

THE CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE GROUNDS FOR ADOPTING AN ANTI-NATURALIST APPROACH TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE HUMANITIES SCIENCES

BESERİ BİLİMLER FELSEFESİNDE ANTİNATURALİST YAKLAŞIMIN ELEŞTİREL TEMELLERİNİN ANALİZİ

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an attempt to evaluate the historical debate between naturalism and anti-naturalism. Here the writer illustrates the grounds for adopting an anti-naturalist approach to the philosophy of the human sciences by examining 3 different approaches. Firstly, the difference between natural and social science will be shown by using Machlup's ideas. The ground comparison was used by Fritz Machlup aims to understand whether the idea of inferiority of the social sciences is correct or not. Secondly, a classical debate proposed by Mill and Winch will be illustrated here and it aims to clarify the possibility of modeling the social science on natural science. An finally in the third part by focusing on Fay and Moon's the naturalist and anti-naturalist debate will be examined by asking what would an adequate philosophy of social science look like?"

Key Words: Naturalism, anti-naturalism, philosophy of science.

ÖZET

Bu çalışma, naturalizm ve anti-natüralizm arasındaki tarihsel tartışmayı değerlendirme çabasının ürünüdür. Yazar, beşeri bilimler felsefesinde anti-natüralist yaklaşımı kabullün temellerini 3 farklı yaklaşımı ele alarak analiz etmektedir. İlk olarak doğa bilimleri ile sosyal bilimler arasındaki temel farklar Machlup'un kavramsallaştırmaları ışığında değerlendirecektir. Fritz Machlup tarafından kullanılan temel karşılaştırma 'sosyal bilimlerin bilim olarak kabul görülmeyişi' fikrinin doğru olup olmadığını anlamayı amaçlar. İkinci olarak Mill ve Winch arasında klasik bir tartışma olan, sosyal bilimleri doğal bilimleri üzerine modellemenin mümkünlüğü çalışmada gösterilecektir. Son olarak ise Fay ve Moon tarafından kavramsallaştırılan natüralizm ve anti-natüralizm tartışmaları "Yeterli bir sosyal bilim nasıl olmalıdır?" sorunsalı üzerinden analiz edilecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Natüralizm, anti-natüralizm, bilim felsefesi.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The term 'social sciences' which refers to a variety of fields is usually used to define the fields which are outside the natural sciences. Economics, business administration, history, law sociology could be examples. Although the term social science is quite broad and has several features, in order to create a common understanding, Giddens (1996) suggests three main features of social science. "Orthodox Consensus", having occurred specifically in sociology after the First World War, however he emphasized that the features are evident in all social sciences. The first feature (ibid. pp; 65-77) is that in order to explain human behavior, one needs to have an understanding of 'social causation'. In other words, although the actors are not aware of the forms of social causality, the social scientist's role is to reveal them. The second feature is called 'positivism' which asserts that there are no differences between social and natural sciences, and as such social sciences can apply the same methodology as natural science. Both logical positivism and naturalism could be accepted under this school. Even though the second feature indicates that social science should be like natural science, according to the third feature, which is called either 'functionalism' by Giddens (ibid.) or 'anti-naturalism', social science cannot be like classical physics because the social scientist's interest is in social systems which look like biological systems rather than physics phenomena. Both functionalism and anti-naturalism support the same argument that human behaviour are fundamentally different from non-human objects (Throop&Knight, 1987) thus, it is not true to say that the methods of natural sciences can be applied in the social sciences.

As explained above, throughout the history of science there have been many different arguments on the definition of science and its parameters. It is possible to see several questions posed throughout history which seek to find the true definition of or method for social science, such as: "Is there any difference between natural science and human science? What are the main differences between social and natural science's methods? Must we separate what we call the social science and the natural science?" (Taylor, 1980). In order to find the appropriate model or method in social sciences these kinds of questions have been asked for many years. According to Taylor (1980, p.25) this issue goes back to Dilthey and to his statement that "we must distinguish between what we could call the natural science and human science."

Instead of reconsidering the historical debate between naturalism and anti-naturalism, this paper will show the grounds for adopting an anti-

naturalist approach to the philosophy of the human sciences by examining three different approaches. In the first part of the paper, Fritz Machlup's nine "grounds of comparison" model will be explained in order to instantiate the difference between natural and social science. Machlup (2001) used this model to seek to answer whether the social sciences were really inferior; therefore this paper not only shows his findings about the inferior level of social science but also finds a pragmatic answer for the historical debate. In the second part, the researcher will analyze both naturalist and anti-naturalist philosophy by comparing arguments proposed by Mill and Winch, known as a classical debate on the social science (Winch, 2008). In the third part, the naturalist/anti-naturalist debate will be examined by explaining Fay's and Moon's pluralistic approach. By asking "what would an adequate philosophy of social science look like?" Fay and Moon (2001) discuss the dual structure of social science and their findings will be used to show that neither naturalism nor anti-naturalism offers appropriate models for social sciences. Finally, in the conclusion part by summarizing these three approaches the researcher will illustrate the necessity of a new synthesis in order to establish a sufficient model for the social science.

2. Social Sciences vs. Natural Sciences?

Why naturalists believe that by using natural science's methods or logic in social science, it is possible to remove the blot from the face of science? According to Martin, M. and McIntyre (2001, p.3) the social sciences have been compared invidiously to the natural sciences, with some critics going so far as to claim that economics, sociology, law and the like are not truly science. In order to make this comparison quite equitable, Machlup (2001, p. 5) used a 'nine grounds of comparison' model and he found that social science may well be more scientifically respectable than its critics would allow. As Machlup (Ibid.) pointed out natural science and social science have been compared so many times but this comparison is rarely done systematically. The parameters of this paper do not permit a full examination of these nine criteria, but the following sections offer a brief explanation and demonstrate that although natural science and social science are different, these differences do not reduce the importance of social science, or vice versa. These comparisons will show that the differences in the two different types of sciences mean that methodological unity is not possible. However, this does not mean that the social sciences are inferior to the natural sciences.

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The first ground is invariability of observations. When a phenomenon repeats itself, it is possible to talk about science. In other words there are several 'invariant' factors and conditions in nature, well what about society? By asking this question to themselves naturalist and positivist scholars claim that in social science it is not easy to see any kind of invariance and that is why social events or society are not enough to be a subject of science. However as Machlup (2001, p.7) underlined there is not any difference between these two in terms of invariance in the sequences events. Only difference could be about the variability degree of the phenomenon.

The second ground is about the objectivity of observations and explanations, while one thinks about the objectivity of both natural and social science, it can be claimed that it is not possible to think social sciences without values. In other words, they are essentially concerned with values; that is why social sciences are always being questioned about their objectivity rate. Although these kinds of questions always make some scholars confused and oppose to values, like Schumpeter (Heilbroner, 1984) who says that economic thought should be cleansed from values, Machlup (2001, p. 9) adds that while examining the objectivity or value-ladenness of social science, we must be clear about the meanings of values. If we do not know the exact meaning and the importance of the values for the social sciences, we cannot differentiate objectivity and value-ladenness. For example, according to Cohen (in Machlup, 2001, p. 9) as a human, it is not easy to be equal and objective on some subjects like religion and abortion. However, Machlup claims that this is not a case only for subjects of social sciences, in the history there were several examples which shows the subjectivity of natural sciences: "...German mathematicians and physicists rejected "Jewish" theorems and theories, including physical relativity, under the pressure of nationalistic values, (...) Russian biologists stuck to a mutation theory which was evidently affected by political values. (...) in the United States an association between political views and scientific answers to the question of the genetic dangers from fall-out and from other nuclear testing." These examples show that how natural sciences had some difficulties regarding with objectivism. As explained here, objectivity has different interpretations and it is not always a matter and gives the true answer while comparing the social sciences with the natural sciences.

While the verifiability of hypotheses, which is the third ground of comparison, is the main goal of the natural sciences, in the social sciences it is not easy to verify the hypotheses. However, Machlup (2001, p. 10) says this difficulty or sometimes impossibility of either verification or control of experiments is not due to the inefficiency of social sciences; it is because of the nature of things. Similarly to the other comparison ground exactness of

findings indicates that one cannot say that the social sciences are less exact than the natural sciences in terms of 'measurements', again the difference is due to the nature of things, not from either the inferiority of social sciences or the superiority of natural sciences.

Exactness of findings is the fourth ground of comparison. According to Machlup "those who claim that the social sciences are "less exact" than the natural sciences often have a very incomplete knowledge of either of them. Since exactness does not have certain meaning and could be different from person to person, Machlup mentions the following possible meanings of the term: measurability, reducibility, accuracy and success. Measurability of phenomena, constancy of numerical relationships, predictability of future events, distance from every-day experience, standards of admission and requirements are the other grounds of Machlup's comparison which depend on the current practice of colleges and universities, not to the character of the disciplines. According to his score card in which he summarizes the key findings of the nine grounds, the natural sciences and the social sciences are different from each other and that is why they need to adapt different methodologies.

The main reason of the differences is coming from the nature of these two types of sciences so it does not mean that one is superior to other. For this reason one should not think that because of its inferiority social sciences could apply natural sciences' methods in order to either catch it up or at least approach it in terms of scientific level. Briefly as Machlup (2001, p.18) illustrated when two things are being compared with each other, one should ensure that the two things should be alternatives of each other. However, when one asks if natural sciences and social sciences are alternatives of course the answer is no - both these sciences' subjects are different and therefore they are not substitutions of each other. Consequently, as Dreyfus and Taylor claimed (in Throop&Knight, 1987, p.93) who are the champions the anti-naturalist position, not only compare these two different sciences but also maintains that the method of natural sciences could be used in the social sciences is not possible. Although in this section the difference between natural and social sciences is explained by using Machlup's nine ground model, it is possible to see some naturalist ideas which support the possibility of the natural science's methods in the social science, in the next section, we analyze this debate following Peter Winch's anti-naturalists approach.

3. Is There Any Methodological Difference Between the Social and the Natural Science?

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After the publication of “The Idea of a Social Science” in 1958, Peter Winch became one of the most misunderstood and contradictive English philosophers (Gaita, in Winch 2008). In his book by challenging Mill’s naturalistic arguments, Winch showed us the impossibility of the naturalism in social sciences. According to Mill social or moral sciences are ‘a blot on the face of science’ and there is only one way to remove this blot - to generalize the methods used in those subjects. Like other logical positivists such as Hempel and Mach, rather than believing that the social sciences have their own logic and rules, Mill stressed that “Any facts are fitted, in themselves, to be a subject of science, which follow one another according to constant laws may not have been discovered, nor even be discoverable by our existing resources” (Winch, 1998, p64). Indeed Mill adds if there are uniformities we can see science there. So there is not any difference between the process of freezing and being bald. For example, as he stated (ibid.) the changing of water into ice follows some quantitative changes of temperature and also the process from hirsuteness to baldness follows the same quantitative changes. For this reason, Mill says human behaviour could be fully explained by laws of nature and it is similar to the study of natural phenomena, same logics just different matters. However, in Winch’s point of view, social science is different from natural science because although in the nature the things could be used to predict the future and they are testable; in social life one cannot reasonably make this kind of prediction because of the variety and the complexity of the human beings. Therefore it is not possible to explain social sciences whose object and subject is human in the same way, they can only be understood in terms of generic or make intelligible. That’s why Winch criticised Mill’s example on baldness and he adds what is bald and what is not? Reality can be comprehensible only by understanding the relationship between reality and thought, inseparable from the nature of language. “Our idea of what belongs to the realm of reality is given for us in the language that we use”. Like Dreyfus (in Throop&Knight, 1987, p.97) said “to understand many everyday activities, one must understand the context of background practices in which they occur.” As it indicated above, The Idea of a Social Science supplies us with classical arguments of anti-naturalism and Winch explains the difference between natural science and social science by using these seven steps summarized by Throop&Knight (1987, p.100). Briefly:

- (1) In order to investigate regularities, one must use rules which specify when something falls into the categories being investigated.*
- (2) Each social science must include the investigation of meaningful behavior.*
- (3) In any investigation of meaningful behavior, the behavior must be categorized according to the rules of the persons being studied.*
- (4) Each social science must include the investigation of regularities which involve*

the rules used by the persons being studied. (5) Statements about rules used by the persons being studied cannot be justified by observations couched in term of the scientists' rules. (6) In the natural sciences theoretical claims can be justified by observations couched in terms of the scientists' rules. (7) Therefore, no social science can be modeled on a natural science.

Consequently, according to Winch (2008, pp.81-85) meaningful behavior is the most important goal of investigation for the social science; in other words a discipline would *ipso facto* not be a social science, if it did not grip the study of meaningful behavior. Also the other important point stressed by Winch in his fifth premise is because of the variety of human behavior, it is not possible to build an observation language for social science. To sum up for Winch (2008) human actions are motivated or intentional, to study them, one has to understand the way situations and actions are interpreted from within that society's form of life. It is impossible to compare social actions in differing forms of life without considering the action's context within their forms of life.

4. "What Would an Adequate Philosophy of Social Science Look Like?"

As Fay and Moon (2001, p.21) illustrated, scholars have been trying to find the answer of the nature of social science for the last three or four decades. Although the exact answer has not been found yet, again there are two different ideas about this question. Similar with the above explained debates, the same polarization was handled by Fay and Moon while the naturalist side talks the possibility of the naturalistic social science, the humanist or the anti-naturalist side claims the impossibility of studying social science "scientifically". As they underlined neither naturalist nor anti-naturalist approach founded a proper solution or answer for those who were seeking the meaning of sufficient philosophy of social sciences. For this reason, in this part the three important points which examined by Fay and Moon and their importance for the social sciences are analyzed, rather than repeating the debate between naturalists and anti-naturalists. As Fay and Moon argued, one who wants to define adequate social philosophy firstly needs to define the relation between explanation and interpretation in social science. By doing this, he would understand not only the relation between these two terms, but also their importance for the social sciences. Accordingly, as Faye (2002) defined, the main concept behind explanation is that it assists researchers to answer any question regarding a certain fact or phenomenon, whereas interpretation seeks to clarify a certain fact or phenomenon by drawing on somebody's background knowledge or

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experiences. In more detail, he pointed out that the researcher's background assumptions play a vital role on selecting a significant answer to the research questions. Furthermore, he stated that even though explanation cannot be against human's background knowledge; interpretation is a hypothesis which is proffered in opposition to a background of accepted principles and ontological statements.

Although both explanation and interpretation are highly important for social science and they should not been considered individually, by the effect of the debate between naturalists and anti-naturalists they have been separated for many years. While the humanist or anti-naturalist side could neither see the explanatory mission of social sciences nor understand the scientific angle of the social sciences; the naturalists totally misapprehended the role of interpretation and intentional phenomenon always are defined deficiently by naturalists. It appears that both naturalists and anti-naturalists ignored the importance of the relation between explanation and interpretation and this is one of the main grounds why these two schools fail to indicate an adequate philosophy of social science.

The other reason is both humanistic and naturalistic sides of the social sciences cannot answer or define the nature of social-scientific theory is the dichotomy between these schools (Fay and Moon, 2001, p.26). In the anti-naturalistic position there is not any place for the theories and anti-naturalists believe that social sciences aim to provide us a simple understanding of practices and actions in a given society, in other words social science is interpretive. However as Fay and Moon stated in order to understand society and the activities which occur in the society we need theories. Indeed they go one step further and add that, in order to give causal explanations as key goals of social sciences must be theoretical. Even though Fay and Moon (2001, p.28) underline the importance of the theory for social science, they argue that the social theories are highly different from the natural theories and therefore it is not possible to explain social world by using either natural sciences' theories or methodologies. They added that however, one who wants to establish the adequate social science has to be aware of the antinomy between naturalism and anti-naturalism, in their words "Until we can transcend the sterile antinomy between naturalist and humanist in the philosophy of social science, we will be completely unable to provide an adequate account of the nature science." (Fay and Moon, 2001, p.30).

Finally, the third point to be analyzed in order to establish a sufficient social science is to be aware of the role of critique. In the social sciences, it does not find the place which it deserves (Fay and Moon, 2001, p.33).

Accordingly on the one side, the anti-naturalists artificially limited themselves to interpreting the meaning of social life, by limiting themselves they not only cannot see the how social order has been either in a conflict or irrational, but also debar themselves from the meaning of the phenomena. On the other side, naturalists are ignoring ~~the~~ some important features of the social phenomena. In short, neither natural nor anti-natural aspects are affording adequate place for the role of critique; and that is why one who needs to establish an adequate social science, has to be careful about these one-sided approaches.

5. CONCLUSION

Since the beginning of the 20th Century, there have been several studies to define both the borders of science and the features of social sciences. The history of the debate between naturalism and anti-naturalism could be found in that term. As a result of this debate several questions were asked to define the social sciences' roles which are either seeking the difference between natural science and social science or trying to define the logical grounds of the separation of these two branches of the sciences.

While naturalists argue there is not any difference between natural science and social science and for this reason both can apply the same methodology in their studies; anti-naturalist maintain that the subject of these two sciences are very different, while natural sciences focus on nature, the social science interests social orders and human beings, so it would be inappropriate to attempt to use the same methods or ways during their studies. Also anti-naturalists go one step further and claim that although sometimes it seems that social science (management science) uses the same processes as natural science (biology), such as the system approach which is used to understand the organization's structure, social sciences explanation and interpretation levels are highly different from the natural sciences. For instance, while he was challenging J.S. Mill's arguments, Peter Winch underlined that, even though both natural sciences and social sciences seek to predict the future, in social science the prediction is not similar to the natural sciences. Indeed, because of the complexity and the variety of the human beings, here it is not possible to talk about the same level of prediction. Briefly, during the history of the debate both naturalism and anti-naturalism try to explain and find themselves an important place in the social sciences. By searching for the right place for themselves they criticized each other sharply. However, when we look at the outcomes and Fay and Moon's paper which is seeking "an adequate social science" it is not possible to either reject or accept one of them individually.

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As mentioned above the failing of these approaches is not they are totally false, but that they approach the question only from their side. While one defining or searching the true method for social sciences, one has to bear in mind that social sciences are both social, that is why it has to identify the phenomena which are intentional, in terms of their meanings; and sciences, that is why they need to develop theories by which they can explain causal interconnections. By showing the grounds for adopting anti-naturalism approach and rejecting the naturalism approach for social sciences, the article aimed to indicate the necessity of a new synthesis for the social sciences.

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