EXAMINATION OF SOME PROBLEMS IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY

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I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not being currently submitted for any other degree. I also certify that any help received in preparing this thesis and all sources used have been acknowledged.

C O N T E N T S

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Abstract

The introduction deals with the scope and the nature of the problem we are going to study. The historical review of the nature of science in general is exposited. The trends and the implications of philosophy are also analysed. Main problems in the philosophy of social sciance are pointed out; again it is shown that conceptual problems may arise when human activities are examined.

The second chapter is concerned with the nature of explanation in science. It also deals with the covering law account of explanation. In this exposition, an attempt is made to determine the adequacy of the deductive method of explanation towards explaining the issue. Explanation and description in the territory of social behaviour are also dealt with in this chapter.

In the next chapter, the discussion revolves around the common sense and the experimental knowledge in our social affairs. It is followed by a discussion on the common sense and the experimental method.

The basic explanatory patterns in psychological theory are examined in the fourth chapter. British Empiricism and the views of the psychophysicists have been explored. Analytical introspectionism is both exposited and evaluated in the light of our present study.

An examination of the behaviouristic theory progresses in the fifth chapter. Watson's Behaviourism is dealt with here and it is shown that he needs to go a long way with his orientation,

to scientific psychology. As a result of a descent from the radicalism of Watson's formulation, Behaviourism branched out into many streams. An advent of Neo-behaviourism is the case. This chapter includes a study of it also.

Chapter six attempts an analysis of the logical nature of central concepts in human behaviour together with an evaluation. It is supplemented by an exposition of the nature of human actions and inanimate behaviour. Functional explanation also follows as regards social behaviour.

Finally, chapter seven makes explicit the nature of explanation in psychology and the status of problems therein. The fundamental question raised in this thesis namely "a methodological dilemma" is found to be less genuine in the light of "a single logic of science". Certain non-experimental procedures are also incorporated to buttress up the conclusion.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Origin of modern science

In a study of the problem of social science it is customary to think of science as a body of knowledge in a broad way. In disentangling any complicated situation, it may be helpful to have a grasp of how it got to be what it is. So, it may help us to put in perspective the problem of philosophy of social science if we see how the present intellectual climate arose.

It is truism that our modern culture is marked off from others above all by the immense developments in what we call 'science' and by the technology that has both flowed from, and in turn stimulated, scientific developments. In the realising of sculpture, philosophy, poetry of architecture the greatest achievements and ancient Greece can still bear comparison with the greatest of our own, yet in our ever-increasing knowledge of the world around us, and the ever-increasing speed with which technology proleferates, there is no real comparison between previous civilization and ours.

Where did this development start, we could trace it back to Greece in the 6th century B.C., when Thales (B.C. 624 - 546 B.C.) began the sort of critical reflection which was the beginning both of science and philosophy as we know it. And the Greek themselves had undoubtedly borrowed much from still earlier civilization of the Near East. But however, valuable such history may be, we can for our purposes begin with distinctively modern developments, which mark off our culture above all from previous civilization. This means that we begin with what we call

in retrospect 'the beginning of modern science'. This in turn leads us to the 17th century. For it was then that a whole picture of the universe, a whole intellectual framework in terms of which men saw themselves and the world about them was challenged, and gave way to another one which is essentially the one we hold today.

To say this happened in the 17th century is to emphasize how late the change was for centuries before the Europe had been moving out of the medieval period. The renaissance, first in Italy and then elsewhere, began at best the 14th century. The Reformation is traditionally dated from Luther's ninety-five theses in 1517. The fact remains that all these developments took place within a whole picture of the universe wheels we are often inclined to think of an medieval and which was in fact far older than that. This may show us how vast and difficult an undertaking it is to change such a picture.

As we shall see, the old picture had its known problems and matters of dispute. But on the whole it was so interlocked, so neatly related to all the observable facts, such a coherent whole, that to these brought up in it seem simply the obvious way things were. If features of it seem quaint to us, that is because another interlocking and coherent picture namely the one which modern science has developed, seem equally obvious to us. The modern picture in turn, has its known problems and matters of dispute. One such problem is that of the proper nature of the social sciences when we trace briefly the old picture and why the new one achieved its hard was deserved victory, then we may be in a better position to see how this problem arises for us.

The most general outline of the old view had remained essentially unchanged, through with many significant developments, for the better part of 2000 years. Though it was adorned with the defended by religious texts, it was in fact essentially Greek, and derived above all from Aristotle (384 - 322 B.C.).

To start our over simplified sketch of it, we might say that it recognized two great types of explanation each with various sub-types. These were spoken of as two types of cause. (In fact Aristotle has spoken of four types of cause, but two are fundamentally important for our purpose.) They are known as the efficient cause and the final cause.

The efficient cause was like what the word "cause" most naturally suggests to us today. It referred broadly to the sorts of ways by which material things (including our bodies) move other material things about, for example if we wish to explain the motion of a cricket ball we could say that it had been struck by a bat with a certain force in a certain direction and that could be the efficient cause of its movement. The final cause was a thing's functions or purpose or goal (these three words by no means mean the same, but all three notions are linked in the notion of final cause). If we said that the batsman had hit the ball in order to score a boundary, this reference to his purpose would be the final cause of the movement.

Now in theory the two sorts of explanation were complementary; one could hope, as in the case above, to get an explanation of each type for any phenomenon that needed to be explained.

In practice, it was often impossible to obtain a convincing explanation of both types, and in particular it was difficult to find a plausible efficient cause. This was specially true in relation to living phenomena. How do we explain an acorn growing into an oak? There is nothing about the observable efficient causes which can give us any real ground for explaining how, in the appropriate circumstances, this will occur. Certain surrounding situations such as good soil and water, may be necessary without them the acorn will not sprout. But why, given those conditions, does this acorn shoot forth? Again, why does the sprout grow into an oak rather than a pine? The sensible answer appears to be that an acorn's goal or functions inherent in it, was to do its best to grow into as a good a specimen of an oak tree as it could, and that some achieved their function better than others.

Suppose we now look at the broader question as to why innumerable seeds, each of which (like the acorn) grows into one thing rather than into another. Again no answer in terms of efficient cause could be found, but an explanation in terms of final causes could be suggested. These patterns and regularities in the development of living and non-living things made an ultimate harmony and order in the universe as a whole, and this was the good things sought to achieve. This ultimate final cause therefore gives the illuminating explanation as to why all phenomena are as they are.

Of these two complementary types of explanation, the cause predominates over the efficient one. For firstly its scope is wider; i.e. we can find final causes for more phenomena than efficient ones.

Secondly, it gives us more insight; even where both explanations are available, it is the ultimate final case, fitting the phenomena into its proper place in the whole order of nature, which seems the illuminating explanation.

Some would claim that such explanations are anthropomorphic, i.e. that they project on to nature wants, goals etc. which are only appropriate only to human beings. If the defending champions of the old picture had lived to hear such a criticism, they would have thought it as a surprisingly ill conceived one. "We do not project our wants or goals on to nature" they might have replied. We only recognize in our own-final causes the highest manifestation of what can easily be seen in less developed form elsewhere. If we think this as a naive view, then ask yourself what observable facts you could have pointed to, which would have proved it wrong.

Now this approach in terms of final causes has a fundamental implication. For the same functions are more or less important nobler or baser, we might say, than others. The heart is more important than the finger nail, the oak more important than the weed. So the picture of the universe will be hierarchical and value-laden. Every thing has its place, every thing has its value because of its contribution to the whole.

This notion of hierarchy is expressed above all in a crucial concept. What exist extends from the highest form of being, namely God, through angels and through man, down to animals, plants, and finally inanimate things. There are innumerable variations on this theme and different ways of fitting different things into it.

For such a view as this, science and morality - how the world is and how we should behave - must have an essential link. However different the two enquiries might be in detail, however much, e.g. men might turn to Aristotle for science and to the Bible for moral guidance, the basic link is the notion of function. On the one hand, science has to find out the functions of things, on the other, if everything has its place and its functions, then the proper way for it is to behave to fulfil its functions. Of course, there are vital differences. We alone can consciously choose or refuse to fulfil our free function. But this only shows that we are higher in the hierarchy than other things around us.

We said that the picture formed a coherent whole. We shall illustrate this a little further by considering the account it gave of motion. We select this for two reasons: (1) The motion was in fact the crucial point; (2) the whole picture is under challenge.

The crucial point in the old account is as follows: It was believed that material substance were composed out of four elements; earth, water, air and fire. There was a hierarchy of value here too, from earth as the baser element up to fire as noblest. This explained part of what was called 'natural motion'. Left to themselves are the two baser elements, earth and water. They would naturally tend downwards towards the centre of the universe, so that the earth would be at the centre with the water covering it. The two nobler elements, air and fire would naturally tend upwards so the air would be on top of the water and fire would visibly struggle up through it.