

NOTES ON PHILOSOPHIC PSYCHOLOGY

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ARE OLD PHILOSOPHIES ONLY ANTECEDENT OF A NEW PHILOSOPHY

Among all the scientists, including psychologists it is common to view philosophy as a mother-tree from which branches of science have successively separated. This concept is rooted in the Enlightenment of the 18th century and has been fostered by brands positivism. Once the Greek miracle was over and the medieval heritage bore its first fruit in the Renaissance, with physics becoming independent of metaphysics, the other sciences, in order of increasing complexity succeeded in achieving similar independence. Towards the end of the 19th century it was the turn of psychology, the underlying hypothesis of this conception is that the history of philosophy and science is a "progressive" process by which reason liberates itself from and triumphs over superstition, religion and metaphysics.

From this conception scarcely relevant to scientific psychology, it must follow that. The so called philosophic psychology preceding the "new" psychology, had to be reduced to an "antecedent" which form what problems and language upon which at a particular moment a positive and experimental psychology was grafted.

It must be clear that such condition of "antecedent" to psychology, an called "pre-scientific", may seem fully justified to a contemporary professional psychologist,

and this is perhaps what those aspiring to become psychologists and attending university lectures expect to hear. Furthermore, the classics in the history of psychology (BORING, HEIDBREder, MURPHY, MISIAK, etc.) have been written from this historiographic point of view. This is because, in fact, they were professional psychologists assuming occasionally -not without dignity- a role of historians. In the same way as it happened in other disciplines they faced the need of creating an intellectual tradition. To all of them, the historic past *by itself* is secondary. It interests them *from their present as psychologists* only in so far as it enables them to understand the continuity with the past. In this perspective, the psychology prior to WUNDT cannot be other than pre-scientific, an antecedent of the scientific psychology. No doubt, early experimental psychologists with self-awareness, such WUNDT, EBBINGHAUS, TITCHENER, etc.- who contemplated their past, did it from this clearly "presentist" point of view (BUTTERFIELD, 1955).

There is no need to become shocked. Similar presentism characterizes the first modern histories of natural sciences written by DREYER, PARTINGTON, SARTON, etc. It has its antecedent in the historical chapters that still serve as introductions to a considerable number of texts and scientific monographies and originated in antiquity as the only historical genre, along with biography, about science, and we find it in the first histories of science written in the Enlightenment. They, too, were written by scientists turned part-time historians, with the same institutional function of creating an intellectual tradition and carrying out disciplinary propaganda. Only very recently, hardly twenty-five years ago, and with force only in the United States, some professional "historians" of science, such as BUTTERFIELD, COHEN, DYKSTERHUIS, KOYRE, KUHN, MAIER began of a study the history of science for its own sake and not as a mere justification and support of the present.

In the context of the history of psychology this change of viewpoint can only be seen in some monographic writings and specialized investigations that are not likely to effect the awareness of psychologists and change their attitude towards their past. In the academic institutions where history of psychology is being taught to psychologists to-be it nearly always consists of a presentation of the ideas of ARISTOTLE, AVICENA, Thomas AQUINAS, VIVES, DESCARTES, HARTLEY, KANT, CABANIS, Stuart MILL or HERBART whose historical significance is diminished by their being considered antecedents of WUNDT, BRENTANO, FREUD or WATSON.

RECEPTION AS MEDIATION BETWEEN PRESENTISM AND HISTORICISM

The decisive fact from which any history of psychology that intends to be substantive must start is that many of these authors presented psychologic systems, more or less global, coherent, having their own essence, interesting in themselves and with their own historical roots. Their views should be understood and evaluated in terms of their own traditions, in the light of the problems that they attempt to solve paying attention to the methodological and conceptual tools available in that period.

To recover our past, in its immanent historic sense, is not to fall into pure historicism nor deprive psychologists of their legitimate right to a responsible presentist approach to their history, provided they do not pretend to be partially or wholly historians of psychology but psychologists acquiring a historic knowledge of the discipline that jointly with other knowledge will provide them with a disciplinary identity.

A just and responsible consideration of those "philosophers" as antecedents which they also have been, of scientific psychology is only possible from this point of view. Moreover, and this is one of my theses, only from this point of view does speaking of the past as an antecedent takes on full meaning. And this is because the history of a person or an event is also the history of the influences of the past and of the tradition it generates. Hence by tracing and reconstructing these receptions we find that part of the historical significance of Thomas AQUINAS or LOTZE is in being our antecedent.

We say "part" since their impact may have generated other things than scientific psychology. This involved a complex process not likely to be reconstructed as a progressive process of genealogies and intellectual receptions, of successive and unilinear assimilations. Rather we believe that from PLATO and ARISTOTLE, through Thomas AQUINAS, DESCARTES and LOCKE, the British associationism and the Scottish school, up to WUNDT and BRENTANO there have been multiple assimilations and rejections advances and retrogressions, continuity and break offs, definitive losses, gradual advances and conceptual jumps, old problem formulations and new solutions, new problems and old solutions. Such a development has little to do with a process of a separation of the particular science from the mother philosophy.

In other words and in synthesis, we could say that our past called philosophic psychology prior to the constitution of experimental psychology, has a life and value in itself and not only as antecedent of today's psychology. A presentist consideration of our past such "historicist" viewpoint (STOCKING, 1965) endeavours to understand pastenents and ideas in their *total* historic meaning, including the history of their reception.

THE PROBLEMATIC USE OF LABELS

The label "philosophic" has been generally applied to psychology prior to WUNDT. Such is the power of intellectual inertia among historians of psychology that not even those who have adopted a methodology consistent with the principles of the called post-Popperian philosophy of science have freed themselves from this inclination; we find hardly any exception in the *general* histories of psychology. Among the ones we know, maybe that of CARPINTERO (1976) and that of PONGRATZ (1967) point to a more appropriate consideration of psychology's past. Neither the Kuhnian approach of CAPARROS (1980) nor the more Toulminan of LEAHEY (1982) succeed in bringing out all the consequences of what "weltanschauliche" models (SUPPE, 1979) of science and history imply. It is known that the new philosophy of science formulated by KUHN, TOULMIN, HANSON or LAUDAN, among others, emphasises that our sophisticated contemporary science is not as scientifically pure as it pretends to be in that it always implies certain philosophic, ontologic and

epistemological components that are embodied, explicitly or not, in scientific theories. An Analysis of the concepts of "research programme" of LAKATOS, "paradigm" of KUHN or "maxi-theory" of LAUDAN would confirm this.

Scientific impurity of the past and present philosophy parallels the thesis of philosophic impurity of science. Specifically, our psychologic past is not as philosophically pure as it is generally claimed. In the traditional interpretation the convergence of the philosophic tradition and a scientific, basically physiological tradition resulted in the birth of the experimental psychology. This interpretation value and rely on as well on some objective support, the personal history of WUNDT and his own historic conscience, among others. But things are more complex. In the heart of this would-be philosophic tradition, certain psychological problems and concepts have been shaped in interaction with the science of its time and can hardly be understood as part of a purely philosophic discourse. Furthermore, modern historians of science have made it clear that the mutual relationship between philosophic discourse and scientific discourse go back to the medieval period. In this sense, the history of science has been decisively influential in the emergence of the new philosophy of science discovering that science is as much loaded with philosophy, as philosophy is with science.

Philosophy has never given up the claim of being as rational as science. It makes no sense to consider philosophy without taking into account its *interaction* and *dialogue* with science. This means that psychologic thought called philosophic is charged with scientific content. Psychologists ought not to overlook the fact that by labelling as philosophical the psychologies of ARISTOTLE, Thomas AQUINAS, DESCARTES, HUME, HARTLEY, KANT or Maine de BIRAN disregard the fact that in each them the philosophic and scientific discourse is structured in accordance with dominance, assimilation, opposition and integration depending on the historic problematic and conceptual contexts.

Psychologists should realize that simplicist labels are misleading. We need only to recall some historic facts. For instance, regardless of the fact that at one time some "scientific" psychologists were considered mere cultivators of a "metaphysic" psychology by WUNDT, he, who was labelled the first experimental psychologist at one point, considered to be another product of the German neoKantian idealism by the psychologico-scientific community that came out of his laboratory. But even the reading of WATSON, apart from perhaps his sparse experimental protocols generated, already in the neobehaviourist period the same philosophic reflection that it generates today. Already in the 50s his followers acknowledged that their systems were metaphysical programmes with a scientific appearance. Finally, what assurance do we have that in a few decades, very few, will it not thought that certain cognitive models inspired by the metaphor of the computer were nothing but metaphysics?. In any case, these examples make it clear that the distinction between scientific psychology and philosophic psychology are not sharply separated in time.

This does not mean that such distinction and dividing line, even if problematic, is not possible and necessary. Avoiding the positivist simplicity of viewing philosophy as a mother knowledge from which particular sciences gradually break off due to

the application of the scientific method to the different domains must not take us incur in the opposite simplicity of not to differentiating between philosophic and scientific discourse in respect to both their structure and their functions. For historians of psychology the *institutional* division -a relatively recent phenomenon- of philosophy and science is not a good starting point, it is an event of obvious significance for intellectual developments but in no way does it signify. During the emergence total independence of the "philosophic" and "scientific" roles -GALILEO and NEWTON, for instance, still see their systems as "philosophy of nature".

We are aware that from its dual -historic and systematic- perspectives this is an extraordinarily complex matter but it does not seem inappropriate to note that the Greeks did not distinguish between science and philosophy even though there were *internal differences* according to the type of discourse manifested in rational-logic language as opposed to the mythico-poetic language. Rational knowledge and activities were generated already by the "Hippocratic physicians" and in Plato's school. In the work of ARISTOTLE, followed by THEOPHRAST, this differentiation process reached its peak. The psychology of ARISTOTLE is anchored in metaphysical principles but it is a "natural" science.

THE CENTRAL PROBLEM: DETERMINING THE RELATIONSHIPS

These considerations provide a perspective from which the historian can capture the real historic meaning of the called philosophic psychology: It embodies the triple thesis that philosophic discourse and scientific discourse are *not* the same thing, that both have occurred from the very *origin* of logical and rational knowledge, and that their development has *always* taken place in mutual relationship. There has never existed a philosophy that has not interacted with science. This is true for PLATO and, especially for ARISTOTLE. It is valid for AVERROES as well, and Thomas AQUINAS, VIVES and BRUNO, DESCARTES and LEIBNIZ, LOCKE and HUME, CONDILLAC and KANT, COMTE and MARX, SCHELLING and DILTHEY, BERGSON and MACH. Hence the real problem is that of determining precisely the *types of relationships* between the two realms of discourse throughout history.

There are periods of estrangement. During the Alexandrian period, rich in psychophysiological contributions the sciences became alienated from philosophy. During the Stoic or Epicurean period philosophy became moral and solacing, taking on the function of a religion. The degree of intensity of the relationships varied from the relative calm of the Moslem or Jewish or Christian medieval period, with their obvious dominance of theology, to the permanent crises of modern times.

These considerations concern very directly the psychology called philosophic cases. Let us take another book at ARISTOTLE and his psychology: the fact that psychology unfolds in the frame of a philosophic system does by no means imply that psychologic knowledge consists exclusively of enunciations characteristic of the philosophic discourse. DESCARTES was a "philosopher", but in his writings we find both philosophy and science. An awareness of the difference is not missing. In PLATO's psychologic thinking we find ontologic propositions subordinated to his metaphysics and his theory of knowledge but also subtle behavioural observations and some psychotherapeutic principles of great modernity.

Philosophic psychologies, previous to the experimental psychology of WUNDT, from PLATO and ARISTOTLE through the Scottish school, the British associationism, MAINE DE BIRAN and HERBART, with no exception, are related to scientific and nearly always *medical* knowledge, basic and clinical of the times. A central task of the history of psychology is to establish for every period and system, *how* psychologic knowledge has been affected by philosophic and scientific thought. The range of differences is wide. Only in the 18th century does psychology start to regard itself as a systematic body of particular and specific knowledges.

On the other hand, we must not think psychologic concepts of a "philosopher" keep a strict correspondence with the retain the same meaning and significance they have had in the philosophic systems in which they were originally formulated. We have to return to the concept of historic reception once more. The significance of LOCKE, BERKELEY and HUME in the historic development of psychology is crucial, and yet in their own systems psychology has had subordinate place. The empiricists aspiring to analyse the possibilities of knowledge coined a specific psychological language, laid the boundaries of some concepts and psychologic problems and established the associative laws which were to be decisive in constituting psychology as a science of the mind. Above all, they established, without having planned it, introspection, as their method. Though with a very different meaning and aim introspection was practised already in neo-Platonism and by St. AUGUSTINE, but neither the Greeks nor the medieval thinkers would have ever thought of basing their psychology on it.

The ideas of philosophical psychologies had always been formulated *within* some broader and more global philosophic system. Only if regard them from this point of view, will they acquire full meaning in Platonic metaphysics, in the Alexandrian science, in the Stoic ethics, in the medieval syntheses of Thomas AQUINAS or AVERROES, in the Cartesian cogito, in the empiricist theories of knowledge, in the mechanicism of LA METTRIE or in the search for the "primitive fact" of MAINE DE BIRAN.

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