

## DISCUSSION

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### LAUDAN'S NORMATIVE NATURALISM

**Abstract** — Unlike more standard non-normative naturalizations of epistemology and philosophy of science, Larry Laudan's naturalized philosophy of science explicitly maintains a normative dimension. This paper critically assesses Laudan's normative naturalism. After summarizing Laudan's position, the paper examines: (1) Laudan's construal of methodological rules as 'instrumentalities' connecting methodological means and cognitive ends; (2) Laudan's instrumental conception of scientific rationality; (3) Laudan's naturalistic account of the axiology of science; and (4) the extent to which a normative philosophy of science can be naturalized. It is concluded that Laudan's normative naturalism is as problematic as its non-normative naturalist cousins.

#### Introduction

RECENT epistemology and philosophy of science have been characterized by a turn toward 'naturalism'. Different authors have filled out their proposals for naturalization in different ways, of course, but for all of them naturalization involves the settling of epistemological/philosophical questions by appeal to science: for the naturalized epistemologist, to the scientific study of language learning and belief forming and sustaining; for the naturalized philosopher of science, to the scientific study of science and its practitioners. In both domains what is advocated is the scientific study of the natural processes by which beliefs and theories are acquired, maintained, and altered in the light of experience.

This turn to science has been thought by many naturalists to involve the abandonment of the normative questions concerning rationality and justification which have characterized traditional epistemology and philosophy of science. Quine, for example, is widely (though not uncontroversially) held to think that naturalizing epistemology involves replacing epistemology with psychology, and refraining from engaging in the traditional project of constructing a normative theory of evidence;<sup>1</sup> Giere's naturalized philosophy of

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<sup>1</sup>The *locus classicus* is, of course, Quine (1969). Kornblith (1985, Introduction) also interprets Quine this way, as do Goldman (1986), Siegel (1980), Kim (1988), and Laudan (1984), pp. 39–40n. Laudan distinguishes his naturalism from Quine's here, and also in Laudan (1987), pp. 24–25, and Laudan (1988), pp. 347, 350.