

THE PROMISE OF CONSTRUCTIVISM AS A METHOD FOR STUDYING THE POLICY PROCESS

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Abstract

Public Policy as a social scientific discipline has developed in large measure by borrowing theories and methods from other social sciences. However, the political reality in which public policy is developed and implemented is constantly changing, and so what counts as policy reality evolves along with its political-economic-cultural context.

At this stage in the development of the field of Public Policy, we lack the necessary theory to capture this evolving reality in a way that will enable us to exploit or employ it in promising and compelling policy recommendations. The underlying difficulty, not yet recognized sufficiently by policy scholars and policy practitioners alike, is the reification of political reality. Both scholars and policymakers generally assume that there is a reality “out there” that is independent of us, and especially is independent of our beliefs about its nature and changeability. This assumption—this reification—is a profound limitation on the compellingness and the practical promise of our work as policy scholars.

The theoretical approach that offers the promise of de-reifying the reality in which and about which policy is made and studied is Constructivism. However, while Constructivism has been developing in the field of international relations and foreign policy for several decades, and also more recently in comparative politics, it is still subject to substantial variation in its theoretical assumptions. The most common version, which might be called “Explanatory Constructivism” or “Insight Constructivism,” emphasizes the importance and value of understanding the reality images or worldviews of policymakers (that is, the images of reality that they construct in their minds). But the more profound and more promising version of Constructivism attempts to de-reify the policy reality by uncovering and showing how what passes for policy reality is significantly determined (although to an extent yet to be discovered) by the beliefs about the nature of the policy reality held and

employed by policymakers. This paper develops the case for employing this advanced version of Constructivism in studying the policy process.

Introduction¹

Public Policy as a social scientific discipline has developed in large measure by borrowing theories and methods from other social sciences—especially political science. There are four important reasons for this, as we know.

First, policy is quintessentially a political field, both for academic analysts and for practitioners, so we tend to borrow concepts, terms, explanations, and even strategies from political theory and practice. The danger here is that we may tend to adopt understandings of politics that have not kept pace with the changes in the policy context or with the changes in our understandings of politics.

Second, the formerly widespread assumption that meanings are clear and intersubjective, made (probably without thinking) both by practitioners and by analysts, is no longer defensible—especially as policy becomes increasingly multicultural and transnational. We must therefore depend increasingly on insights from what is now often termed “the interpretive turn” or the “discursive turn.”

Third, the political reality in which public policy is developed and implemented is constantly changing, often in ways and to degrees that virtually no one can anticipate adequately—especially in the world of satellite communications, computer processing, and social media. We now need policy theory that both enables us to recognize these changes as quickly as possible and to capitalize upon

¹ Earlier versions of this argument were developed in papers presented at the

them by employing theory that adapts quickly to changing reality and even helps us gain influence over those changes.

These three transformational changes are widely recognized, and we know what we must do to deal constructively and creatively with them. But the fourth reason has not yet been adequately recognized. The fact is that both policy makers and policy scholars still tend to *reify* reality—that is, to assume that reality is somehow “out there, independent of us and of our beliefs about what it is and how it operates.” This view tends to limit, or even cripple, our efforts to develop creative policies that offer the promise of constructive changes in a reality that nobody considers desirable. It is time to recognize that we must “de-reify” reality, whether we are most interested in explanation of the policy process and outcomes, or in policy analysis and recommendation. But it is not yet clear to many just how we might do this.

The theoretical approach that offers the promise of de-reifying the reality in which and about which policy is made and studied is Constructivism. Constructivism is transforming much study of international relations and foreign policy.² But although public policy includes foreign policy, there has been surprisingly little effort to apply Constructivism to public policy more broadly.

Policy theory—theory that instructs actors on how to decide and act—has always been central to concerns of social theorists interested in playing a role in

² The literature on Constructivism in international relations is enormous by now—too enormous to summarize here. Those seeking an overview might consult, for example, Jennifer Sterling-Folker, ed., *Making Sense of International Relations Theory* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2006), ch. 5.

policy making or other forms of political action.³ However, until relatively recent breakthroughs, policy theory, or “action theory”⁴ as it is often called, has tended to be grounded in often unconscious naïve assumptions about the obviousness of meanings and the determinateness of social reality. Two strands of social theorizing have made major vital contributions to improving policy theory by questioning and ultimately rejecting these twin assumptions in recent decades: “the interpretive turn,” and what might be called “the Constructivist turn.”

The importance of a thoughtful exploration and application of interpretation has, I believe, become so obvious, that I do not intend to rehearse it here.⁵ Rather, I wish to explore the usefulness of a particular version of Constructivism in achieving

³ Another type of policy theory is—or claims to be—strictly explanatory, devoted to explaining why and how particular policies are chosen. This approach assumes that human action is determinate and can therefore be successfully or accurately explained by social theorizing. I believe that this is a mistaken assumption, as I argue in “Studying Public Policy-Making As If We Mattered,” in *Research in Public Policy Analysis and Management*, vol. 7 (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1955), pp. 227-240. I shall also explain the reasons for this below.

⁴ This term for theory that is explicitly addressed to how to act effectively in particular circumstances has a substantial history in certain disciplines, including education and business. Such work has direct relevance for the approach to social theorizing that I am recommending. For illustrations, see Richard Winter, *Action-Research and the Nature of Social Inquiry: Professional Innovation and Educational Work* (Aldershot: Gower, 1987). Another application is “action learning.” See Michael J. Marquardt et al., *Action Learning for Developing Leaders and Organizations* (Washington: American Psychological Association, 2009). See also the related but somewhat different approach of Chris Argyris summarized in his “Research as Action: Usable Knowledge for Understanding and Changing the Status Quo,” chapter 9 in Nigel Nicholson et al., eds., *The Theory and Practice of Organizational Psychology* (New York: Academic Press, 1982), as well as in many of his books. Donald Schoen (see below) and Argyris have also collaborated in developing relevant concepts of social learning.

⁵ A particularly valuable overview can be found in Dvora Yanow & Peregrine Schwartz-Shea, eds., *Interpretation and Method: Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2006; second edition, 2013). See also Frank Fischer and Herbert Gottweis, eds., *The Argumentative Turn Revisited: Public Policy as Communicative Practice* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

two important goals of policy study: complementing and extending interpretive insights, and making policy theory more promising to developers of policy theory.

What has come to be called Constructivism has evolved in various fields, starting with the sociology of knowledge, where the founding work is Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's pioneering book *The Social Construction of Reality*,⁶ and extending to other, more applied, aspects of sociology.⁷ Another strand has developed in psychology,⁸ where an interesting recent developing approach is called "interpretative phenomenological analysis."⁹

Perhaps the most extensive and prominent development in recent years has occurred in international relations and foreign policy, and because this area is particularly close to the study of public policy, much of my analysis here will build upon this work.¹⁰

⁶ Peter Berger & Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966). Their work was inspired by that of Alfred Schutz, as they explain in the introduction to this book. Another work, produced at the same time but focused more on the sociology of the *distribution* of knowledge, is Burkart Holzner, *Reality Construction in Society* (Cambridge: Schenkman, 1967).

⁷ The dominant figure here is Kenneth Gergen. See, for example, his *An Invitation to Social Construction* (London: Sage, 1999), among many other works.

⁸ Some psychological approaches build on cognitive psychology while others employ group identity theory. For illustrative examples from international relations and foreign policy focused on Russia, see Ted Hopf, *Social Construction of International Politics: Identities and Foreign Policies, Moscow, 1955 and 1999* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002) and Anne L. Clunan, *The Social Construction of Russia's Resurgence: Aspirations, Identity, and Security Interests* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

⁹ See Jonathan A. Smith, Paul Flowers, and Michael Larkin, *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2009).

¹⁰ There is a growing constructivist movement in comparative politics. See Daniel M. Green, ed., *Constructivism and Comparative Politics* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2002).

There are actually four significantly different versions of constructivism that a scholar, whether theorist or researcher, might adopt.¹¹ However, the apparently wide variety of versions described or referred to in the literature thus far does not clearly represent these four variants. Furthermore, the versions or variants of constructivism that practicing scholars use are generally not yet clearly and deeply enough developed in terms of their ontological underpinnings and methodological implications. As a result, they and the work built upon them are less systematic, less compelling, and less useful to practitioners--whether those practitioners be scholars or policymakers--than they should be.

There is widespread agreement on some basic features of constructivist work, although explicit formulations of this agreement do tend to vary. "Constructivists stress that both structural continuities and processes of change are based on agency," says a recent analysis by two scholars. "Agency, in turn, is influenced by social, spatial, and historical context. Rather than granting ontological priority to either structure or agency, constructivists view both as 'mutually constituted.'"¹²

¹¹ I have presented these four types of Constructivism in previous papers. See "Four Alternative Constructivisms: Implications for Social Theorizing and Practice," prepared for delivery at the annual meetings of the International Studies Association in New Orleans, February 2010. Earlier versions of this argument were presented in papers delivered at the annual meetings of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, September 2008, and the Northeastern Political Science Association, Philadelphia, November, 2009.

¹² Audie Klotz & Cecilia Lynch, *Strategies for Research in Constructivist International Relations*. (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2007), p. 3. This concise survey helpfully summarizes many of the current variations in constructivist practice. An interesting but quite different earlier survey can be found in Ralph Pettman, *Commonsense Constructivism, or the Making of World Affairs* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2000). And for an interesting discussion of certain aspects of methods advocating the integration of

Terminology varies considerably. Ruggie, for example, in his classic account, rather than focusing on the structure-agency differentiation, distinguishes between what he calls neoclassical, postmodernist, and naturalistic constructivisms, all of which he considers ultimately *approaches* to the study of international relations rather than *theories* of international relations.¹³ Among other versions referred to in Ruggie's valuable analysis and account are sociological, feminist, jurisprudential, genealogical, and emancipatory constructivisms. And, of course, various psychological¹⁴ and psychiatric versions, as well as the sociology of knowledge version developed by Berger and Luckmann, appear in the literature from time to time.

However, as interesting as these widely varying distinctions are, and as relevant as they can be for suggesting foci or emphases as options for how to conduct constructivist research, there are deeper, ontological, distinctions and assumptions that should be carefully considered by anyone attempting to do or to evaluate constructivist theorizing or research—or constructivist policymaking. For example, a scholar who is not clear about his or her ontological presuppositions risks producing work that is logically weakened, and may fail to make research breakthroughs that a more thoughtful and precisely formulated approach might make possible.

three of them, see Amir Lupovici, "Constructivist Methods: A Plea and Manifesto for Pluralism," *Review of International Studies* 35, 2009, 195-218.

¹³ John Gerard Ruggie, "What Makes the World Hang Together? Neo-utilitarianism and the Social Constructivist Challenge," *International Organization* 52, 4 Autumn 1998, pp. 855-885.

¹⁴ See footnote 8 supra.

At their root, the four variants among which scholars should consciously select vary in the extent or degree to which they believe—assume, in most cases—that the fundamental reality that they are studying and that practitioners are operating in is, or at least can be, *constituted by the beliefs of practitioners* mediated through practitioner actions and the resulting interactions, rather than being “out there,” independent of either the ideas about that reality held by the actors or those held by the theorists—or, in other words, rather than being “mind-independent.” Those who cling to the latter perspective, which thinks of reality as “mind-independent,” are practitioners of *reification*—treating as a nonhuman thing what is in fact a human product.¹⁵

A major motivation for undertaking constructivist research has always been to escape the constraints of reification, which not only distorts social reality but also prevents actors and observers alike from recognizing the changeability of that humanly created reality.

The first version of Constructivism, for which there is not yet a standard term, I shall call “*Insight Constructivism*.” It might also appropriately be called “Explanatory Constructivism.” It takes no position on what the underlying determinants of reality are, nor therefore on the possible *constitutive* role of ideas, understandings, and beliefs of the actors. Instead, insight constructivism argues that we should attend to the beliefs of practitioners in order better to understand—get insight into, or more satisfactorily explain--why they take the decisions and

¹⁵ The literature on reification is growing. See, for interesting recent reflections, Axel Honneth et al., *Reification: A New Look at an Old Idea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

actions they do. The first key to the value of this approach lies in the usefulness and policy-relevance of the analytical framework with which these practitioner beliefs, which I have elsewhere called “reality images”¹⁶ and which others sometimes call worldviews, are examined, as we shall see below. This Insight Constructivism is, obviously, constructivism conceived as an “approach” rather than as a theory.

The second Constructivism, which might be called *Strong Constructivism* or *Complete Constructivism*, assumes that all of reality is in some way a product of consciousness—in other words, reality is a consequence, or a creation, of the beliefs about reality held by practitioners, whether they are aware of this constitutive effect or not. The way this happens, according to Strong Constructivism, is that policymakers and their agents act on the basis of their reality images, and these actions then become parts of the reality images of other actors, however accurate or inaccurate the resulting images—both perceptions and cognitions--may be, and then influence the actions of these actors. The resulting actions in turn become part of the reality images of the original actors, and influence their responses. This sets up what observers, whether practitioners or researchers, consider a pattern of interaction, and that pattern both practitioners and observers come to think of as an institution or a phenomenon such as an arms race, a war, a negotiation, or trade.

Thus, according to this Strong Constructivism, all of reality is indeterminate, contingent on the patterns of interaction among the units--patterns that are in turn dependent on the actions of the actors, which are ultimately contingent upon the beliefs about reality, or in other words the consciousness, of the actors. I have

¹⁶ David V. Edwards, *Creating a New World Politics: From Conflict to Cooperation* (New York: McKay, 1973).

elsewhere called this view “reality creation”¹⁷ to distinguish it from views that simply attempt to uncover the images of reality “constructed” by individuals or imposed upon them by cultural authorities—something which should more properly be called “reality construction.”

The third Constructivism has no obvious name, but many possibilities, among them *uncertain, indeterminate, agnostic, or moderate* Constructivism. This view, which I shall call *Indeterminate Constructivism*, holds that it is not (at least not yet) clear *how much* of reality is ultimately determined by beliefs, though it is obvious that at least some of reality is so determined. This approach therefore, ideally, assumes the possibility that all of reality *may* be indeterminate and contingent on practitioners’ beliefs and resulting actions, and keeps pressing its analysis until any limits to such reality creation by consciousness are uncovered.

The most obvious candidate limitations on the creation of reality by consciousness are, of course, what are normally considered the “material” factors in reality, such as geography, natural resources, weather, weaponry, etc.¹⁸ From another perspective, language and meaning are, at least in the immediate sense, given rather than socially constructed, although some would point out correctly that both are clearly socioculturally variable, and therefore over time must be socially constructed and socially maintained or altered.

¹⁷ Edwards, *op. cit.*

¹⁸ Pettman interestingly argues that the “commonsense” views of ordinary—non-scholar and non-practitioner—people will tend to assume more flexibility or changeability in this apparently given global reality. See his *Commonsense Constructivism*, *passim*.

The fourth Constructivism might best be called *Policy Constructivism*. It holds that one should build practical or policy theory, or “action theory,” by focusing on policy decisions and the resulting actions and interactions. This approach focuses on the practitioners’ beliefs about how to be effective, or how to get what you want, and works toward development of statements of the form “If you want to achieve goal G under conditions ABC, do XYZ.”

With its Constructivist orientation, this approach to policy theory is particularly promising of policy relevance—and more particularly, of innovation and creative policy development, as I shall explain below.

Clearly, given the state of our agreed-upon knowledge about reality in general, let alone about the particular realities facing policy makers, we cannot choose definitively among these four Constructivisms at this time. Whichever one we choose to employ in our work as policy scholars or policy practitioners, we should expect to have to act—or publish or advise--before we are sure we are right, and we should therefore be prepared to modify our underlying ontological assumptions as our work unfolds. In other words, we should expect to act before knowing and to learn from and by experience.

But first and foremost, we should be clear about the ontological assumptions we are making, so that they can inform our work in ways that will help us be methodologically sound and help our work contribute to increasing our knowledge about how the world actually works as well as to developing defensible constructivist policy theory. And we should adopt the approach that promises the preferred likely payoff in terms of knowledge, grounded belief, or policy relevance.

To decide how to do this, we need a well-developed understanding of each of these four options.

Insight Constructivism: Constructivism as an Approach

What I am calling “Insight Constructivism” is a derivation and further development of work pioneered by psychologists, especially George A. Kelly and Dean Pruitt, intended to focus attention on the images or pictures of reality developed by individuals. Kelly developed his “theory of personality constructs” in the 1950s.¹⁹ The first effort to apply this sort of analysis to the study of international relations was a book chapter by Dean Pruitt called “The Definition of the Situation as a Determinant of International Action,” published in 1965.²⁰ A somewhat different approach was pioneered by Nathan Leites, who termed his focus the “operational code” of political actors in his studies of the Soviet Politburo and French politics. It was later applied to foreign policy by Alexander George and others.²¹

¹⁹ See George A. Kelly, *The Psychology of Personality Constructs* (N.Y.: Norton, 1955), the original work. Others have further developed the approach since. See, for the most recent, Richard Butler, ed., *Reflections in Personal Construct Theory* (N.Y.: Wiley, 2009).

²⁰ Dean Pruitt, “The Definition of the Situation,” in Herbert Kelman, ed., *International Behavior: A Social-Psychological Analysis* (N.Y.: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1965), pp. 393-432.

²¹ See, among other sources, Nathan Leites, *The Operational Code of the Politburo* (NY: McGraw-Hill, 1951), the first published work, and *On the Game of Politics in France* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1959). See also Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005). Among more recent examinations of Leites’s work, see Mark Schafer and Stephen Walker, eds., *Beliefs and Leadership in World Politics: Methods and Applications of Operational Code Analysis* (NY: Palgrave, 2006).

The basic project in the various versions of this approach is to develop relatively comprehensive descriptions of the reality images, or worldviews, of participants in policy decision making in order to first understand the sources of their decisions. At this point, there are several ways in which phenomena we would label social construction might be uncovered. One is to focus on the social construction—read social or cultural determinants—of each policymaker’s reality image. But that is not the heart of a constructivist view of politics or policymaking. It is only when the comparable reality images of other participants—whether individual or collective actors--have been uncovered or inferred, and the underlying decisions therefore better understood, that payoffs beyond understanding of particular decisions and actions might be achieved. Thus, for example, as patterns of interaction are tied to policymakers’ beliefs about the nature of reality—often, the exigencies of responding to challenges--the sources of conflicts that might be addressed by negotiation—or, perhaps, exploited in policy making—may become clearer.

Since few policymakers articulate fully their own reality images, the project tends to involve inferences from what has been articulated publicly and from statements in memoirs, biographies, and media accounts, combined as necessary with inferences from other such statements and/or from behavior.

Policymakers’ reality images can of course be analyzed or decomposed into various sets of key components. My work has led me to the view that the most useful and revealing “conceptual framework” breaks the policymakers’s beliefs into six key components. These six are: (1) beliefs about *what is*, (2) beliefs about *what*

causes what, (3) beliefs about *how changeable reality is*; (4) beliefs about *what's right*, (5) beliefs about *what works*, and (6) beliefs about *what should be done in particular settings by whom, how, and why*. These categories correspond to, or contribute to, traditional social scientific activities: description, explanation, evaluation, practical theorizing, and policy recommendation.

The great virtue of Insight Constructivism is that it enables one to “see reality as another sees it,” and therefore better understand why he or she or it took the actions he/she/it did, and then to add examination of other actors’ reality images and resulting actions. Furthermore, if done well and comprehensively, it enables one to pinpoint just where disagreements among actors actually lie, whether they be in the image of the situation or in ideas of causation or in values, for example.

Insight Constructivism is obviously closely related intellectually and theoretically to interpretive policy theory, and can benefit from insights developed there.

Strong Constructivism: Constructivism as an Ontology

Insight Constructivism takes no position on whether reality is “out there” independent of us and the way we think about it and act. Strong Constructivism, by contrast, assumes that reality is actually constituted by the images actors have of that reality as they act upon those images and produce the interactions that we experience as events and patterns--patterns such as war, trade,

negotiation, and arms races in international relations.²² Thus Strong Constructivism must study not only the reality images of actors, but also the relations between these images and actual happenings—relations that this theory assumes to be causal. The project is not simply to better understand why actors act as they do, which is the project of Insight Constructivism, but also to discover the causal relations between those actors' reality images and the eventuating patterns of interaction that we call phenomena, such as, in international relations, war, negotiation, trade, etc.

Few scholars today would endorse and practice such Strong Constructivism, but many would endorse the weaker version, which we are calling Indeterminate Constructivism. If research by scholars turns up compelling evidence that in fact most if not all of reality in the world of policy as we know it is produced or constituted by actors who are acting on their images of reality, that will have to change.

It is important, however, to be clear about what is being claimed here. Obviously, happenings are caused, in the immediate or proximate sense, by the actions of participants. Consider the example of international relations. Wars do not happen unless parties strike each other militarily. Typical explanations of wars, however—especially those employing “Realist” theoretical perspectives—tend to assume that the decisions of leaders in crises or conflicts are ultimately best explainable by features of the structure of the international system and/or the

²² For a philosophical account of how this might be understood to happen, see Owen Barfield, *Saving the Appearances: A Study in Idolatry* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1965), reprinted with a new introduction by Wesleyan University Press in 1988).

military power of the participants.²³ Strong Constructivism, by contrast, asserts that the structure of the international system—and indeed the very concept of “an international system”—is a construct of the minds of the observers and participants, and so are assessments of military capabilities. Furthermore, this theory argues, the only reason that certain actions seem to be “forced” by such structures or capabilities is the fact that people believe that these factors matter or are determinants. A different set of beliefs about what exists and what matters would produce different decisions and actions, and therefore different outcomes. So in this way international reality really is created by the beliefs participants hold and employ.

Indeterminate Constructivism: Constructivism as an Experiment

For the time being, until more research is completed, most scholars and theorists with constructivist tendencies will act as if they are Indeterminate Constructivists—people who believe that at least some of reality is indeed constituted by the images held by actors as those images inform actions, but who are not sure how much of that reality is so constituted.

One recent critical study of the prominent constructivist works developed by Nicholas Onuf, Alexander Wendt, and Friedrich Kratochwil asserts that these three,

²³ J. Samuel Barkin makes an interesting case for the potential benefits of Constructivism for Realism and vice versa: “A realist constructivism is a constructivism in which a concern for power politics, understood as relational rather than structural, is central. It is also one in which the link to social realism is a realism that takes intersubjectivity and co-constitution seriously, that focuses on social structures as the locus of change in international politics.” *Realist Constructivism: Rethinking International Relations Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010), p. 169.

at least, “agree on the assumption of limited construction. That is, when their constructivist analysis starts, some reality has already been made and is taken as given. Constructivist work stresses the significance of meaning but assumes, at the same time, the existence of an a priori reality.”²⁴

This formulation of “Limited Constructivism” assumes more certainty about just what is preexistent than most thoughtful scholars are likely to be willing to assume at this point in the development of the discipline. It also assumes that these aspects cannot themselves be “deconstructed” to show that they, too, have been socially created and are being socially maintained and/or modified over time by actions based on actors’ reality images. There is, of course, a large body of general work on some of these aspects in such fields as linguistics and the theory of language.²⁵

The clearest cases of constitutive images at work in international relations are probably arms races, in which virtually all researchers will grant that the arms race is a product of beliefs about the other’s intentions and capabilities that are held by each of the participating actors.

Some will go on to limit the role of social construction in such cases by asserting that the racing actions that follow from the developed images are justified by the material circumstances, and these analysts will then tend to settle on assumptions close to those of “Realists” who argue that states do and/or should

²⁴ Maja Zehfuss, *Constructivism in International Relations: The Politics of Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), page 10.

²⁵ See, for example, Jonathan Potter, *Representing Reality: Discourse, Rhetoric and Social Construction* (London: Sage, 1996), and Vivienne Burr, *Social Constructionism*, second edition (N.Y.: Routledge, 2003).

respond to other states' military postures—in other words, that there is a kind of automaticity to such racing policies. But this view does not really undermine the constructivist argument that the images are constitutive, because it is clear that if states for some reason chose not to respond to others' arming, the arms race would not result.

Careful sustained study designed to discover how much of reality is actually socially constructed will have to address the question raised by philosopher Ian Hacking in the title of his book, *The Social Construction of What?*²⁶ Hacking mentions dozens of things that have been described as socially constructed in various natural scientific and social scientific literatures. It is obvious that individuals develop their reality images in social contexts, influenced by authorities. It is also obvious that thoughtful individuals will develop images influenced by the actions of other individuals. And of course it is obvious that these images will produce actions by one party that influence the actions of another party, assuming that the other party is attentive. And so the resulting patterns of interaction, which we commonly call phenomena--such as diplomatic interaction, economic trade, cultural exchange, or war in international relations, for example--are clearly “constructed” of the image-caused actions of the parties.

Thus the real question becomes whether these patterned interactions can be said to be caused by the antecedent images, such that they would not occur were these images not in the minds of the practitioners and acted upon by them. And that is what constructivist scholars continue to investigate.

²⁶ Ian Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

There are many such case studies available today. One of the most interesting pioneering cases is little known today: Amitai Etzioni's study of the interplay between President John F. Kennedy and Chairman Nikita Khrushchev in the summer of 1963, following the nuclear-war-scare of the Cuban Missile Crisis. Etzioni found a pattern of what at the time were commonly referred to as "reciprocation-inducing unilateral initiatives"²⁷ which some thought were creating a "peace race" counterpart to the longstanding Cold War arms race. This instance deserves a much more comprehensive examination, possible now that national archives are open, than Etzioni was able to do. Jeffrey Sachs recently undertook such a study, with interesting results that add significantly to our understanding of what happened in "the Kennedy Experiment."²⁸

Policy Constructivism: Constructivism as a Practice

Policy Constructivists may hold either the Strong or the Indeterminate view, for their interest is pragmatic. They want to know what beliefs, put into practice, will work to create and sustain the developments they—or their employers--seek to foster in the world. Much of the appeal of this version comes from the commonly held view that things are bad--in world affairs, in domestic politics, in the social

²⁷ Psychologist Charles E. Osgood made major contributions to development of this policy proposal, formulating an approach he called "Graduated Reciprocation in Tension-reduction", or GRIT, in his seminal book, *An Alternative To War Or Surrender* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1962).

²⁸ Amitai Etzioni, "The Kennedy Experiment," *Western Political Quarterly* 20:2 (June 1967), 361ff. See also his subsequent reflection, "The Kennedy Experiment Revisited," *Political Research Quarterly* 26:1 (March 2008), 20-24. Jeffrey Sachs, *To Move the World: JFK's Quest for Peace* (N.Y.: Random House, 2013), builds upon and elaborates on Etzioni's analysis.

world, or whatever realm policymakers and scholars are operating--in substantial part because of the worldviews on which policymakers base their actions, and the consequent search for an alternative approach. This has led some advocates to distinguish between “conventional” and “critical” Constructivism, and an interesting literature has grown out of this distinction.²⁹

But because our theoretical knowledge in social science is still so underdeveloped--or, perhaps more accurately, so non-intersubjective³⁰--at this stage, the policy theorist with a constructivist focus will know that one will have to act before knowing in today’s world, and learn about the actual limits to social construction/creation through trial and success or failure—learning while doing, as “reflective practitioners”—a term, developed by the late Donald Schoen, for all professionals who do this.³¹

“Faced with some phenomenon that he finds unique, the inquirer nevertheless draws on some element of his familiar repertoire which he treats as exemplar or as generative metaphor for the new phenomenon,” writes Schoen in characterizing the work of professionals such as architects, psychotherapists, and development advisors. “Further, as the inquirer reflects on the similarities he has perceived, he formulates new hypotheses. But he tests these hypotheses by

²⁹ See, for a useful survey, Ted Hopf, “The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory,” *International Security* (1999) vol. 23 no. 1, pp.171-200. See also the interesting array of articles not focused on Constructivism as such in Steven C. Roach, ed., *Critical Theory and International Relations* (N.Y.: Routledge, 2008).

³⁰ In other words, particular scholars with particular theoretical perspectives may be convinced of the accuracy and reliability of their conclusions and beliefs, but that conviction is not widely shared.

³¹ Donald Schoen, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).

experimental actions which also function as moves for shaping the situation and as probes for exploring it.”³²

So, from this perspective, *the social actor* being studied by the social scientist *must be a reflective practitioner* if he or she wishes to be effective—not just because our rigorous and intersubjective knowledge of social reality is still underdeveloped, but also because that very social reality is continually being maintained and/or modified by the actions of social actors. There is considerable evidence that this is in fact what public managers do.³³

In addition, *the social scientist* studying those social actors *must also be a reflective practitioner*, because he or she must hypothesize about ongoing action by social actors without having a fully developed and confirmed social theory, and must learn by doing so over time. Of course—and interestingly—such reflective practice closely parallels the way most of us, without knowing it, live our everyday as well as our professional lives, at least when we are not acting ideologically—that is, not precommitting ourselves to absolutes regardless of their efficacy. Most of us

³² Schoen, *Reflective Practitioner*, op. cit., p. 269.

³³ For example, an interesting study found that “public sector innovations generally did not spring anew as if from blueprints, but evolved through an adaptive process. Their novelty more often was in their assemblage—often of familiar parts. Like natural selection, the evolutionary tinkering that ultimately produces innovation is messy. Organisms change and adapt; their ultimate fate is tested in the field. Evolutionary tinkering—using bits and pieces of what is around in new ways to meet changing circumstances—is iterative, incremental, and disorderly. ‘failure—error—becomes the basis for evolutionary learning. Analysis occurs at the implementation stage, after a process that is begun to ‘do the doable.’” Mary Bryna Sanger & Martin A. Levin, “Using Old Stuff in New Ways: Innovation as a Case of Evolutionary Tinkering,” *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, vol. 11, no. 1, 1992, pages 88-115 at 104.

are better at doing reflective practice than we are at articulating what we are doing or how we are doing it. So are most professionals.

Being good at such reflective practice requires “having a body of experiences on which to draw, the ability to conduct mental experiments, the ability to critically evaluate their outcomes, and the ability to revise one’s definition of the situation if not satisfied with the solutions the mental experiment yielded.”³⁴

Theorizing as Reflexive Reflective Practice

The discovery and self-conscious utilization of reflective practice, while a significant achievement, will not suffice for effective decision making in our social world. As we have already noted, in the social realm, reality itself certainly seems to be at least somewhat indeterminate. Whatever the ultimate locus and cause(s) of that indeterminacy, action certainly seems to involve choice that is not fully determined by preceding or existing conditions.³⁵ Action will be informed by the beliefs practitioners hold about how social reality works, from which they derive beliefs or maxims about how to be effective in the social world. In other words, their actions will be shaped by their—consciously- or unconsciously-held—social theories. This means that the social theorist tends to become an actor, and his or her social theory tends to become a factor, in the very social world that he or she is studying and theorizing about—and perhaps making policy recommendations

³⁴ Mary M. Kennedy, “Inexact Sciences: Professional Education and the Development of Expertise,” chapter 4 in *Review of Research in Education*, vol. 14 (Washington: American Educational Research Association, 1987), page. 149.

³⁵ For a compelling argument that reality is not determinate and an interesting examination of implications, see G. L. S. Shackle, *Imagination and the Nature of Choice* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1979).

about.³⁶ So, to be effective, the theorist—and the reflective practitioner—must incorporate these possible or likely effects into his or her action theory before employing it.

Indeed, this prescription applies even to those scholars not considering themselves policy scientists, because they may be influencing practitioners indirectly as their theoretical assertions come to be “in the discipline” and even “in the air”. And the implication of this is that scholars must also become *reflexive* theorists.³⁷ That is, if they hope to be accurate over time they must attempt to incorporate into their theorizing in advance the potential constitutive effects upon reality of their theorizing and its adoption and employment by practitioners.³⁸ And, if one accepts a constructivist perspective on international relations or any other aspect of social life, one might well argue that being such a reflexive reflective practitioner is the ethical responsibility of the social theorist.

Put another way, we are remaking the world as we make and revise and act upon—or as others adopt and act upon--our practical theories of how to act effectively in that very world. So our theories must be *reflexive* as well as reflective. In other words, our theories must take into account the possible effects on their likely truth or falsity of their being adopted and acted upon by practitioners. They

³⁶ I first developed this argument for reflexive reflective practice in a series of papers, including “The Theorist as Reflexive Reflective Practitioner,” and “Policy Scholars as Reflective Practitioners”, both delivered at the 1990 annual meetings of the American Political Science Association in San Francisco.

³⁷ For an analysis of reflexive theory, see Ianna Hamati-Ataya, “Reflectivity, Reflexivity, Reflexivism: IR’s ‘Reflexive Turn’—and Beyond,” *European Journal of International Relations*, vol. 18 (2012), pp. 1-26.

³⁸ The term “reflexive” is used in a wide variety of ways by social theorists—mostly to refer to self-consciousness about one’s values. See Hamati-Ataya, *op. cit.*

must incorporate into themselves the potential constitutive effects upon reality—upon the behavior of those being theorized about—of the very theorizing.

Thoughtful macroeconomic theorists and election forecasters, for example, have long been doing this routinely because they are acutely aware of the possible impacts of the articulation and/or implementation of their theories and projections on the behavior about which they are theorizing.³⁹ A simpler way to say this is to note that the social world is the realm of self-confirming and self-defeating prophecies.⁴⁰

Experiential Learning in Theory and Practice

We should remember that we are building and rebuilding theory for action and for ethical evaluation as we act as reflexive reflective practitioners.⁴¹ As experience mounts, we should make efforts to develop “metalearning” or second-order learning (sometimes called “deuterolearning”)--that is, learning about how to learn how to do a better job of deciding under conditions of uncertainty, ignorance, and conflicting values.

³⁹ See, for example, Emile Grunberg, “Predictability and Reflexivity,” 45 *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 4 (1986), 475-488.

⁴⁰ See, for example, Russell A. Jones, *Self-Fulfilling Prophecies: Social, Psychological, and Physiological Effects of Expectancies* (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1977), and Rebecca C. Curtis, ed., *Self-Defeating Behavior* (New York: Plenum, 1989), esp. chapter 1.

⁴¹ I developed the ethical dimension and related concerns in “*Ethics, Efficiency, and Reflexive Reflective Practice*,” a paper presented at the Second International Conference on Public Service Ethics, Siena, Italy, June 1992.

The study of metalearning is still in its relatively early stages.⁴² But research in various experiential contexts enables us to differentiate levels of learning from experience—levels which have applications in the various aspects of policy activity.

Edward Cell⁴³ distinguishes between four levels of experiential learning. He calls the most elementary and most common level “response learning.” This involves a change in the way one responds to a certain situation, by adding a new type of response or substituting a new one for an old one. This is the domain of operant conditioning, the common mode of “trial-and-error” learning, in which one develops one’s repertoire of behaviors.

The second level Cell calls “situation learning.” This involves a change in the way one interprets a certain kind of situation, or a change in framing. Whether such reframing is imposed upon one by manipulation or is freely chosen, it involves a transfer of learning, or generalization. It is thus a more powerful form of learning than mere response learning, whether for good or for ill.

Such experiential learning becomes metalearning when it involves learning how to change one’s interpretations. Cell calls this third level “transsituation

⁴² For a survey of four prominent approaches, which the authors term behaviorist, structuralist, functionalist, and humanist, see Anthony P. Carnevale et al., *Workplace Basics* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990), chapter 3.

⁴³ Edward Cell, *Learning to Learn from Experience* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984). I have adapted Cell’s work on the study of everyday life to policy activity. For the most recent consideration, see Wilma Koutstaal, *The Agile Mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), esp. chapter 7, “Thoughts About Thoughts: The Control versus Noncontrol of Thinking.” There is also a burgeoning literature in cognitive neuroscience that will probably prove relevant. See, for examples, the chapters in Ran R. Hassin et al., eds., *Self Control in Society, Mind, and Brain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), and Frank Vander Valk, ed., *Essays on Neuroscience and Political Theory: Thinking the Body Politic* (London: Routledge, 2012).

learning.” It can be seen as a change in autonomy because it generates a new capacity and freedom to reinterpret or reframe almost at will, in order to open new opportunities for effective action. It is thus reflective. And because it emphasizes choice, it should also foster greater recognition of one’s responsibility for one’s action and its consequences.

The fourth and highest level of experiential learning Cell calls “transcendent learning.” This involves developing new concepts or theories that fundamentally transform one’s way of understanding and acting. Schoen’s development of the model of “reflective practice” is an example of transcendent learning, for it enables one to increase his or her ability to do transsituational learning. So is the development of the model that we are developing here. But our model must go a step further.

From Reflexive Practice to Transcendent Practice

There is a third feature that should characterize both our normative model and our model-informed behavior as policy theorists—one suggested by Cell’s work. Both should be transcendent. We should seek to avoid the conservatizing and historicizing effect of models and theories developed strictly out of our images of the historical record and our definitions or conceptions of the present situation. We want to transcend these past and present limitations as much as possible when there are values that are not yet societally accepted, but that we believe likely to be desirable if attainable. These values might take many different forms. For example,

one might be the establishment of a world characterized by more cooperative relations among longterm adversaries.⁴⁴

Alternatively, the values might concern new forms of efficiency or rationality, such as are implicit in the increasingly common critique of decision science. Too historical a focus and too narrative a perspective will tend to limit our beliefs about possibilities, and thereby will likely limit the developments that are the consequences of our actions and inactions. So our practical theories and our goals, and even the values that motivate or justify them, should be cast to make more possible that which has been previously thought to be impossible but which we believe desirable.

It is relatively easy to see how the model of reflexive reflective practice can be applied to the typical sorts of policymaking practices in the modern—and postmodern—state. After all, we are all reflective practitioners in our daily lives, and we sometimes act reflexively as well—especially in interpersonal relations, where the impact of expectations on elicited behavior is often clearly discernible and even foreseeable.

The Ethics of Theory and Practice

But can such a model be effectively applied to the ethical deliberation and decision that arise in policymaking and in policy theorizing? How should we decide how to act ethically under conditions of uncertainty and a plurality of worldviews

⁴⁴ I suggest a route to this goal grounded in an early version of the approach I am developing here in *Creating a New World Politics: From Conflict to Cooperation*, op. cit.

and values? The conventional approach is reasoning deductively from accepted principles to particular cases. Its rigor and grounding in general principle make it appeal particularly to those who fear a collapse into ethical relativism. However, this approach is no longer defensible or even plausible as a model for ethical policy decision in our era of ethical pluralism—especially in policy areas where participants want to apply conflicting moral principles and where judgment is highly context-sensitive. It suffers from limitations similar to those of the rational decision model and its decision science variant. We need a new model for ethical decision and action. What form should it take?

Specialists in applied ethics—especially in the field of medical ethics—have developed various alternative models.⁴⁵ The simplest can be called “the application model,” in which theoretical normative principles are taken as given and applied to particular cases. Given the usual situation in policy debates of disagreements over normative principles, this method is unlikely to be particularly useful.

The second, “the mediation model,” seeks to mediate between conflicting deductively derived principles by applying a decision rule seen as independent of the ethical conflict. The appeal of this model is that it enables agreement in practice when agreement in principle is impossible. However, in doing so it simply shifts conflict to disputes about what mediating rule, principle, or practice should be used, without reconciling underlying conflicts over ethical differences. Its practical effect, therefore, is to devalue the very ethical concerns that are supposed to inform

⁴⁵ See, for the description and critique of the application model and the following five alternatives, Glenn C. Graber & David C. Thomasma, *Theory and Practice in Medical Ethics* (New York: Continuum, 1989).

decision. Put another way, the compromise it entails is not principled but opportunistic. So it is unlikely to be found satisfactory in the public policy arena.

Another candidate, the third model, is sometimes called “the context determination model.” This approach is intended to allow the context of decision to dictate the moral rules that are to be applied to a case. In practice, this usually means that the special expertise of the interested participants in the decision defines what counts as relevant. The approach abstracts from the very disagreements of interested parties by privileging the perspective of the authoritative deciders or advisors. It often works in medical settings, where medical specialists make most of the difficult decisions and execute them—and maintain the authority to legitimate their decisions in the minds of most onlookers, including even their patients or victims. It also may work in typical academic settings, although the reasons why it may work themselves may impugn its working.⁴⁶ The model is, in any event, unlikely to be helpful in political policy decisions, however, because the deciders tend to lack that cognitive authority, and may be unable to transfer their procedural legitimacy as elected or appointed

⁴⁶ For an interesting critique, see Kathryn Pyne Addelson, “The Man of Professional Wisdom,” in Sandra Harding & Merrill B. Hintikka, eds., *Discovering Reality* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1983), pages 165-186, reprinted subsequently in her book *Impure Thoughts: Essays on Philosophy, Feminism, and Ethics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991). And for a particularly interesting integration and application of cognitive authority and ecological thinking, see Lorraine Code, *Ecological Thinking: The Politics of Epistemic Location* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

officials to the realm of ethical evaluation in a world of dispersed and often conflicting expertises.⁴⁷

The fourth model is sometimes called “the origination model.” According to it, practitioners act without any general principles, and only gradually inductively develop axioms for decision making on the bases of their experiences. This approach recognizes that moral doctrines developed in different and often simpler times often seem utterly irrelevant in contemporary policy practice. Consider, for example, the application of doctrines about the appropriate uses of military force in an era suddenly the victim of global war and nuclear weapons, or of transnational terrorism, or (in the near future) of multinationally proliferated drones. How are these originating experiences to be guided? And how are the generalizations to be derived? If intuition is the only available guide, and if people’s ethical intuitions vary, which intuitions are we to trust? This model cannot answer these questions, and we probably want more and earlier explicitly moral guidance for decision makers—something this model cannot offer.

The fifth model, “the virtue model,” completely abandons the effort to develop general principles of action, and instead emphasizes the personal qualities of the actor. But this view—while widely applied in personal and interpersonal ethics—becomes increasingly problematic as decision involves more than one person, because one person’s virtue may be another’s vice. Furthermore, many policy problems involve conflicting values that are simply not addressed by having

⁴⁷ The literature on the politics of expertise is now too extensive to cite here, but mention should be made of Harald A. Mieg, *The Social Psychology of Expertise* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2001).

virtuous decision makers—that is, people who behave in ways that are personally honorable, such as telling the truth and keeping commitments.

The remaining model is the one that medical ethicists sometimes call “the validation model.” It begins by recognizing that a plurality of value principles will be brought to bear on a public policy question, and that each question arises in a context that can be seen as somewhat similar to and somewhat different from the contexts of other such decision situations. The effort, therefore, is to bring various principles to bear on the situation as they seem relevant to practitioners—but always in a hypothesizing way, so that they are subject to revision during the decision process as well as thereafter. The criterion for selection among these principles, and for retention or abandonment of them, is basically pragmatic. If practitioners feel comfortable with a principle as they explore its application, they pursue it. If not, they modify it or abandon it and search for a substitute. Unlike the previous models, this model can be adapted for use in developing public policy ethics and in making public policy decisions, for it is none other than a version of Schoen’s reflective practice.

This validation model derived from medical ethics appeals as a possible way of resolving ethical and policy goal problems because of its pragmatic orientation and its reliance on hypothesis, testing, and ongoing revision. These virtues are closely related to those of a discarded and once discredited ethical tradition: casuistry. Casuistic reasoning is case-based reasoning in which one applies guidelines, rules-of-thumb, maxims, etc. of a lower level of generality in deciding what should be done. In its era of dominance in the Roman Catholic and Jewish

traditions, it was characterized by reliance on paradigms and analogies, appeal to generally accepted maxims, careful analysis of particular circumstances, and estimates of degrees of probability.⁴⁸ As a casuist, one generally selects guidelines that have tentative appeal or support for their relevance and right-feeling, but that cannot be effectively defended in their more abstract and generalized formulations.

Casuistic reasoning is quite relevant for ethical analysis in today's pluralistic world. The late ethical theorist Stephen Toulmin argued that "The moment we leave the realm of theory for that of practical experience, the rebuttable presumptions of practical argument replace the formal necessity of theoretical inference."⁴⁹ But if such reasoning is to be applied to ethical and policy problems in the modern—or, perhaps more accurately, the postmodern—state, it must escape the conservatizing tendencies that past-case-based reasoning tends to manifest.

Ethical consciousness develops or evolves, and so our ethical evaluation should not be grounded solely in past ethical sensibility and behavior patterns—the bases for most arguments about what is ethically possible. Rather, we should cast our ethical evaluation in ways that take note of emerging new norms of conduct and desert. In other words, we should be judging behavior in terms of standards that are not yet established or legitimated in the local or the global society, but which reflect developing sensitivity to new claims to rights and obligations.

⁴⁸ Casuistic reasoning has an analogical counterpart today in the case-based reasoning that is the most commonly used basis for instruction in the law in common law countries, and a major factor in legal decision making as well.

⁴⁹ Stephen Toulmin, "The Recovery of Practical Philosophy," *American Scholar*, Summer 1988, pages 337-352 at 347. See also Albert R. Jonsen & Stephen Toulmin, *The Abuse of Casuistry: A History of Moral Reasoning* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

The importance of this stipulation is particularly clear today in the realm of entitlement to rights and the corresponding implied responsibilities or duties—major considerations in many public policy controversies. Through history various groups have gained such entitlements through ongoing struggles which have gradually awakened the ethical sensitivity of those in power politically, economically, and socially. Women and peoples of color are perhaps the clearest cases of this today in the West, but children are now not far behind—and animals⁵⁰ and even the living environment⁵¹ seem to be emerging as the next such cases.

In the realm of international law, the emerging doctrine of “the responsibility to protect” is another interesting and significant example. Historically, this development of ethical sensitivity in a society has been delayed by the reliance by empirical ethical theorists—and normative theorists as well—on past practices as the sources of present imperatives. As a result, ethical advances have tended to be the by-product of catastrophes such as world war and the subsequent war crimes trials to advance the standards expected of human conduct and apply them retroactively—if usually still only to the losing side. This automatic conservatizing force of past practice is a luxury that we can no longer afford—particularly in the realm of environmental ethics.⁵²

⁵⁰ The literature on the possible ethical claims of animals is burgeoning, and cannot be summarized here.

⁵¹ For a particularly interesting argument on the frontier of this aspect, see Michael Marder, *Plant-Thinking: A Philosophy of Vegetal Life* (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 2013).

⁵² The field of environmental ethics is developing rapidly now. It has its own journal, *Environmental Ethics*, and there are too many helpful recent books to list here. One that is particularly interesting, however, is Daniel Kealey, *Revisioning*

Such ethical transcendence of existing legitimate norms or conventions is relevant for our practical theorizing as well, because as ethical consciousness develops and evolves, that changes ideas of the possible about which practical theorists theorize.

Thus, if we are to be both effective and responsible, our theorizing about ethical evaluation and practical action must share three characteristics quite novel to most present-day theorizing, decision making, and thinking. It must be reflective, reflexive, and transcendent.

Our Tasks as Policy Theorists

So we as policy theorists should develop tentative and practically testable action theories of reflexive reflective transcendent practice. These theories should be structured so that they can be easily applied, readily tested, and revised in the midst of ongoing practice so that our tentative knowledge cumulates.

We shall need to develop two sets of such theories. One set must be devoted to how to be reflexive, reflective, and transcendent as one advises political actors. The other must be devoted—and addressed—to the subjects and consumers of that advice, and it must be focused on how they, as political actors, can themselves act in a reflexive, reflective, and transcendent manner.

Policy is still generally thought of in “the policy community” as an essentially applied rather than a theoretical concern. Thus many practitioners in the world of policy seem to be virtually unaware that they are practicing theory in everything

Environmental Ethics (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990). And also clearly relevant is Code, *Ecological Thinking*, op. cit.

they do. They are therefore also unaware that being more self-consciously theoretical in one's conduct can bring major benefits.

All human action—the activities of everyday life—is in fact informed by theory, whether we realize it or not. And in everyday life we commonly resort to intuition in deciding what to do. The reflective practitioner who wishes to engage in transcendent practice should also invite intuition into his or her deliberation at all stages of the policy process. While there are ongoing disputes about the precise nature of intuition, there is longstanding evidence that the most effective leaders rely heavily on their intuition, regardless of what typical business-school training and other conventional heuristics may recommend.⁵³ Teachers, theorists, and trainers have tended to shy away from endorsing the use of intuition, in large measure because its source is unknown, and so widely feared—especially by devotees of conventional rationality--and because it is difficult to systematize rules of thumb for its invocation. Still, there is growing recognition that intuition can operate where quantification cannot—and where forced quantification misleads.⁵⁴

I believe that we shall increasingly recognize, as some have long been arguing,⁵⁵ that intuition consists of or derives from “messages” from what might be

⁵³ See, for one classic example among many, Weston Agor, *Intuitive Management* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice hall, 1980), as well as a burgeoning popular literature, typified by Eugene Sadler-Smith, *The Intuitive Mind: Profiting from the Power of Your Sixth Sense* (Chichester: Wiley, 2010).

⁵⁴ For a different advocacy of reliance on intuition, see Marcus Anthony, “Futures Research at the Frontiers of Mind,” *Foresight*, vol. 11 (2009), pp. 61-80.

⁵⁵ See, for one of the most interesting examples, June Singer, *Seeing Through the Visible World* (New York: Harper, 1990).

called invisible or unmanifest reality.⁵⁶ One part of that unmanifest reality is our own individual or personal unconscious—something widely recognized as potentially influential. Another, usually more profound and often less likely to be recognized, is the collective unconscious.⁵⁷ It is time we included intuition as a legitimate element in policy deliberations. But, especially because it is by its nature less intersubjectively available than more manifest materials, it must be made explicit and be readily subject to reconsideration and revision or replacement. This treatment is, of course, the essence of reflective practice, so the reflective practitioner is ideally suited to lead in the legitimation of intuition.

When we incorporate the transcendent in our reflexive reflective practice, we will be creating insight through ideational intuition, creating value through moral intuition, and helping to create desired futures by our reflexive theorizing—even if we are not ourselves policy makers. There is no sanctuary from real-world consequences and responsibilities for the social theorist who might wish to act only as a would-be scientific theorist and not as an advisor or as a policymaker. But there are great and growing opportunities for creative and ethically responsible theorizing. And such self-conscious theorizing, if it is reflexive and reflective, and

⁵⁶ See J. H. Reyner, *Psionic Medicine* (London: Routledge, enlarged edition 1982). See also June Singer, *Seeing Through the Visible World* (NY: HarperCollins, 1990).

⁵⁷ This is not the place for an examination of the collective unconscious. Among the works that I have found particularly helpful are Owen Barfield, *Saving the Appearances: A Study in Idolatry*, op. cit., and the work of C. G. Jung. I have discussed its relevance in more detail in David V. Edwards, “*For A Noetic Political Science: Incorporating Unconscious, Psi, And Supernatural Phenomena,*” a paper presented at the 1997 Annual Meetings of the American Political Science Association, August 1997.

incorporates the transcendent, can capitalize on the fact that, inevitably, the theorist is an actor, and the theory is a factor, in social reality.