

Pragmatism, Pluralism, and the Idea of a Social Science

Patrick Thaddeus Jackson

American University ♦ @profptj

March for Science

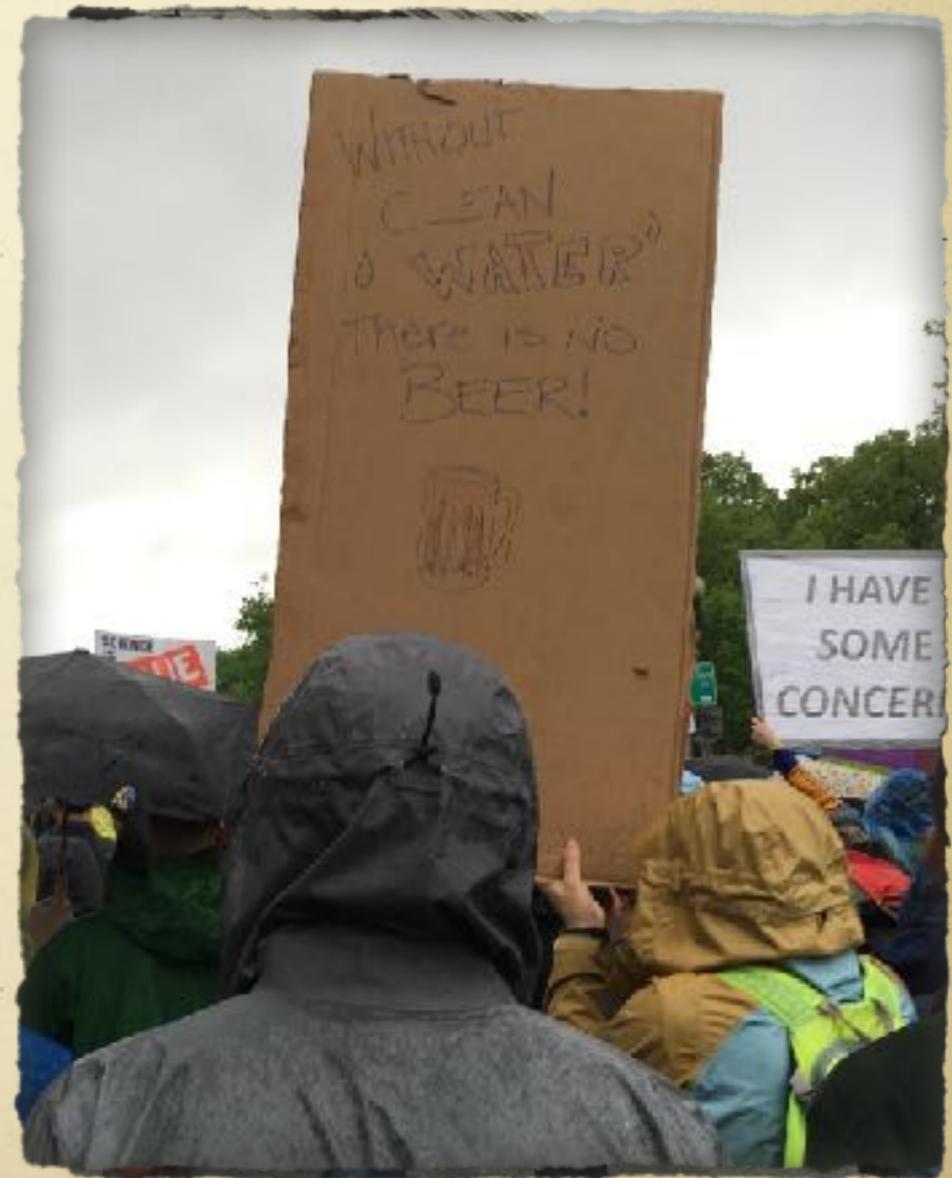
- ❧ 22 April 2017, in more than 600 cities
- ❧ “We marched to defend the role of science in policy and society.”
- ❧ science vs. “relativism”



citizen, <http://www.dailykos.com/story/2017/4/23/1655431/>

Science and Politics

- science > other forms of knowing
- learning from the “science question” in the social sciences
- practical concerns



Naturalism

- no important difference between natural and social worlds
- universal procedure for determining facts
- *real science = natural science*

STAND BACK



**I'M GOING TO TRY
SCIENCE**

Anti-Naturalism



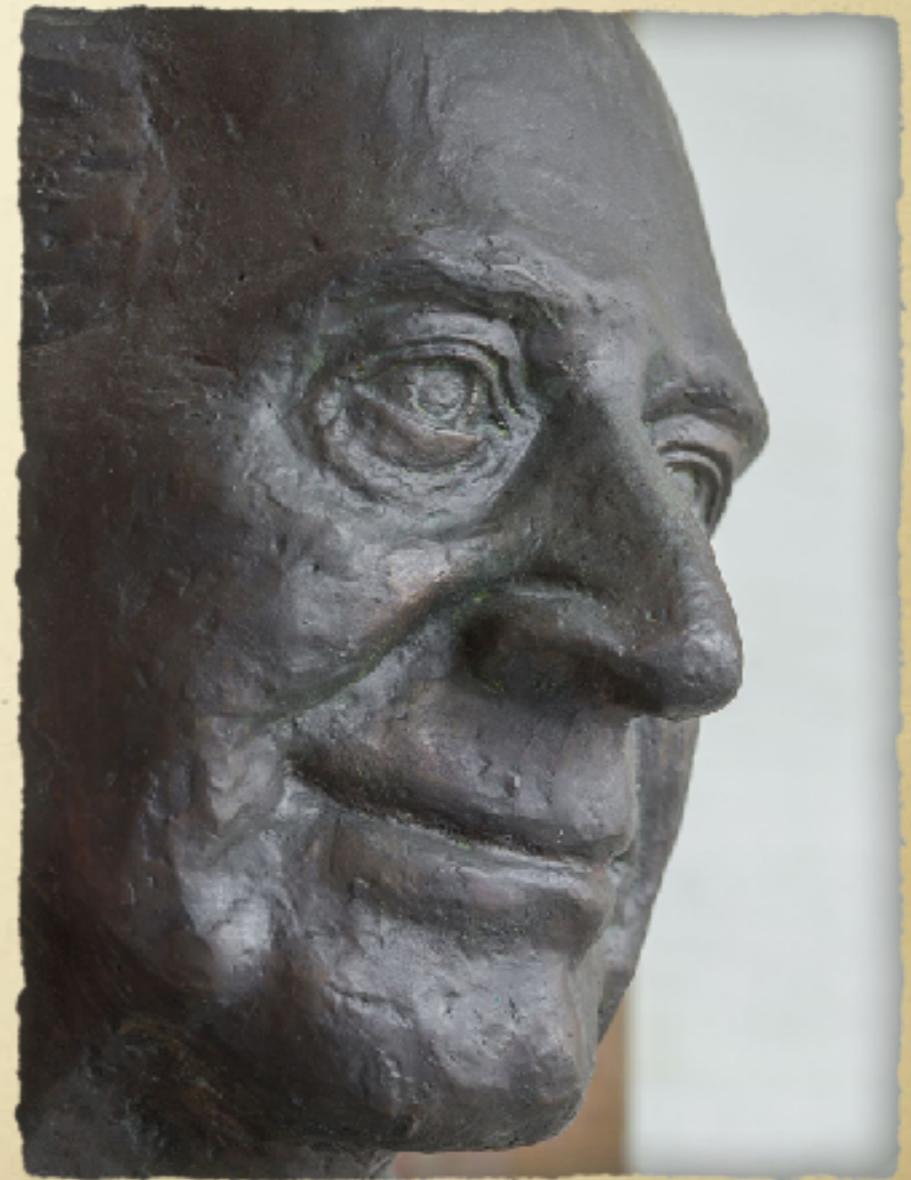
- human beings are not like other entities
- social science is elucidating meanings
- *interpretation* as highest epistemic goal

Difficulties

- anti-naturalism can't account for *recurrent patterns* in social life...or their transformation
- naturalism has a hard time with *agency* and *intentionality*
- they're *both* (partly) right:
 - agency/intentionality have to be central
 - but this doesn't preclude explanation

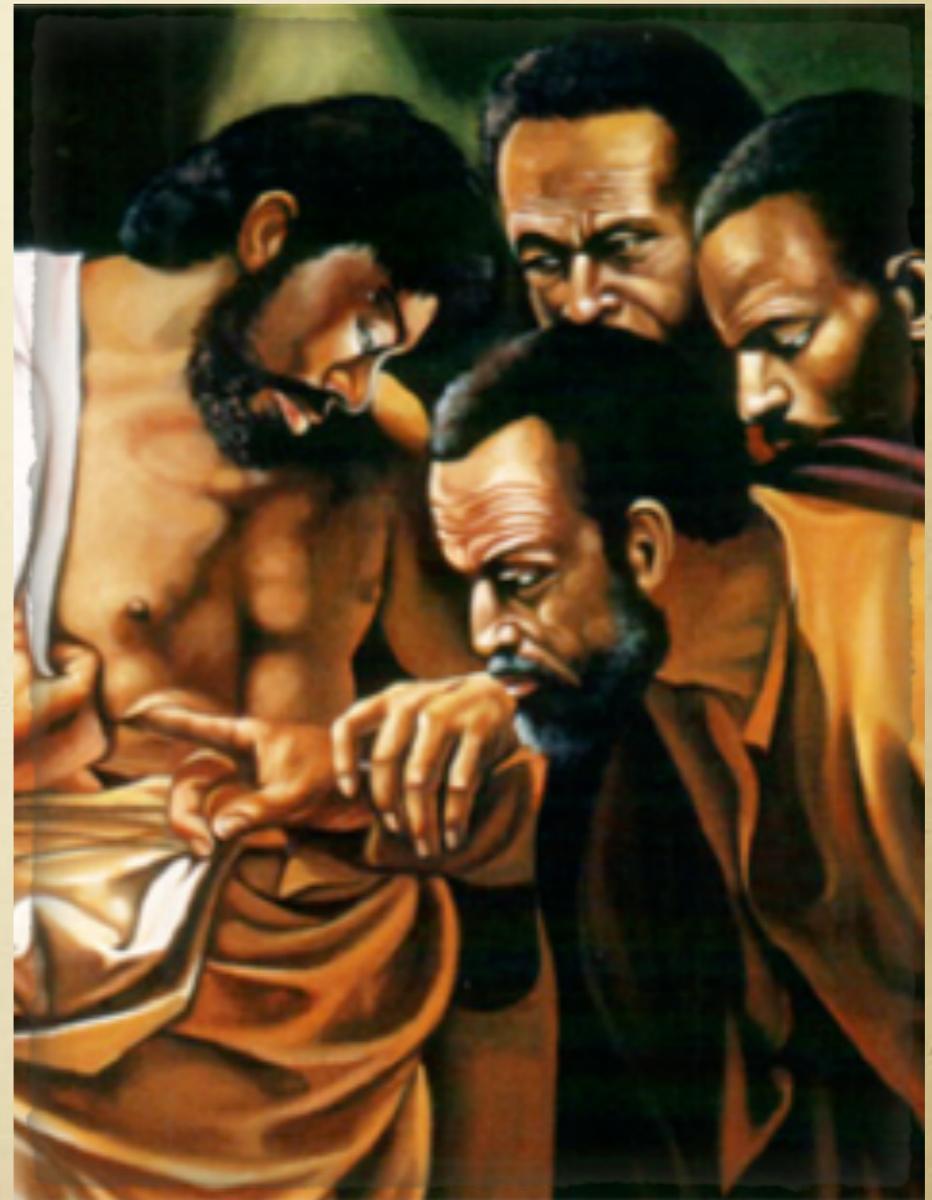
Demarcation

- Vienna Circle:
“verifiability”
- Popper: “falsifiability”
- nomothetic generalization,
quantification,
physicalism...
- *all demarcation criteria fail*



The Scientific Spirit

- “Doubting Thomas”
- observational data
- impersonal standards
- courage to “face facts”



Ways of Knowing

Science and Facts

- application of impersonal standards to observational data
- involves *consensus*
- *factual description*
- *factual explanations* take facts into account
- agreement produced through *reasoning*



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Varieties of Explanation

- aims to provide a *recipe* for *resolving a problem*
- augmenting the *capacity* of the recipient
- *causal*: answers questions about how to make something happen
- *interpretive*: answers questions about how to “go on” appropriately

Scientific Methodologies

The Humanized Sciences

- problem-situations ground *all* acts of explanation
- the end of explanation is *human doing*
- “science” establishes consensus parameters for action

