

## NORMATIVITY, EXPLANATION, AND SOCIAL SCIENCES A Symposium on Stephen Turner's *Explaining the Normative*

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In the world as we should think of it, where does normativity fit? Science pictures humans as the result of a long history of natural selection, as organisms able to be understood along causal or functional relations, or more recently as agents governed by patterns of neural activation. Commonsense, on the contrary, depict us as persons able to do things for reasons, as citizens that are sometimes acting for the sake of the common good, or as fellow travellers engaged together in the business of morality and cooperation. But can we accept both stories about us? Can we coherently see ourselves as beings governed by causal forces but also as people who respond to moral facts, as agents who are motivated by what is fair, rational or reasonable?

This tension is at the core of *Explaining the Normative* (Polity, 2010), Stephen Turner's last book. The reader will find in it the most sustained attack against the belief in the irreducible character of normativity. By taking into account several insights coming from Philosophy, Anthropology, Sociology, Theory of Law, Economics, and Cognitive Neuroscience, Stephen Turner has written the first book devoted entirely to answering the above question *from the side of Social Sciences*. It is important to stress where the originality of Turner's book lies: even if we have had recently a lot of books dealing with normativity from a philosophical side (some of them really remarkable), there has been a shortage of systematic contributions written by social scientists and focused on the explanatory status of normative phenomena. Although Stephen Turner is not a social scientist himself, his new book somehow corrects the tendency I have just pointed out. It offers the first systematic approach to the explanatory problem posited by the normative. And it does so, again, by exploring intuitions that are familiar to those working inside Social Sciences.

But in putting together this symposium our purpose was not only to stress the relevance of *Explaining the Normative*. Besides, we wanted to fuel a more general debate about the proper philosophical and methodological framework to deal with normative-oriented behaviour. With this goal in mind we have invited two philosophers (Jesús Zamora-Bonilla and Antonio Gaitán-Torres) and a sociologist (José Antonio Noguera). They discuss different aspects of Turner's book, raising objections to the entire project sketched in *Explaining the Normative*. Along with these papers, the reader will also find in what follows two pieces by Stephen Turner: a brief statement of the main argument contained in his book and a reply to our three contributors. We hope that by putting together this material the important question of how to make sense of normativity will be highlighted.