

The Methods of Applied Philosophy and the Tools of the Policy Sciences

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ABSTRACT: In this paper I argue that applied philosophers hoping to develop a stronger role in public policy formation can begin by aligning their methods with the tools employed in the policy sciences. I proceed first by characterizing the standard view of policymaking and policy education as instrumentally oriented toward the employment of specific policy tools. I then investigate pressures internal to philosophy that nudge work in applied philosophy toward the periphery of policy debates. I capture the dynamics of these pressures by framing them as the “dilemma dilemma” and the “problem problem.” Seeking a remedy, I turn to the interdisciplinarity of a unique approach to policymaking generally known as the “policy sciences.” Finally, I investigate the case of bioethics, an instance where philosophy has made decent headway with policymakers. From this I draw parallels to public policy. I suggest that because the policy sciences are essentially an alchemist’s brew of academic fields, and because philosophy covers many of the foundational questions associated with these fields, it is only natural that applied philosophers should begin collaborations with other applied academics by adopting the strategies that have so successfully applied in other theoretical fields.

A great many universities offer advanced degrees in public policy, providing concentrations in areas as diverse as public health, natural resources, criminal justice, finance, education, senior care, defense, and so on. The curricula associated with these programs draw from a wide variety of disciplines, but most prevalently from economics, statistics, political science, and law. Conspicuously absent from many of these programs is training in philosophy. No doubt this is partly due to the prevailing assumption amongst many practitioners and professionals that philosophy is pure theory—interesting and provocative, perhaps, but not much use in solving real-world problems. Indeed, this is one reason that journals like *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, the *International Journal of Applied Philosophy*, *Public Affairs Quarterly*, and other related publications were initially convened—to explore and demonstrate the relevance of philosophy to these otherwise practical

questions. Nevertheless, philosophy remains excluded from the core curriculum of most graduate programs in the policy arena.

This is unfortunate, to say the least, since a growing body of work in applied philosophy responds to the same ethical and political concerns that are captured in the concentration areas offered by policy programs. More importantly, though the impression of many academics internal to several influential policy programs is that the only appropriate role for philosophy is that of training in ethics, policy-related philosophy work need not be constrained in this way. There are a variety of philosophical topics and methods relevant to the policy student. It is my purpose in this paper to articulate an alternative research trajectory for applied philosophy; and most importantly, to argue for an approach to philosophy that emphasizes the design of methods and tools that can be put into use by practitioners.

In this paper I argue that philosophers hoping to develop a role in public policy formation can begin by re-orienting their objectives, modifying their methods, and helping policy scientists develop useful analytic tools. I proceed first by characterizing the standard view of policymaking and policy education as instrumentally oriented toward the employment of specific policy tools. I then investigate pressures internal to philosophy that nudge work in applied philosophy toward the periphery of policy debates. I capture the dynamics of these pressures by framing them as the “dilemma dilemma” and the “problem problem.” Seeking a remedy, I turn to the interdisciplinarity of a unique approach to policymaking generally known as the “policy sciences.” Finally, in the latter portion of the paper I investigate the case of bioethics, an instance where philosophy has made decent headway with policymakers. From this I draw parallels to public policy. I suggest that because the policy sciences are essentially an alchemist’s brew of academic fields, and because philosophy covers many of the foundational questions associated with these fields, it is only natural that applied philosophers should begin collaborations with other applied academics by adopting the strategies that have so successfully applied other theoretical fields.

Though this paper discusses programs in public policy within the US context, it does not aim primarily to influence how philosophy is taught to public policy students. Rather, it aims to trace the contours of an alternative research orientation for applied philosophers—a research orientation that understands the philosopher as mutual participant in the design, formation, and solution of public policy problems.

THE PROBLEMS OF POLICY

The Master in Public Affairs or Public Administration (M.P.A.) degree, or its counterpart the Master in Public Policy (M.P.P.), is geared to prepare students for careers in international and domestic policy. Generally speaking M.P.A. or M.P.P. programs involve a two-year commitment that focuses on instilling in students tools that will aid them in addressing all at once the political, historical, economic, and organizational aspects of complex policy problems. Most programs require students to concentrate in one of a variety of concrete specializations, including international relations, development studies, economic policy, public affairs,

demography, health and health policy, science, technology, or environmental policy, and urban policy, among others.

Policy curricula are unique in that they are composed of the applied arms of core liberal arts disciplines. They are generally structured around training students in a set of policy 'tools' that can later be utilized in the field. Among other tools, statistics has offered the policy sciences the t- and z-tests, chi-squared models, regression analysis; economics has offered cost-benefit analysis, econometrics, game theory, as well as several important valuation mechanisms; political science has offered the survey, political history, and the instruments of program evaluation; and law has offered a vast body of legislative and judicial code. But despite recent work in applied philosophy, philosophers have provided little in the way of *tools* for policy practitioners, much to the chagrin of policy students and practitioners alike.

Such programs are informed by a variety of views about the best approach to policy creation, but more or less can be characterized by an emphasis on problem solving through attendance to these 'tools.' Some programs place greater emphasis on economics and cost-benefit analysis. Others place greater emphasis on the epidemiological and statistical tools of the social sciences. The language of 'policy tools' implies exactly what the policy schools were created to address: the need in public policy to 'use' these tools. Therefore, a majority of the approaches are reinforced by the suppositions, sometimes characterized as 'positivistic,' of instrumental reason.¹

The philosopher interested in policy concerns is left with a troubling question: how to fit good work in philosophy into the apparatus of policymaking without entirely betraying the conceptual sensitivity and the appreciation of nuance characteristic of philosophy? There are a striking variety of proposals about how best to accomplish this. Usually these are framed as suggestions for the education of policy students, but each has bearing also on how research in applied philosophy should be conducted.

Some think that philosophy should provide policymakers with a firm background in social philosophy and political theory.² Others suggest that philosophy should stick to ethical issues and criticism of social morality.³ Still others think that philosophy should offer up professional and administrative codes of ethics.⁴ And yet others think that philosophy can teach students in meta-ethics and ethical analysis. Many have even criticized the strong theoretical orientation in philosophy altogether and have called for philosophy to start taking up particular policies.⁵ Some have suggested that the projects are incompatible.⁶ And yet still others, notably both Dan Brock and Norman Daniels (applied philosophers of significant influence), have gone so far as to suggest that we temper expectations, that philosophy maybe ought to play only a limited role in policymaking after all.⁷

Not surprisingly, the instrumental and pragmatic nature of policymaking rubs many philosophers the wrong way. The "usefulness" of the other disciplines is often used as a bludgeon, directed at clobbering philosophy out of the picture. More devastatingly, criticisms of instrumental reason have come from many corners of philosophy. To name but two outspoken critics: John Dewey famously

recasts instrumentalism in his own pragmatic way; and Jürgen Habermas, drawing on the work of his predecessors in the Frankfurt School and in the American Pragmatist School, offers up an alternative to instrumental rationality in communicative reason.⁸ More on this later.

THE DILEMMA DILEMMA AND THE PROBLEM PROBLEM

It doesn't take a lengthy browse through articles in any of the several applied philosophy journals to see that many applied philosophers address the same problems and questions that so perplex scholars in public policy. Topics vary from discussions of terrorism, abortion, organ donation, torture, just wars, racial profiling, universal health care, nonhuman animals, etc.—all central public policy concerns. And yet, the fact remains: good work in applied philosophy is rarely picked up by scholars of public policy. Periodically, one or two articles will trickle over into the policy curriculum, but more as a curiosity, as a point of departure for discussion, than as a central part of the debate.⁹ So what's behind this?

It is difficult to say, of course. Perhaps there are political reasons; perhaps those who are actually in a position to influence public policy are driven by external influences.¹⁰ Perhaps there are also psychological reasons; perhaps some are intimidated or confused by philosophy. Perhaps, in fact, there are economic reasons; perhaps there's just not enough time, and nowhere near enough funding, to give students the robust grounding in theory that they would really need to grind down their rough edges.¹¹ But at least one reason seems more plausible to me than others: it is that applied philosophy very often functions in competition with, rather than in concert with, work in policy schools. I think two well-known professional pressures can explain this: the “dilemma dilemma” and the “problem problem.”

What I have begun calling the “dilemma dilemma” is the prevailing view that philosophy is and should be engaged in the strict business of thinking through matters theoretically, from the standpoint of abstract dilemmas, out-of-this-galaxy counterfactuals, tidy syllogisms, general rules, and universal principles.¹² It is an orientation not unfamiliar to any philosopher of any background: find a position that has at least two plausible horns—act or omit, kill or let die, believe or disbelieve, accept or reject, tell the truth or pay one's debts—and argue for a position that prefers one over the other. Generally this is accomplished by employing a host of familiar techniques: intuition pumping, logic chopping, game theorizing, thought experimenting, concept analyzing, and so on. This approach, then, we might loosely characterize as an approach that understands philosophy in terms of dilemmas, in terms of deep and rich philosophical quandaries. And this ‘dilemma’ view of philosophy, I think, gives rise to a dilemma for the applied philosopher.

The dilemma that arises due to this orientation toward dilemmas (hence the “dilemma dilemma”) is that it appears that in order to maintain a toehold on the rich methodology, history, and purpose of philosophy, the applied philosopher must employ the selfsame methodologies that have been employed throughout philosophy (intuition pumping, logic chopping, game theorizing, thought experimenting, etc.) and steer herself toward the same objective—knowledge.

Since “problems in the world” don’t make themselves apparent in neat and tidily pre-packaged dilemmas, the applied philosopher faces something of a different dilemma. Either she keep her hands clean of public policy-related questions and remain expressly theoretical (and thus admit defeat with regard to applied philosophy altogether) or she get expressly applied and address directly the concerns of public policy (at the risk of veering far away from what many take to “count as” philosophy). In other words, either she admit defeat and avoid all practical questions in order to stay pure; or dirty her hands by stepping into questions with rough edges, but do so by answering these questions in a “philosophically relevant way.”

Faced with this choice, many philosophers opt for the first horn of the dilemma. To avoid sullyng their thought, they keep their heads above the fray, content to toil over the difficult theoretical questions that have characterized western philosophy since before Plato.¹³ The real world is untidy, beset with a smorgasbord of confounding factors. Better to keep one’s integrity than to fall wistfully and naively into pseudo-social science.

But for those of us who see that philosophy can offer many rich insights to public policy and other applied problems, the first horn of the dilemma is not an attractive option. We opt for the latter alternative.

What I am calling the “problem problem” hangs, in many respects, on pressures generated by the latter horn of the dilemma dilemma.¹⁴ In an attempt to remain relevant to philosophy and to work in an area that avoids the dilemma dilemma, philosophers strive to do what they do best: isolate abstract minutiae of real-world problems, characterize these as abstract philosophical problems, and in some cases as dilemmas themselves. In lieu of dipping too far into the applied morass and addressing the resolution of applied problems in terms of practical action orientations, the applied philosopher identifies and argues instead for solutions to apparent *theoretical problems* implicit in applied policy questions. The objective, presumably, is *knowledge*: to isolate the right concepts and ideas.

Just consider again the standard approach to applied issues. A cursory review of recent articles in applied philosophy and in cognate journals attests to the gale force crosswinds of the dilemma dilemma. Article after article frames the problems of applied philosophy in terms of puzzles, problems, and paradoxes.¹⁵ So in an attempt to avoid hanging a hat on one of the two horns of the dilemma dilemma, the applied philosopher isolates theoretical problems internal to applied questions that appear to have a philosophical solution. She then provides an elaborate argument for or against one of these problems.

Intuitively, one might think this a good thing. Policy analysts seek answers to problems. Applied philosophers seek answers to problems. Perfect marriage! But that’s not at all the case. What *is* the case is that policy analysts have an exceptionally painful relationship with philosophical resolution of problems, mostly because they *already have* so many other tools at their disposal that can resolve their problems without appeal to the somewhat headier and more complex arguments of applied philosophy. To heap further problems on top of the already difficult problems that policymakers seek to resolve is the *wrong approach* to making headway with those in the policy domain.

The problem that therefore arises because of this orientation toward theoretical problem solution is that it does not serve the objective of those who hope to see philosophy take root in problem oriented disciplines. Why not? Because problems are *precisely* what the policy analyst also seeks to resolve.

So here we can see that applied philosophy has generally not, in fact, handily closed the case on the dilemma dilemma, but perhaps made things even more intractable by initiating the problem problem. The theoretical problem orientation of the applied philosopher serves to offer only a competing viewpoint that grates against the orientation toward solutions characteristic of policymakers.

We have identified, then, two distinct pressures that push applied philosophy in the direction of policy irrelevance. From one side, there is the perspective of professional philosophy, which militates against application for the reason that it challenges the methodologies and history that have characterized philosophy. And then we have the perspective of the policymaker, which angles at problems and the solution to problems but cannot digest further obfuscation or complication.

Sometimes the former pressure is characterized as a straightforward resistance on the part of philosophers to applied questions. It is nowhere near that simple. Applied work in philosophy has enjoyed noteworthy success. Applied questions offer up a treasure trove of possible theoretical questions for the philosopher. This is attested to partly by the success of this journal.

Equivalently, on the side of the policy professional, sometimes the pressures are characterized as a straightforward reaction to theoretical inquiry. Policy professionals may balk at the introduction of theory as irrelevant to the resolution of their practical problems. But neither is this theoreticity the problem. The questions that applied philosophy seeks to address only *appear to be* irrelevant and extremely theoretical because they are often posed with the problem orientation of philosophers. Ask almost any applied philosopher to explain the usefulness of her research to a policy practitioner and expect a response in this vein: "Shouldn't we strive to have the right concepts?" Point being: philosophy is relevant indeed. It's just not relevant in the right way.

One natural outcome of this rift is deepening entrenchment, evident to almost anyone who has tried to straddle a position between the two fields. The academic applied philosopher steers herself toward legitimacy within her community. She digs in and seeks to establish her footprint in a uniquely philosophical way. Liars paradoxes, idiot boxes, trolley problems, sorites paradoxes, Zeno's paradoxes come to dominate philosophical discussion of problems in the practical world. In this respect, the applied philosopher does not offer much to the policymaker, except conceptual confusion.

In response, the practitioners (of policy, medicine, business, environmental studies, or what have you) often react to the narrow and theoretical debates of academic applied philosophy by taking on the burden of addressing these problems themselves, sometimes restructuring philosophical and ethical questions such that they become mere caricatures. In ethics, for instance, some philosophers complain that applied cases presented by non-philosophically-trained practitioners and touted as ethical dilemmas are often not *true* dilemmas, but instead uncontroversial questions to which any reasonable person of almost any

plausible ethical orientation would find an easy solution. “If you catch your boss cooking the books, what should you do?” “You notice that the head surgeon on your ward has made a critical and life threatening mistake, do you let it slide or do you mention it to his superiors?” And so on.

What would really help policymaking is not a strengthening of these academic ramparts, nor a honing of arguments geared to establish knowledge, but an orientation toward *clarity*.

THE PROMISE OF THE POLICY SCIENCES

The political scientist Harold Lasswell is generally credited with coining and popularizing the study of the “policy sciences.” Together with Yale Law Professor Myres S. McDougal and University of Michigan philosophy professor Abraham Kaplan, as well as a team of other co-collaborators, Lasswell pieced together the framework for a broad-reaching, interdisciplinary approach to public policymaking. Far from a simple descriptive model of the process of public policy, the term ‘policy sciences’ in fact refers to a school of thought regarding a comprehensive approach for understanding and solving problems. For Lasswell, all policy questions are, among many other things, always underwritten by a score of values and goal orientations such that the problems at issue cannot adequately be addressed without directed attention to these values and goal orientations as well.

The interdisciplinary approach of the policy sciences, friendly as it is to normative and value questions, views itself as distinct from the instrumentalist orientation of many other approaches to policy outlined above. Where many policy approaches seek the best or most efficacious instruments for resolving problems, the policy sciences aim ultimately to resolve problems in a way that elevates human dignity—that also attends to the diverse human, historical, and contextual element in public policy making. This broad-reaching interdisciplinarity, with its strong orientation to work in the humanities as well as the social sciences, is in many ways the hallmark of the policy sciences.

Above all, the policy sciences aims to improve decision making by reinforcing and supporting human dignity, to elide the blinders of instrumental reason by addressing the manifold of human experience. According to Lasswell and McDougal, one of the central reasons for this interdisciplinarity is to subject the policy scientist to the central values of democracy. “In general terms I desire to contribute to the *integration* of morals, science and policy. My moral value is that of the individualistic society in which I have been reared, and to which I am loyal: The dignity of the human personality.”¹⁶

Lasswell saw that robust policy solutions could only be obtained by insisting upon a commitment to contextuality, problem orientation, and methodological diversity. All for good reasons: first, no decision can adequately be understood apart from the larger social process in which it is itself a part. Thus *contextuality* is a key element in the policy sciences. Second, a reliance on ideology, principle, and grand historical projects cannot, given the complexity and contextuality of policy problems, serve with reliable solutions. As a consequence, a discipline geared to resolve problems should expressly orient itself on those problems and

should be purposeful. Thus *problem orientation* is the second key element in the policy sciences. Finally, due to the multidimensionality and complexity of many of these problems it stands to reason that the policy scientist should draw from a diversity of methodologies. Thus *methodological diversity* is the third key element in the policy sciences. It is Lasswell's sincere belief that understanding the policy formation and decision-making process will eventually also be beneficial in the creation of public policy.

Given the sheer size of Lasswell's corpus, it is hard to say much about "his view" without extensive qualification;¹⁷ but it is probably fair to assert that he was enamored of relatively rigid categories. He sought, for instance, to distinguish eight values, seven decision process functions, five intellectual tasks, among other things.¹⁸ Consider, first, the "five intellectual tasks" that Lasswell identifies as central to the policy process: (1) goals clarification, (2) measurement, retrieval and display of data, (3) causal modeling, (4) forecasting, and (5) devising alternatives. It should be clear that the first of these—goals clarification—functions already at an advanced philosophical level. That is, Lasswell explains that the values that guide the selection of goals must also be considered in tandem with the other considerations relevant to public policy making.¹⁹ Public policy analysts must determine which of several possible solutions to the problem is the "best" given the data and the options. This can sometimes mean deciding between welfare, health, expediency, efficiency, justice, and rights, among other things.

These goals are guided by what Lasswell identifies as the "eight core values." For Lasswell these values serve to orient a policy within the wider landscape of policy problems.²⁰ All policy problems, he claims, can be understood as guided by these eight values, and each of these values can be assessed in turn. First, broadly speaking, there are what he coins 'welfare values' (values related to health, wealth, skill, and enlightenment). And then there are what he calls 'emotional values' (values related to affection, power, respect, and rectitude). These somewhat woolly categories serve the purpose not of offering a hard and fast metaphysical taxonomy, but of opening a discussion about values to the policymaker; a person who, it is important to bear in mind, otherwise has little interest in the study of philosophy *per se*, but can probably be best described as having an interest in resolving practical problems. The critical observation that these values then instigate is that values are always already working in the background of every policy decision.

This body of work is influenced heavily by the pragmatists John Dewey and George Herbert Mead, as Lasswell was a student of both.²¹ The pragmatist connections are easy to draw. Dewey, for instance, notes in his ethical work that policy oriented toward the fulfillment of goals is policy that lands itself in an infinite regress of goals.²² Policy oriented instead toward an assessment of the values guiding goal orientation, this is a different matter entirely. According to many in the policy sciences, policy must seek to improve and understand value judgments, which can then help direct conduct. Lasswell follows Mead's descriptive sociology by isolating the underpinnings of substantive ethical values in the upbringing and background of all individual policy makers. Normatively speaking, Lasswell and Kaplan both think that philosophy can play the role of offering insight into these already operative values.²³

What is perhaps less obvious is that this position has been echoed by numerous other philosophers and political theorists. Notably, Jürgen Habermas, who borrowed the Hegelian notion of *Sittlichkeit* and adapted it through the work of G. H. Mead, makes much the same point.²⁴ The reason that Habermas is notable is that his view and Lasswell's view share many critical features. Like Lasswell, Habermas strives for a non-coercive public policy. Like Lasswell, Habermas takes democracy and the elevation of human dignity as a fundamental conclusion of his view. Like Lasswell, Habermas insists that instead of orienting itself exclusively toward purposive ends (the ends of instrumental reason), actions ought to be coordinated toward the end of mutual understanding (the *telos* of communicative rationality).

This connection between Lasswell and Habermas has not gone unnoticed by an influential second-generation policy scientist, John Dryzek, who has also dedicated the better part of his career to articulating a multidisciplinary, contextualized, and problem oriented approach to problems.²⁵ Just as Habermas's discomfort with instrumental rationality guides much of his discourse ethics, Dryzek's "postpositivism" rejects the rigid instrumentalism of the more positivist strains of policy studies by calling attention to the value dimension already implicit in all aspects of policy design.²⁶

Frankly, my sympathies lie with Habermas here, in that I think the role of philosophy need not be limited to consideration of values and goal orientations. Philosophy can offer a great deal more to the policy practitioner than what one finds typified by ethics.²⁷ One can see this most strikingly in public policy debates regarding policies related to climate science, where epistemology and the philosophy of science, not ethics, plays a central role. In the spirit of Dewey, Habermas's main line of reasoning is that philosophy ought to abandon the idea that it can function as a stand-in for knowledge. It cannot aim at knowledge in the same way that so many of the other sciences do. Rather, it must begin to understand itself as interpreter to the discoveries and observations of science. It is here, then, that I think we can find our hook into public policy.

So how do *philosophers* facilitate the mutual understanding that Habermas claims is inherent in communicative action? We facilitate mutual understanding by dramatically refiguring our place in the philosophical, academic, and policy landscape. We abandon the notion that practical policy problems are put on better footing by the research that has characteristically been done in applied philosophy. We abandon, in short, philosophy's orientation toward *knowledge* and reorient it toward *insight*. To put this differently: what can philosophy bring to the policy circus? Insight. Clarity. Strength of argument.²⁸

In a way, none of this is all that new to philosophers. Insight has been lurking in the background of philosophy for eons. Moreover, the connections between philosophy and public policy have been around since at least as long as Democritus, and run up through strong traditions of political theory and ethics. What is somewhat different now is that as the academy has tended toward increasing specialization, philosophy has also tended toward specialization. In doing so, philosophy has trended toward methodologies that mirror academic disciplines oriented toward knowledge. As a consequence, philosophy works primarily *in*

conflict with the many other knowledge-oriented disciplines central to policymaking. This clash can be overcome by altering the orientation of philosophy toward policy questions and understanding the applied philosopher as an interpreter and mutual contributor to the solution of problems, rather than as a conquistador in the terrain of ideas.

HITS AND MISSES

As one might expect, there is already a sizable body of work that makes some attempt at reconciliation in the way that I have been describing. Onora O'Neill in part seeks such a reconciliation when she points out that to do practical ethics, "we need not only to think hard about the justification of ethical principles, and the specification of types of or context for which they are relevant. We need to think less about with [sic] 'application,' and address the implications of the fact that agents are always committed to a *plurality of indeterminate and defeasible* normative principles, so that conflict and tension between enactments of principles may arise."²⁹ I'd like now to analyze briefly one case here, lessons from which I think we can carry over into other areas of applied philosophy.

Consider much of the work in bioethics (by almost all accounts an extremely successful offshoot of applied philosophy). Notwithstanding bioethics as an academic discipline, bioethics-related concerns are certainly recognized by the general population as an essential dimension of medical practice and biomedical research projects. It is probably true that most people believe that all practitioners should know what's right and wrong, permissible or impermissible. This holds true whether they consult bioethicists or not. In the current landscape of medical problems, people throughout the world seek answers to pressing ethical questions. There is, in other words, significant demand for bioethics, just as there is demand for philosophical insight in policy. Also, as with many questions in public policy, the questions addressed by bioethics are many of the same questions that applied philosophers have also been researching for decades now: euthanasia, abortion, amputation, sedation, informed consent, etc. In fact, there's already a good deal of cross-pollination between bioethics and some branches of applied philosophy.

In what form do some of the most prominently read articles and positions come? They come as examinations of a particular clinical or experimental problem and an exploration of the ethical dimensions of that problem. Indeed, it would appear that this is precisely the model that I am arguing against, a reinstatement of the problem problem. But look a little closer. What bioethicists have deftly done is to commandeer several central ethical concepts, repackaged them in a reasonably comprehensible way, and harnessed them for the purpose of contributing to problem solution. Bioethicists have not, in fact, reinstated the problem problem. They have offered *insight* to those who hit stumbling blocks in the solution to their problems.

More or less, this has been a joint project aimed at reaching mutual understanding. Bioethicists have collaborated with medical researchers and physicians to identify the pressing problems faced in the clinical or lab setting. What they

have done, in effect, is to eschew entirely the trappings of earlier philosophical endeavors—the discussion is not about harm broadly conceived, but about harm in *this particular context*. And since *this particular context* is always what's at issue in the day-to-day life of the practitioner, it is both the case that the practitioner is able to see the contribution that a specific philosophical model can make to their understanding of the problem, and it is also the case that the philosopher has quite a bit of material to work with.

In the case of bioethics, the particularized problems are so rich, complex, and numerous that in many cases bioethics has spun off from philosophy proper and formed extremely successful, independent, well-funded, and politically-supported departments, societies and journals that stand on their own merit. It is not uncommon at many of the larger U.S. research universities to find Departments of Bioethics almost completely separate from philosophy departments.

By contrast, look at a somewhat less prolific niche of applied philosophy. Take my area of specialization: environmental ethics. What is curious to some, and frustrating to many, is that even in the face of a relatively recent groundswell of interest in environmental issues, environmental ethics takes a backseat in many policy discussions. As a consequence of this, Andrew Light has sought to steer environmental philosophers in the direction of public philosophy.³⁰ Robert Frodeman has called for a policy turn in environmental ethics.³¹ My colleague Michael Zimmerman has argued for a more integrated view, a view he calls “integral ecology.”³² These objections, nuances between them aside, function in the same tradition of interdisciplinary collaboration that I pursue here.

Their work has been met by appeals from outside philosophy as well, in schools of public policy, where policy scientists implore their colleagues to look closely at the philosophical dimensions of contemporary policy problems. Lasswell's “policy scientist of democracy,” for instance, has transformed into Roger Pielke Jr.'s “honest broker.”³³ Pielke argues forcefully that the contemporary politicization of science is a direct result of the ‘scientization’ of policy—or the instrumental turn in policymaking (discussed above) that relies on the tools of social science but neglects the input of other normative disciplines. John Dryzek has also argued, as mentioned above, for greater attention to philosophy and ethics. And yet, the appeals of these policy scientists have been met with relative silence from the philosophical establishment.

Consider, now, how the other social sciences integrate into the policy world. Each provides a significant tool that can aid in the formation of public policy. Economics offers primarily diagnostic tools, geared to guide policy analysis. It offers tools for describing welfare arrangements and prescribing policy solutions. Statistics offers diagnostic rubrics for capturing large citizen populations and characterizing their needs or responses to given public policies. Political science gives history, context, overview, and some theory about the development, rise, and fall of who gets what, where, when, and how. Even the somewhat more professional disciplines of administration and management offer organizational instruments to policy formation.

But applied philosophy? In its current incarnation applied philosophy offers only a loose constellation of arguments with no single, univocal skill set. It offers

conceptual solutions to practical problems that any and all of these other social sciences can address more compellingly and concretely. So the position that I have been forging is that philosophy is not on a par with these other branches of study. It does not offer much that is *useful* to the policy scientist, apart from largely non-economic, non-empirical arguments for one position over another.

Fine, one might object. Philosophy has never offered anything useful. To offer something useful belies the aims and objectives of philosophy. But I humbly submit that this is the wrong attitude. Philosophy has always been oriented not only around knowledge and a love of knowledge, but also around insight; and in this case, in particular, the insight can come in the form of a clear articulation of the values and concepts behind goal formation.

Don't get me wrong. As a philosopher, I will confess to a healthy appreciation of philosophy oriented toward knowledge. I like my pure philosophy straight up, with a shot of coffee or a pint of beer, thank you very much. But pure philosophy and applied philosophy, while inextricably bound, are also not the same enterprise, and as such, shouldn't employ the same methods. There is a great deal more that applied philosophers can do to gain purchase in public policy, and a nice starting point might be to address the tools of the policy sciences.

ROOTING THROUGH THE TOOLBOX: BEAUCHAMP AND CHILDRRESS

Almost all bioethics programs teach some variation of Tom Beauchamp and James Childress's work *The Principles of Bioethics*. The two authors have developed four principles that are exceptionally influential in the field. These principles are, put nakedly: (a) autonomy, (b) beneficence, (c) non-maleficence, and (d) justice. For the medical professional, the four principles together function as a pocket guide to ethical action. In the classroom, they function more as stepping off points for discussion. This view, sometimes pitched as 'principlism,' is transparently Rossian in nature (though somehow Ross completely fades out of the picture).

The "Beauchamp and Childress" phenomenon is both admirable and troubling. On one hand, it is admirable as a successful example of a philosophical tool in play. Anybody who has ever pushed a research project through an Institutional Review Board has encountered it. A colleague in bioethics reports anecdotally that many physicians in fact carry around crib sheets of the four principles. On the other hand, it is troubling because it leaves so much out. Rightly or wrongly, many academic philosophers object that blanket deployment of philosophical principles grossly oversimplifies the project of ethical inquiry.³⁴

Philosophers should try to avoid blanching at such oversimplification, difficult though this may be. The pressures of the dilemma dilemma ought not to force the proverbial baby to be thrown out with the bathwater. The point has been made countless times that one certainly wouldn't want one's family doctor to be too much of a philosopher. That sounds about right to me. There is good reason to believe that rich philosophical criticism of Beauchamp and Childress's Rossian principlism is altogether irrelevant to the "on-the-ground" concerns of working practitioners. So far as the practitioner is concerned, Beauchamp and Childress

are not so much advocates of these principles, but *developers and designers* of tools that clear the fog for policymakers.³⁵

The idea then is that, in the face of cases like the four principles, the philosopher ought not to retreat into esoteric debates about the priority of the right over the good, or about prima facie versus absolute principles. Instead, the philosopher should seek to clarify and illuminate principles that can contribute to the overarching project of policy clarification with the same sort of succinct power that Beauchamp and Childress have been able to harness. They should seek to provide accounts that reduce the difficult philosophical issues down to their core ideas, for the express purpose of simplifying these extraordinarily difficult concepts for people who otherwise don't have the same luxury to read and discuss philosophical issues that most philosophers have.

Notably, this orientation toward shared insight, with the contemporaneous placement of theoretical concerns on the back burner, is also what the other disciplines in the policy sciences have offered. The efficiency limitations of cost-benefit analysis are well known and discussed by many economists, sometimes even as the concept is being introduced in policy programs. Nevertheless, the tool is vital to public policy. Not a single MPA program exists without a rudimentary overview in CBA. So too for multivariate regression analysis. Scholars across the statistical landscape develop these tools as much they employ them. These are rudimentary to the field. All of these tools exist as tools in a policy toolbox, each of which is underscored by a variety of values and presuppositions. Unless philosophers offer input into the design of these tools, temporarily abandoning concerns about the contribution of their work to the body of philosophical knowledge, there will be plenty of these tools that go unscrutinized, and philosophers will forever be out in the cold.

THE NEED FOR THIS

Consider this practically for a moment. An approach to policy questions that is contextual, problem oriented, and methodologically diverse would require not general arguments from philosophers, but rather philosophers with training in range of ethical, political, and metaphysical views, training that could bring insight to policy questions instead of further problems to policy questions. From the standpoint of the profession, this could be understood as a research goldmine indeed.

To bring applied philosophy and policy together in the way that I am suggesting will require enormous growth in philosophy. We need legions of philosophers to do this. We need staggering numbers of creative and critical people to address a staggering number of public policy issues that are simply incomprehensibly deep and convoluted. For every article in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* there is a corresponding set of multiple articles in philosophy: articles aimed to address the metaphysics, ethics, epistemology of these concerns. Bioethicists have discovered this and are reaping its rewards, sometimes to the disapprobation of mainstream theoretical philosophers; and sometimes to the dismay of applied philosophers themselves. Equivalently, for every article in the *Journal of Policy Studies* there is a corresponding set of multiple articles in philosophy.

With this growth in supply, comes demand. The benefits to the discipline of philosophy should be plain to all. With a clearer articulation of applications for philosophy and public policy come opportunities for collaboration and grant money. With opportunities for collaboration and grant money come increased enrollment, and increases in paying enrollment. With increases in enrollment come opportunities for a wider readership, for greater interest, for more graduate students, for less dependent relationships with University administrations, and so on. There are opportunities for applied journals, applied societies, and applied collaboration.

The applied philosopher must, of course, continue to play the role of critic and knowledge seeker. This will always be true. It is on these questions that the applied philosopher can ply his trade most naturally. But to constrict philosophy to this narrow set of questions and methods, as Prof. Brock suggests, is to cut off a potential blood supply to an already exclusive and diminutive discipline. A purely abstract and critical role for philosophy will forever be drowned out by the din of the power tools provided by the social and natural sciences.

THE GOOD NEWS

Luckily, philosophy already has plenty of material from which to draw. Theoretical and applied philosophers have for years offered up a tremendous body of work that even prolific and diligent professional philosophers struggle to read. The challenge will be to chart a course through this material such that it can inform particular policies.

This can be done without threatening underlying objectives of pure theoretical or applied philosophy. If the pursuit of knowledge is definitive of philosophy, or that which drives a scholar of philosophy, so much the better for these areas of study. My suggestion is aimed at pragmatically oriented applied philosophers who would like to see their work play a more productive role in the development of policy; who would like to see the sphere of philosophy's influence expand. It is also aimed to persuade those who might otherwise reinforce the suppositions that guide the dilemma dilemma to recognize that the various orientations to applied philosophy can work in happy symbiosis. Just as all of the above disciplines have grown offshoots that wend their way into the policy apparatus, so to can philosophy harmoniously do the same.

The idea, in short, is that pursuit of policy relevance undertaken with the standard knowledge-oriented methodology loses incredible motivating force in the face of the other knowledge-oriented disciplines. Almost all of the other academic components of the policy world—again, statistics, economics, political science, sociology, various sciences—are disciplines oriented toward “knowledge” as well as explanation, unfettered by the cumbers of critical inquiry. The philosopher cannot compete with the knowledge offerings of these disciplines. If she aims to, her arguments are quickly brushed into the category of belief or ideology, left to gather dust.

CONCLUSION

Historically speaking, the reach of the policy sciences has waxed and waned, and appears to be somewhat contingent on trends in the policy arena. There are several journals dedicated to the policy sciences. One place that the policy sciences appears to have taken root is in my home environmental studies department at the University of Colorado, Boulder.³⁶ This program developed via the input of several important figures in environmental studies, political science, policy science, and philosophy, some of whom are intellectual descendents and students of Lasswell. At the same time, the Center which I directed for two years, the Center for Values and Social Policy, also maintained, while not an explicit commitment to Lasswell's work, at least some outward recognition that if philosophy is to be relevant to public policy, it must play in the same sandbox.

To be frank, I am not concerned here with the reach of the policy sciences into policy curricula. There are plenty of political scientists writing on this topic. Rather, what interests me is the extent to which this acknowledgement of value orientations and diverse approaches to public policy formation can gain a foothold in both the policy process and in philosophy. The reason for this should be clear: there is strong and growing demand for insightful input from applied philosophy in almost all questions related to public policy. The challenge now is to philosophers to refigure their research methods, goals, and direction such that they step up to meet this demand.

The characteristic mistake of the philosopher is to assume that the problem on the ground is that nobody listens to the philosopher. But I have argued that that is not the problem at all. Debates in philosophy are esoteric and narrow, yes. They are nitpicky about details, yes. They are complex and virtually impossible to condense into one or two tools, yes. This all goes without saying. But what is also true about the debates of philosophers is that most students, particularly in public policy, do not even know that robust, rich, and longstanding debates exist, they do not recognize that the concepts they regularly employ—such as constraints, welfare, equity, rights, equality, parity, and property . . . the list goes on—have always been at issue in philosophy. Students at the highest levels do not know this, and sometimes even scholars and professors teaching in these programs do not know, or choose to ignore, the deep running presuppositions that guide and form public policies.

For many years running, the questions that applied philosophers have sought to address have primarily been self-referential, geared to straighten out kinks in earlier philosophical views. But this cannot be the sole productive approach if applied philosophy hopes to break bread with the policy sciences. What must instead happen is that applied philosophy must adopt the same approach that the applied sides of the other disciplines have adopted. Philosophers must begin to see themselves as involved in the academic community, as involved in building up a body of literature that can be tapped by non-philosophers, as purveyors of insight and not excavators of knowledge. This will have the benefit of encouraging interest in philosophy, of making the relevance of philosophy known.

As I have said, there is a great deal of work to be done. Philosophers must continue to resist the prevailing assumption that they are involved strictly in theory, as well as the counterpart reaction to assume that the curative to a strict theoretical orientation is to become deeply entrenched in the straightforward resolution of problems. They must resist the divisive wedge of the dilemma dilemma and the consequent pitfall of the problem problem.

To be sure, many before me have tried and succeeded at making great strides for applied philosophy. The rise of interest in applied philosophy is testimony to that progress. But as someone who has feet in both philosophy and public policy, in my humble judgment there is still much work to be done. To my mind the appropriate strategy is the strategy of tool design, the same strategy that has aided the other social sciences in integrating into the toolbox of the policymaker; and perhaps more poignantly, the same strategy that once brought the great apes to the forefront of the evolutionary chain.

Endnotes

1. There are too many articles on this topic to adequately cover the range, but a brief overview is offered in the Rabin book cited here. Jack Rabin, W. Bartley Hildreth, and Gerald Miller, *Handbook of Public Administration, 3rd Edition* (Boca Raton: CRC Press/Taylor & Francis Group, 2007), 556–7.

2. *Ibid.*, 525.

3. John R. Walton, James M. Stearns, and Charles T. Crespy, "Integrating Ethics in the Public Administration Curriculum: A Three-Step Process," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 16.3, Special Issue: The New Public Management in New Zealand and Beyond (Summer 1997): 470–83.

4. Bowman and colleagues have conducted a fascinating study of code-based ethics around the public administration curriculum. James S. Bowman, Evan M. Berman, and Jonathan P. West, "The Profession of Public Administration: An Ethics Edge in Introductory Textbooks?," *Public Administration Review* 61.2 (Mar.–Apr. 2001): 194–205.

5. Dennis Thompson, "Philosophy and Policy," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 14.2 (Spring 1985): 205–18.

6. D. Amy, "Why Policy Analysis and Ethics are Incompatible," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 3.4 (Summer 1984): 573–91.

7. Dan W. Brock, "Truth or Consequences: The Role of Philosophers in Policy-Making," *Ethics* 97.4 (July 1987): 786–91; Norman Daniels, "Conflicting Objectives and the Priorities Problem," in *Income Support*, ed. P. Brown, C. Johnson, and P. Vernier (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Littlefield, 1981).

8. Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action: Lifeworld and System*, Vol. 2, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987).

9. Ethan Fishman examines this problem only as it pertains to political philosophy, but the point can be expanded to include almost all of applied philosophy. Ethan Fishman, "Political Philosophy and the Policy Studies Organization," *Political Science and Politics* 24.4 (Dec. 1991): 720–3.

10. Amy, "Why Policy Analysis and Ethics are Incompatible," 573–91.

11. A much lengthier discussion of this problem can be found in a 2009 special issue of the *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 26.3 dedicated to philosophy and public policy.

12. Henry Shue picks up this general stream of thinking in his article “Making Exceptions,” *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 26.3 (2009): 307–22. There he argues that the abstraction of many applied philosophy cases—ticking time bomb cases and climate change cases in particular—are often unhelpful or misleading for policy-makers. James Connelly and Vittorio Bufacchi both offer nice replies in that same volume.

13. Brock, “Truth or Consequences,” 786–91.

14. Onora O’Neill addresses a related concern in her piece in “Applied Ethics: Naturalism, Normativity and Public Policy,” *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 26.3 (2009): 219–30. She notes that “the ‘cases’ which applied ethics discusses are themselves indeterminate, and the relation of principles to these ‘cases’ differs from the relation of principles to cases in naturalistic, truth-oriented inquiry” (219). Responses from Kimberly Brownlee and David Archard are similarly instructive.

15. Dennis Thompson cites a particularly interesting case of this phenomenon, though he doesn’t use the case to make the same point. David Lewis, instead, makes the point. Thompson’s discussion revolves around what has been called the “Paradox of Deterrence” related to national security gambles. David Lewis, in response to this so-called paradox, argues that in “actual policy the paradox is ‘completely bogus.’” Thompson, “Philosophy and Policy,” 205–18. For the Lewis citation, as well as other essays that frame policy problems in the terms that I am describing, see: *The Security Gamble: Deterrence Dilemmas in the Nuclear Age*, ed. Douglas MacLean (Rowman & Allanheld: New York, 1984).

16. Harold D. Lasswell, “On the Policy Sciences in 1943,” *Policy Sciences* 36 (2003): 71–98.

17. Lasswell wrote over 50 books, 1,000 articles, and engaged in numerous consultations with private citizens and public officials. For more on his work, see Rodney Muth, Mary M. Finley, and Marcia F. Muth, *Harold D. Lasswell: An Annotated Biography* (New Haven: New Haven Press and Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1990). Original citation from Ron Brunner, “The Policy Scientist of Democracy Revisited,” *Policy Sciences* 41.1 (March 2008): 3–19.

18. Harold Lasswell, *Politics: Who Gets What, When and How* (New York: P. Smith, 1950).

19. William Ascher and Barbara Hirschfelder-Ascher, “Linking Lasswell’s Political Psychology and the Policy Sciences,” *Policy Sciences* 37 (2004): 23.

20. Lasswell and Kaplan divide political science into two distinct spheres: the sphere dealing with empirical propositions and the sphere involving value judgments. Roland J. Pennock, “Political Science and Political Philosophy,” *The American Political Science Review* 45.4. (Dec. 1951): 1081–5.

21. Bruce Lannes Smith, “The Mystifying Intellectual History of Harold D. Lasswell,” in *Politics, Personality, and Social Science in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Arnold A. Rogow (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969).

22. John Dewey, “Theory of Valuation,” in John Dewey, *The Later Works, 1925–1953*, ed. J. A. Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981).

23. Abraham Kaplan, *American Ethics and Public Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963).

24. Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*.

25. John Dryzek, in particular, has taken up the charge of advocating a Habermasian integrated framework for policy scientists. For a brief dip into this work, see John S. Dryzek, “Policy Analysis and Planning: From Science to Argument” in *The Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis and Planning*, ed. Frank Fischer and John Forester (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993). Also, Dryzek, *Discursive Democracy: Politics, Policy, and Political Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

26. There is a small barge of material on postpositivism in both the policy sciences and in discourse ethics. For work in the policy sciences, see Frank Fischer, "Beyond Empiricism: Policy Inquiry in Postpositivist Perspective," *Policy Studies Journal* 26.1 (Spring 1998): 129–46; Fischer, "Reconstructing Policy Analysis: A Postpositivist Perspective," *Policy Sciences* 25.3 (August 1992); and John Forester, *Critical Theory, Public Policy, and Planning Practice: Toward a Critical Pragmatism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993); in discourse ethics, see Fred Dallmayr, *Twilight of Subjectivity: Contributions to a Post-Individualist Theory of Politics* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1981).

27. Jürgen Habermas, "Philosophy as Stand-In and Interpreter," in *After Philosophy: End or Transformation?*, ed. Kenneth Baynes, James Bohman, and Thomas McCarthy (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987).

28. Almost forty years ago Sidney Hook argued a similarly Deweyan position: Sidney Hook, "Philosophy and Public Policy," *The Journal of Philosophy* 67.14 (July 23, 1970): 461–70.

29. O'Neill, "Applied Ethics: Naturalism, Normativity and Public Policy," 229–30.

30. See, among other publications: "Contemporary Environmental Ethics: From Metaethics to Public Philosophy," *Metaphilosophy* 33.4 (2002): 426–49; and "The Urban Blind Spot in Environmental Ethics," *Environmental Politics* 10.1 (2001): 7–35.

31. Robert Frodeman, "The Policy Turn in Environmental Philosophy," in *Environmental Ethics* 28.1 (Spring 2006): 10.

32. S. Esbjörn-Hargens and M. E. Zimmerman, "Integral Ecology" in *Encyclopedia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy*, ed. J. B. Callicott and R. Frodeman (New York: Macmillan Library Reference, 2008); Michael Zimmerman and Sean Esbjorn-Hargens, *Integral Ecology: Uniting Multiple Perspectives on the Natural World* (Boston: Integral Books, 2009).

33. Roger A. Pielke Jr., *The Honest Broker: Making Sense of Science in Policy and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

34. Edwin R. Dubose, Ronald P. Hame, and Laurence J. O'Connell, eds., *A Matter of Principles?: Ferment in U.S. Bioethics* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International: 1994); as well as Marcus Düwell, "One Principle Or Many?" *Bioethics in Cultural Contexts: Reflections on Methods and Finitude*, International Library of Ethics, Law, and the New Medicine series vol. 28; and K. Danner Clouser and Bernard Gert, "A Critique of Principlism," *The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 15.2 (April 1990): 219–36, among many other critical papers.

35. This may be the most appropriate way to think of applied philosophy in general. Carolyn Whitbeck, for instance, argues that the philosophical dimensions of engineering ethics are best understood not as decision problems, as they commonly are, but rather as matters of design. C. Whitbeck, *Ethics in Engineering Practice and Research* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); M. van Amerongen, "The Moral Designer," *Techné* 7.3 (Spring 2004).

36. Roger A. Pielke Jr., "What Future for the Policy Sciences?" *Policy Sciences* 37 (2004): 209–25.