University of Michigan’s Center for Political Studies. The Workshop included around two-dozen prominent journal editors and political science methodologists active in the DA-RT initiative. (I was not present due to illness, but Managing Editor James Moskowitz attended in my stead.) On October 6, 2014, the assembled journal editors issued a draft joint statement “commit(ting) their respective journals to the principles of data access and research transparency, and to implementing policies requiring authors to make as accessible as possible the empirical foundation and logic of inquiry of evidence-based research.”^[4]

Shortly thereafter I shared with the Workshop list serve a letter explaining why I could not sign their statement (See Appendix). In the letter I offered a number of reasons for my refusal, but my central rationale is easily stated: the DA-RT initiative is in tension with the methodological and stylistic pluralism, and eclecticism, that *Perspectives on Politics* seeks to promote.

Perspectives publishes first-rate research and writing for a broad readership of professional political scientists, including many who do not fancy themselves methodologically *de rigueur*, but who are most definitely serious thinkers and writers and teachers and citizens. Replication studies and research reports have their place in the discipline. But we are committed to cultivating a space where scholars can develop creative and often big *ideas* about how and why the political world works and how it might work differently. And from my vantage point as editor of this journal, what political science *most* needs now is not new and more rigorous data standards, but new and more *interesting* work that speaks to the real political concerns facing the students

3 There are *huge* ethical dilemmas at stake here that the entire DA-RT discussion seems to ignore, the kind of dilemmas discussed in Charli Carpenter’s June 2012 *Perspectives* essay, “‘You Talk So Matter-of-Factly in This Language of Science’: Constructing Human Rights in the Academy.”

4 This statement, now signed by the editors of 25 political science journals, is posted online at <http://www.dartstatement.org/>. The posted statement identifies four measures that will be *required* by all signatory journals by January 15, 2016.

we teach—and most of us spend most of our professional time teaching students—and the world in which we live.

The DA-RT initiative, in contrast, is linked to recent efforts to promote a rather narrow conception of political science relevance. One important link is the desire to justify, secure, and expand the funding of ambitious research projects by corporate and governmental agencies, none more important than the National Science Foundation. In the past few years efforts to eliminate NSF funding of political science have preoccupied many in the discipline, and with good reason. I have been public about the importance of defending such funding, and indeed in 2013 I organized and chaired an official APSA panel on this topic that featured, among others, APSA President-elect John Aldrich, Arthur Lupia, NSF officer Brian Humes, US Representative Daniel Lipinski, and a range of major figures in the discipline. At the same, I have joined others in the discipline, including Rogers Smith and Ira Katznelson, in arguing that the defense of NSF funding ought to be linked to a much broader projection and *improvement* of political science as a discipline relevant to the challenges of democratic citizenship. This latter concern does not seem to have received the same attention in the discipline. A case in point is the 2014 “Improving Public Perceptions of Political Science’s Value,” a Report of an APSA Task Force appointed and led by APSA President John Aldrich and chaired by Arthur Lupia. To be clear, the Task Force included a range of participants, and did very important and valuable work, for which it should be commended. At the same time, the animating concern of the entire report seems limited to the improvement of “public perception.”

At least since John Dewey’s 1927 *The Public and its Problems*, it has been well understood that “the public” is a notoriously problematic concept. Indeed, it is probably more accurate to speak of a range of actual and possible *publics*. What are the range of public concerns, public interests, and public groups to which political science speaks and ought to speak? What does it mean to be relevant, and are all forms of relevance equal? At the heart of these and other important questions is a deeper question: how should political scientists, and political science as an organized discipline, relate to—speak to, but also *listen to*—the complex and power-infused world that it both inhabits and take as its object of study? These are complex and difficult questions, and there will never be consensus about how best to answer them. But they are fundamental questions, and ones that warrant serious attention and vigorous discussion and debate. And yet the Task Force Report is largely silent on them. It takes for granted that academic disciplines are best seen as insulated and standing apart from society (“Political Science as a corporate entity engages in two principal tasks – the creation of knowledge and the dissemination of knowledge”), and that the constituencies that constitute “the public” are essentially “consumers” of the “information” political science provides. The fundamental problem, on this view, is “how information should be presented.” As the Report outlines:

“Many of the ways in which political scientists currently communicate—through their teaching, publication in journals, and conference presentations – were developed in less competitive communicative eras. Strategies for presenting information that were once seen as acceptable, in part because there were few other options, are now seen as slow, unengaging and ineffective. Evolving technologies change individual and cultural expectations about what kinds of information should be available and how information should be presented . . . At this moment, political science’s professional associations have an opportunity, and perhaps an obligation to their members, to take the lead

in improving perceptions of political science's public value. If not APSA, who will? This report, commissioned by the American Political Science Association, identifies means by which individual scholars and professional organizations can make political science's insights and discoveries more accessible, more relevant, and more valuable to more people. Our main finding is that there are many ways in which APSA, and similarly situated professional organizations, can help political science communicate its insights to a wide range of diverse constituencies using a dynamic collection of communicative strategies and technologies (2014:1-2)."

Again, much of what it outlined here is true. New modes of communication present new opportunities, and the discipline, and especially its professional association, can do a much better job proactively of engaging these opportunities (and also the accompanying *challenges*). But at the same time, too much is simply taken for granted by this Report: that political science is a more or less homogeneously "research-oriented" discipline, and that its principal challenge is not to be more open or engaged or interesting, but to "disseminate its information" and thereby "add value" to society and in turn receive value—state support and funding.⁵ In the same way, journals are described here as information containers and "products" more than as actual spaces where ideas are represented, shared, contested, and thus *publicized*. The Report thus states: "An expansive number of entities are providing information about topics relevant to political science. For APSA and its members to be focal parts of this conversation, its journal products must have attributes that match or surpass its desired audiences' evolving expectations. APSA journals must provide fast, relevant, and accessible representations of political science's extensive knowledge base." And on this basis the Report recommends consideration of a range of e-journal ideas all of which take for granted that digital technologies ought to drive publishing formats and that the most important imperative is to satisfy social demands for "speed." This is surely one conception of what publication is about. But it is hardly the only one. Indeed, it is a conception of publication that is very different from the conception that animates the journal that I edit.

Perspectives on Politics Between Past and Future

The conception of political science reflected in the DA-RT initiative (and accompanying statements and editor endorsements) and in the Task Force Report is a *modernizing* vision centered on the revolutionary scholarly and communicative possibilities conferred by the new digital technologies. In this sense, it is novel and indeed pioneering. But at its heart, this vision articulates the old positivist idea that social science, like natural science, is all about employing the most up-to-date methods and techniques to generate and then disseminate veridical truths about the world. On this view we must work as hard as possible to eliminate the perspectival and interpretive dimensions of science, and support methods and procedures to ensure that every piece of research is purged of partiality and oriented toward achieving an accurate representation of reality that anyone else, anywhere, can potentially "replicate" and assess. Few today would deny that we social scientists are part of the world we study-

5 Many of these ideas were first articulated in Arthur Lupia's (2014) interesting and important 2013 Ithiel de Sola Pool Lecture, "What is the Value of Social Science: Challenges for Researchers and Government Funders." --

-that we draw on vernacular descriptions (“democracy,” “authoritarianism,” “political party”), are largely shaped by the problems of our time, and are housed and supported by schools and institutions that are most definitely part of society. Indeed, the effort to promote the “public perception” of political science hinges on the worldly character of the discipline. But the initiatives I have been criticizing presume that the epistemic and the ethical challenges presented by this worldliness are of no great importance, and warrant no particular consideration or disciplinary attention. Indeed, they seem to regard methodology as a means of curing social scientific work of partiality, so that social science can restore its credibility as something more than the disciplined, contextualized and contestable *interpretation* of a complex world, a world in which we are at once inquirers and participants.

Perspectives on Politics, from the start, has drawn on and sought to empower a different conception of political science, one that is signified by its very title, which proclaims that a flagship journal of the American Political Science Association will publish articles and essays that offer *perspectives* that can and should be brought into fruitful dialogue and debate with *alternative* perspectives. The journal publishes articles employing diverse perspectives and methods. In every case, authors—serious scholars whose work has met demanding standards of double-blind peer review—deploy a perspective that they consider to be most illuminating for the purposes of understanding a problem at hand; explain why this perspective ought to be considered illuminating; employ methods and techniques, and present evidence, to support their explanation; and offer an account of why the perspective that has been presented is interesting, important, and fruitful for further thinking about things that matter. In every case these authors challenge some existing interpretation. And in every case it can be assumed that at some future point another author will come along and renew the challenge. The journal has published *nothing* that has settled, once and for all, any major analytical, conceptual, empirical, or normative dispute in political science. In this, it is like every other journal in the discipline. But unlike most journals in the discipline, this journal *embraces* the *perspectival* character of the very best things it publishes, and places a premium on lively discussion and debate on matters of consequence to a broad range of political science scholars and readers irrespective of their particular areas of expertise.

While some colleagues place an ever-greater premium on methodological sophistication, specialization, rigor of presentation, and “data archiving,” *Perspectives* places a premium on being integrative and being interesting. For us, these are the primary benchmarks of intellectual quality.

Perspectives on Politics incorporates into its very mission the goal of working proactively to bringing different domains of inquiry, and perspectives on politics, into more fruitful dialogue and debate, by highlighting the importance of *themes* over the importance of subfields or methods or paradigms. We believe that the ability to discern important research problems, and to think broadly about why they are important and how a wide range of interesting scholarship can be engaged—what I will call, echoing C. Wright Mills (1959), the possession of *political imagination*—does not come naturally. And it is not cultivated by an approach to disciplinary training and evaluation focused on methodological prowess and ever-more-specialized training in research methods, be they statistical or qualitative. It is cultivated by the promotion and publication of work that is, for want of a better phrase, broad-minded and interesting.

In Defense of Publicity

Why am I writing these things, now? As an ex-officio and longest-serving member of the APSA Council, I have been party to important recent discussions about the need to “modernize” the discipline, via the DA-RT initiative, the creation of new e-journals designed for rapid dissemination of “research reports,” and the public relations and outreach proposals contained in the 2014 Task Force. Like most discussions of “modernization,” these discussions have seemed heavily biased in favor of a “newer is better” ethos in which newer means “technically advanced.”

Gary King is correct to observe that “large parts” of the social sciences are “moving from the humanities to the sciences . . .” But large parts of the political science discipline are *not* part of this move and do not wish to be part of this move. And the fact that *Perspectives on Politics* exists as the institutional co-equal of the *American Political Science Review* is one important sign of this. In the very heart of institutionalized political science in the United States there exists a successful and arguably very popular scholarly journal that promotes, and enacts, a practice of broad-minded, ecumenical, intellectually serious and politics-centered political science.

Perspectives on Politics is simply one political science journal among many, and its distinctive editorial philosophy is hardly universally embraced. It represents one possible vision of political science that coexists with, jostles with, and sometimes competes with, other visions. And this is as it should be. The proponents of the tendencies I have discussed above are to be admired for having the courage of their convictions. But this does not require the universal embrace of their concept of a modernized political science.

DA-RT is preoccupied with the accessibility and transparency of data and data-analytical techniques. Accessibility and transparency are no doubt good things. At the same time, DA-RT promotes a very limited, and indeed highly privatized, notion of scholarly “publicity.” It seeks to establish new bureaucratic procedures of data disclosure and housing, so that scholarly experts can re-do data analysis and replicate the findings of earlier data-driven research. Indeed, it seeks to deliberately erect new barriers to the publication of scholarly research, so that research that does not satisfy the prescribed methods and the mandated bureaucratic procedures can be filtered out, and so that the scholarly journals who sign on can ensure that their publications serve as disseminators of “information” and “research products” that have a particular “scientific” badge of approval.

Perspectives on Politics represents a very different conception of publicity. Our journal rests on the deep etymological connection between the ideas of publication, publicity, and public. The purpose of the journal is to broaden dialogue and debate, and to incite both scholarly boldness and scholarly skepticism, and not to restrict or to temper them. We are a scholarly journal, and we have standards. But we are open to a wide variety of formats and approaches and we resist the normalizing tendencies associated with *all* forms of methodological obsession. When I took over the journal, we emphatically branded it as “a political science public sphere.” We very deliberately understood our mission as primarily *intra*-disciplinary. Given the tendencies toward balkanization and specialization, and given the rhetorical importance of claims to “science,” we deliberately sought to enact a broader kind of political *science* that prized scholarly excellence and that placed a premium on broadening the discipline from *within*. *Perspectives* is not a public intellectual journal. It is a scholarly journal. At the same time, such a broadening of the discipline from the inside out has no necessary terminus. And

by promoting research and writing that is problem-driven and intellectually accessible, we hoped—and we still hope—that the journal will speak to broader reading publics, in the academy and in the broader public domain, in the United States and beyond. We promote blogging by our authors. We have started a social media campaign, centered on a Twitter account. And we regularly un-gate large sections of the journal so that the interesting things that we publish can be read by journalists, elites, and ordinary citizens who do not pay APSA membership dues. We embrace the potential for rapid and extensive sharing of ideas made possible by the new digital technologies, and we look forward to working ever more closely with terrific blogs—like *Monkey Cage*, *Duck of Minerva*, and many others—that make important political science research accessible to broader publics. And we are committed to promoting broader forms of public access of online material. At the same time, we regard these possibilities as valuable only to the extent that they enhance the quality of our journal, as a deliberately and professionally edited scholarly publication committed to intellectual breadth and genuinely critical inquiry.

From the vantage point of our journal, the most important challenge facing contemporary political science is not to elevate the discipline's expert authority via new methodological regulations and new forms of professional public relations. It is to strengthen the discipline's *real commitment* to promoting new and interesting forms of research and writing that enhance scholarly and public understanding of things that are important. And to do so in ways that truly compliment the kinds of teaching, university "service," and public engagement that most political scientists practice in the course of their ordinary lives.

Political science is a science. And so it is good that it fosters the development of a wide range of techniques, methods, experiments, arguments, and approaches. The dramatic growth in the sophistication, academic cache, and instrumental usefulness of quantitative social science is an accomplished fact of contemporary scholarship. The methodological sophistication of much new qualitative research is an equally accomplished fact. And the current preoccupation with DA-RT represents progress for a conception of social science linked to methodological prowess. But it does not represent the future of political science writ large. For the future of political science remains open. Indeed, it is we, who stand in that gap between past and future, who will determine just how open this future remains.

So What?

Except for the brief introduction, most of what I've said above has been said by me to American audiences.

Why publish them in a *Romanian* journal?

Of course, it is quite typical for academics to go around telling people what they feel like saying, irrespective of whether what they have to say is at all relevant to their audience. Indeed, such a disposition might well be a requirement of true academic success!

But I am not a typical academic.

And if one reason for my talk is to inform you, as colleagues, about some recent developments in U.S. political science that are being contested by people like me, a second is to *engage* you regarding some common concerns we have as scholars and intellectuals.

The American Political Science Association has global reach. Many of its members are scholars who reside outside of the U.S. The neo-positivism of which I

have spoken also has global reach and global aspirations. The evidence of this is not hard to find. *The European Journal of Political Research*—which recently signed onto the DA-RT document—is one good example ready to hand. In 1997 Pippa Norris published a piece in *EJPR* entitled “Towards a More Cosmopolitan Political Science?” If you read her very careful, and very interesting, piece, you will see that by “cosmopolitan” she means “modern” and by “modern” she means “American-style.” Her piece ends on a rather pessimistic note:

despite easier communication, and cultural connections, political scientists in United States and Europe seem no closer today, and perhaps even methodologically further apart. Multilateral links may have strengthened within Europe, but even here it is more common for colleagues to come to meetings of the ECPR to talk about the politics of their own country . . . than it is to present the results of comparative research. For those who regard localism as a way of encouraging theoretical pluralism and cultural diversity, this may be regarded as healthy But for those who believe that a more cosmopolitan political science will lead to greater intellectual enrichment, stronger general theories, and more international interchange within the discipline, the results are discouraging. We have easier means to communicate, for sure, but whether we can actually surmount and breakdown the boundaries of national political science remains under doubt (1997: 32-33).

What is not in doubt is where Norris stands on this issue. She favors a global political science organized according to the most up-to-date methods and pursuing general theories of politics across time and space.

In Spring 2002 an interesting discussion of this project was published in the journal *European Political Science*, which featured a powerful critique of this so-called “cosmopolitanism” by Philippe Schmitter entitled “Seven [Disputable] Theses Concerning The Future of ‘Transatlanticised’ or ‘Globalised’ Political Science.” In this piece Schmitter takes aim at Robert Goodin and Hans-Dieter Klingeman’s 1998 *A New Handbook of Political Science*, an anthology dedicated to advancing disciplinary “globalization.” Schmitter argues that this effort rests on seven implied “theses” that he identifies and then criticizes. He writes: “From this ‘transatlanticized’ perspective, the future of political science is clear – and it is already on display on the western side of the Atlantic. It is merely a matter of time before national and regional resistances are overcome and the entire discipline will converge upon an identical set of concepts, assumptions and methods.” Schmitter makes two broad arguments against this agenda: the first is the American political science has some serious pathologies and is in the midst of a serious crisis (as it was in 2002). The second is that “European backwardness” can only be regarded as retrograde by adopting a naïve “end of history” thesis. Indeed, Schmitter maintains that it is *European* political science that ought to be regarded as exemplary, by virtue of its skepticism of methodological fads, its deep connections to historical and sociological approaches, and its actual engagements with European public spheres (and perhaps even with an emerging overarching European public *sphere*). Schmitter argues that while American political science has become professionalized and highly balkanized, placing a premium on expert knowledge, European political science retains real spaces for critical thinking and public engagement. He writes: “I do not think it is exaggerated to claim that, while American political scientists see their task as exclusively ‘professional,’ their European (and Latin American and African) counterparts see it as equally ‘intellectual.’”

There is some irony in all of this. For Schmitter is in fact an *American* political

scientist, though one with a unique profile: best known for his path-breaking work with Guillermo O'Donnell, and a range of international collaborators, on democratization, he tired of American political science, and after a long association with the European University Institute, he left the United States, abandoned his American academic affiliations, and moved to Florence as a full-time Professor at the European University Institute. Schmitter “walked the talk.” Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that because of his long-standing immersion in Europe, his “walking” led him to start “talking.” In any case, his piece is both polemical and brilliant. It is more polemical, and perhaps more brilliant, than the talk I am giving right now. But I would like to end this talk on a very similar note of skepticism about the beneficence of American-style disciplinary modernization.

It is easy for someone like me to complain about certain troubling tendencies in American political science, all the while benefiting from certain advantages that accompany these tendencies. It is also easy for someone like me to imagine that *my* problems in dealing with an over-specialized and over-professionalized discipline in the U.S. are the problems of Romanian political scientists. My problems are not your problems, at least not immediately. You have your own problems. You are still reckoning with the legacies of post-Communism. If political science in the U.S. is over-professionalized, political science in Romania is probably under-professionalized. And because it is, it is also underfunded and under-resourced. Furthermore, if in the U.S. there is an abundance of specialists and a scarcity of true intellectuals, in Romania serious social scientists thankfully include some major public intellectuals—such as my dearest friend Mihaela Miroiu—but also face a challenge that Max Weber noted long ago—*dilettantism*. And in the face of dilettantism, a focus on the empirical can be a bracing and necessary thing. Indeed, empirical research, of the kind that Mihaela and her students and collaborators, and many of you, practice, is *essential* to any vital political science. At the same time, empirical work is one thing; *empiricism* is another. And in the highest reaches of rigorous American political science, empiricism increasingly means elaborate statistical, mathematical, and experimental research that is far removed from the empirical world as lived and experienced.

I don't wish to catalogue much less analyze and prescribe the state of Romanian political science. It would be more accurate to say that my visits to Romania over the years have been motivated by a desire to experience and to learn from my Romanian colleagues.

But I do wish to say this: I have seen the future, and in some very important ways it doesn't work so well.

The *Romanian Journal of Society and Politics* is truly a *fine* journal. I have a sense of the challenges facing Romanian scholarly journals. The challenges are real. I'm sure that in some important ways my Romanian colleagues would benefit from more of the things that I am criticizing back home. And indeed, in the end I *am* an APSA editor, and my journal's operations, and staff of seven, and my own salary, are paid by APSA. I'm sure that in many ways most of you *wish* you had this. In the same way, I fully understand why some of the debates that American political scientists had decades ago are debates that you still need to have. Romanian political scientists will clear your own path. You are clearing your own path now. And I'd like to close with a very simple observation: I always learn when I visit Romania, and I always am inspired when I visit as well. I am moved by the hospitality I receive. And it reminds me that a truly cosmopolitan political science embraces an ongoing dialogue among perspectives and experiences that surpasses nationality and geography and even history, by nurturing

an ongoing fusion of horizons among people who care about understanding and improving the world that we share.

Appendix (Letter Sent by Jeffrey C. Isaac to DA-RT organizers)

“I respect those of you who have worked hard to develop the DA-RT initiative and to draft various statements advancing the principles to which you adhere. But I cannot sign onto the statement.

There are two reasons.

The first is that I regard both the DA-RT initiative and the current move to gain journal buy-in as very consequential developments, and I believe they require serious due diligence, at the level of APSA and its members, and at the level of the editorial boards of the journals involved. I intend to initiate a serious discussion with my own board. But I will not rush this discussion.

The second reason is that I personally do not agree with this initiative.

Behind this initiative is a model of science that I understand, and respect, and regard as both flawed and contestable. I do not question that science requires openness, transparency, and vigorous peer review and methods of critique more generally. In this respect I am a follower of both John Dewey and Karl Popper. But I do question whether the standard method of hypothesis-testing ought to be regarded as normative for the entire political science discipline or its top journals. And I believe that while the DA-RT initiative has bravely and convincingly incorporated many kinds of qualitative research, there are many kinds of research that are not neatly encompassed within the model of hypothesis-testing and replication. To codify uniform expectations for the handling of “data,” and indeed to reduce all questions of evidentiary argument to the language of “data,” does a disservice to many kinds of political science inquiry and is likely to be very awkward and indeed impossible for many journals to accept. I assume this is why the “core group” was defined as it was—fairly narrowly it would appear. I honor the *range* of approaches to research that define our discipline. And I respect editors who consider DA-RT essential to the missions of their journals. But I do not favor encouraging all journals to undertake this initiative, and I do not support making this initiative normative or mandatory for the discipline as a whole.

More importantly, the journal that I edit—the only reason I am even party to this conversation—was created with a very specific mission: to provide a space for a wide range of approaches to and perspectives on politics, and to enact an editorial commitment to methodological and intellectual pluralism within the political science discipline. The one-size-fits-all expectations articulated in the DA-RT statement do not fit much of what *Perspectives on Politics* publishes. The strong prescriptivism of the statement is too heavy-handed to suit our journal’s eclecticism. Perhaps most importantly, our journal operates on a distinctive epistemic premise: that the primary “problem” with political science research today is not that there needs to be more replicable research, “replication studies,” and specialized inquiries, but that there needs to be broader discussions, and research projects, that center on *ideas* that are *interesting*

and *important*. I know that for many serious, accomplished, and well-intended colleagues, these words—ideas, interesting, important—might seem very impressionistic. All the same, they are central to what our journal does. And it would appear that many political scientists consider this worthwhile, for *Perspectives*, still a relatively young journal, seems to be very widely read and respected . . .

Our journal is a political science journal edited by political scientists at top academic institutions. It is very serious about the quality of data, evidence, and argumentation. This is why we organize a rigorous peer review process, and always send submissions to skeptical readers, and challenge authors to seriously engage criticisms of their data, evidence, and argumentation. Indeed, for many years we have encouraged authors of empirical research articles to make their data, or at least some of it, available via online appendices hosted at permanent links, so that readers can better understand the evidentiary bases of their arguments, and colleagues can criticize these arguments and thereby contribute to the processes of conjecture and refutation at the heart of social science broadly construed.

Our journal has not encountered any problems with this way of proceeding.

Our authors submit to a rigorous editorial process, and seem willing to do so, but have expressed no great desire to surmount new administrative hurdles.

Editors of certain kinds of journals may have reason to be very concerned about DART—though I am unaware of any major breach of scholarly ethics in our discipline in recent years (one of my colleagues at IU, himself a quantitative researcher, has described DART to me as “a solution in search of a problem”). But I do not share these concerns. And my job as editor in chief of *Perspectives* is to foster, develop, and protect a space in the discipline that embraces a plurality of approaches to politics and to political inquiry. And so I will not sign the statement.

I will share this statement, and relevant materials, with my editorial board, and we will discuss the DART initiative at our next board meeting in the Spring.

I respect the opinions of my colleagues, especially when I don’t share these opinions. I thus appreciate why many of you will proceed with this initiative. I hope you will appreciate why I feel obliged to proceed differently, by expressing my reservations about turning your concerns into normative standards for the entire profession.

Sincerely,
Jeff Isaac

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