

DISCUSSION

THE CARTESIAN QUESTIONS OF METHODOLOGY AND AGAINST PSYCHOLOGISM : A REJOINDER

In his (1980)¹ Rakesh Verma makes an attempt to defend his (1979)² against the criticism in my (1979)³. His defence is such that it confirms the target of my criticism — a very rare phenomenon in philosophy — without, however, meeting it. In what follows I shall advance a decisive argument against the kind of psychologism which Rakesh Verma imposes on philosophical analysis and show that his disagreement with me over the two main *issues* that I raise remains still essentially unargued :

- (1) What kind of question is being asked when Descartes asks : But what then am I? And (2) what kind of completeness requirement, if any, can one legitimately impose on an enterprise of philosophical analysis of concepts?

All that I tried to say by way of criticism in my (1979) is based on the fundamental distinction that I draw between the two kinds of enterprises of (a) philosophical analysis as elucidation/appraisal of methodological frameworks of science and (b) empirically testable scientific description of the world within an antecedently available methodological framework. But to draw such distinction and to require that one must not confuse one kind of enterprise with another in no way implies a denial of the possibility that a philosopher/scientist may be involved in both at one and the same time or in one and the same work. Nor does it imply a very sharp distinction between philosophy and science. In so far as every science must proceed within the framework of an antecedently available methodology, it raises issues of fundamental philosophical importance to it; and in so far as it aims at systems-specific empirically testable theories within this framework, it raises problems of fundamental theoretical importance to it. Philosophy of science arises, out of this dual character of science, as an abstract enterprise that is concerned with problems of fundamental methodological and epistemological importance to science.

The distinction above is, therefore, of crucial importance to

a proper understanding of the complex relationship as well as the differences between philosophy and science. It is also helpful in understanding the philosophical work of the older philosophers such as Rene Descartes. Descartes was not only a great methodologist but also a great mathematician-physicist. And, in my opinion, he may be regarded as the precursor of the present-day cognitivist school of psychology. This may explain why the Chomskyan linguistic theory should trace its pre-history to 'Cartesian linguistics'. The possibilities of misunderstanding the types of questions that Descartes asked and confusing the different Cartesian enterprises with one another are, therefore, inherent in Descartes' own works.

That in Descartes we find a great methodologist of the sciences is obvious from his *Regulae ad directionem ingenii* (1701) and *Discourse on Method*, where he propounds his doctrine of the fundamental methodological unity of all sciences. With such a doctrine in the background, many of the metaphysically interpreted Cartesian questions are best understood as of ontological and methodological significance. Thus, in my view, Descartes is involved essentially in an ontological and methodological enterprise when he asks : But what then am I? The question that he is here asking is : What *kind* of substance/entity/being is the human mind/self whose 'existence' is knowable *clearly and distinctly beyond* all possibilities of doubt? And this is to ask precisely the kind of question which is philosophically significant in the present sense of this term. His answer to the effect that the mind/self is the *kind* of all and only those things which think, understand, doubt, etc. is philosophically significant in the same sense. It is interesting that what is true of Descartes' definition of 'self'/'mind' is also true of his definition of 'matter' as *extension*. The latter definition can be re-stated as : Matter is the *kind* of all and only those things which are extended. Its philosophical significance lies in the fact that it provides a *geometrical framework* for the construction of physical theory⁴. That is, given this definition, we have a whole methodological framework, based on a certain ontology, for constructing a certain *kind* of physical theory — the *kind* of framework of which it is an interesting consequence, e. g., that empty space is impossible. In this aspect, Descartes' definition of matter bears a close resemblance to his definition of self/mind. The latter also provides a methodological framework for the construction

of a certain type of psychological theory while ruling out any reductionist theory of the mental world such as behaviourism among other things.⁵

Descartes' *hypothesis* of the pineal gland as the seat of mind-body interaction is, on the other hand, best understood as the kind of hypothesis which one must arrive at/advance only after one has laid down a whole methodological framework for scientific theory in the mutually distinct realms of the physical and the mental. After all, Descartes must face the specific problem of explaining the mind-body interaction in man and his pineal gland hypothesis forms just part of his attempt to do so. It is an independent issue altogether as to how far he succeeds in this.

I am indeed still not clear as to what kind of 'analysis' is it that Rakesh undertakes by posing the question : Who am I? My contention that his whole undertaking rests on a deep misunderstanding of one of the Cartesian enterprises concerning the mind/self is confirmed by the kind of reply he gives in his (1980) in response to my criticism. This is least surprising, at least to me. For if it takes the development, after a long time, of as revolutionary a scientific theory of Einstein's general theory of relativity to realise the true philosophical significance of Descartes' definition of matter as extension,⁶ it can take a still longer time and an equally revolutionary theory to realise the philosophical significance of his answer to the question concerning the mind/self, Gilbert Ryle's *Concept of Mind* notwithstanding.⁷

Unless the question 'Who am I?' is intended to involve one in an enterprise of psycho-analysis of one's own self for, among other things, a therapeutic purpose, any claim to philosophical analysis of the concepts that may be involved here must be supported by a characterization as to the *kind* of concepts these are. And as to the question of the kind of procedure that philosophy can afford to adopt it must be admitted that what is true of science is generally true of philosophy as well. It is true that there is such a thing as the psychology of the investigator in all the fields whatever. Thus it is true that what a physicist or a philosopher does must be affected by his psychology. But this does not entail that his work must incorporate a descriptive account of his psychological states/dispositions on which his work is, no doubt, *causally* dependent. Such an account might be relevant to historical appraisals of his work/theory, but not to its philosophical appraisals.

No one can then deny that our theories etc. are causally dependent on our individual psychologies. But the causal role of group psychology and a host of other relevant historical factors is equally undeniable in this context. Now, if one were to make it a rule, just as Rakesh does in his (1979), that all philosophical analysis must incorporate in its anatomy the specific descriptive account of the kind of dispositions that characterize the particular investigator every time he decides to analyse a concept it would not only make one invariably commit the serious error of psychologism⁸, but land one in an *infinite regress* in the special case of psychological/quasi-psychological concepts. For in this case, one's analysis (e. g. that of the concept of mind) must, according to Rakesh-type completeness requirement⁹, incorporate the specific descriptive component that describes the *kinds* of dispositions that characterize the philosopher who does this analysis. This entails that the particular philosopher must commit himself beforehand to a certain methodological framework of *description* of the individual psychologies of the philosophers who are engaged in the analysis of concepts. And to commit oneself beforehand to such a framework, without which the description of one's own or others' dispositions should just be impossible, is to accept a certain philosophy concerning these concepts — i. e., in the present example, a whole philosophy of mind, a whole framework for empirically testable description of one's or others' psychological states. Such being the consequence of Rakesh-type completeness requirement, it makes nonsense of the philosophers' enterprise of analysis of concepts such as the concept of mind. For in order to be applicable at every relevant level of philosophical analysis, this requirement must also be applicable to this allegedly antecedently accepted methodological framework. But any attempt to apply it at this level leads to an *infinite regress*. Hence it cannot be imposed on philosophical analysis at any level whatever.

I must now deal very briefly with Rakesh's hasty empirical generalization : 'Philosophers disagree .. Scientists mostly do not. Scientist's don't even disagree in their almost universal rebuff to philosophy..' ¹⁰. Well, may be agreement as against disagreement is good. Indeed if agreement on a common framework of rules of the game were not good, perhaps it would not have been possible for me even to think of criticizing the views of the author of (1980). But from the fact that agreement on such

a common framework of rules is good it does not follow that all organized/dogmatic agreement is good. If actual scientific practice is characterized by dogmatic/mass agreement, it is certainly bad. But fortunately, the actual situation is somewhat different. Hence any characterization of science and philosophy in terms of as hasty a generalization as quoted above is mistaken, if not absurd. In any case, one's search for such generalizations is in vain if these are sought to characterize science. Even if such a generalization turned out to be true and not hasty, a philosopher could still undertake to change a science radically and significantly, if only gradually. Moreover, it should not be surprising if many of the things that a philosopher of science says about science turn out, upon closer scrutiny, to be just false or absurd. Indeed to show that would not prevent philosophy from interacting with science in significant ways; it would only accelerate such interactions.

Lastly, it is not possible to agree with Rakesh on yet another point which he makes concerning the nature of self-contradictions. According to him what we normally call a self-contradiction (of the form 'p. ~ p') in a logical sense is really a function of individual/group psychology¹¹ and hence a psychological concept. It is, not, however, made clear as to how by admitting a psychological conception of self-contradiction one can prohibit/rule out self-contradiction as a logical concept. However, Rakesh is right in asking the question :

Would it make any sense for us to say " 'p. ~ p' are self-contradictory but I can imagine 'p. ~ p' "?¹²

The answer is in the negative. Precisely so not for the reason that a self-contradiction (of the form 'p. ~ p') is a function of individual/group psychology, but for the reason that the kind of combination of statements that this would make as a *whole* is in turn self-contradictory.¹³ And this in its turn is not a matter of psychology, unless Rakesh is prepared to face *infinite regress*. It follows that Rakesh's thesis, if accepted, would once again lead us to undesirable consequences. Obviously, by making self-contradiction a matter of *imaginability*, he is not ruling out the possibility of creatures different from us and for whom all that is unimaginable for us is quite imaginable.

NOTES

1. Rakesh Verma (1980), 'Is Philosophy Free of the Psychology of Philosophers?', *Indian Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. VII, No. 3 (April 1980). pp. 417-421.
2. Rakesh Verma (1979), 'Self-knowledge and Human Action' *Indian Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. VI, No. 3 (April 1979). pp. 570-73.
3. G. L. Pandit (1979), 'Analysis Without Empirical Description', *Indian Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. VI, No. 4. July (1979). pp. 727-31.
4. This is how Einstein also understands the significance of Descartes' definition of matter. See A. Einstein (1960) *Relativity*, Note to the fifteenth edition', VI. Methuen & Co. Ltd. Paperback; see also pp. 136-56.
5. See G. L. Pandit (1979), pp. 729-30.
6. Discussion of this point—which I deal with elsewhere—is beyond the scope of the present paper.
7. Indeed, the Chomskyan linguistic theory has already made a remarkable contribution in this direction i. e. towards a proper understanding of the Cartesian enterprise concerning the mind/self.
8. See G. L. Pandit (1971) 'Two Concepts of Psychologism', *Philosophical Studies*, Vol. XXII, Nos. 5-6, pp. 86-88.
9. See G. L. Pandit (1979), pp. 727-31.
10. See Rakesh Verma (1980), pp. 420-21.
11. See Rakesh Verma (1980), p. 420.
12. Rakesh Verma (1980), p. 420.
13. A self-contradiction is 'something' which 'says' what is logically impossible. While logical impossibility entails, among other things, psychological impossibility, the latter does not entail the former. Hence the two concepts of *logical* and *psychological*, impossibility cannot be, without confusion, identified with each other. It is for this and similar reasons that it would in its turn be again self-contradictory, though at a higher level, to describe a conjunction—of the form 'p. ~ p'—as self-contradictory and yet to lay a claim to its psychological possibility/imaginability. And this rules out any psychologistic view of self-contradiction as unacceptable.

REVIEWS

Social Justice — An Axiological Analysis, Dr. S. Gopalan, Centre of Advanced Study in Philosophy, University of Madras, 1972, pp. XVI ; 280. Price 20/-.

Thinking of human values, it can be said that one could approach the concept of value either from the view point of a reflective understanding or from the practical basis of deciding from amongst the alternative plausible policies, the most preferable on a specified criterion. And lastly arising from the human reflections about diverse apprehensions of those varied conditions under which Man can realize his 'values'. Whatever else Dr. Gopalan in his Axiological Analysis may be up to, he is neither seeking a credible policy for delivering social justice to us, nor is he very much concerned with sharing those intimate experiences of value—peaks in human-condition that he may have undergone personally with his readers ; no such existential agonies!

His approach is called Axiological Analysis but certainly he does not adopt the familiar procedures that have been introduced in modern philosophy belonging to linguistic-conceptual—analytical or Existential phenomenological or strictly Marxist—developmental evolutionary methods in the disparate traditions. Rather, he is largely eclectic and if anything closest to traditional speculative idealism and its famous integral conception of Morality. He adopts the substantive language of Metaphysics of Value rather than discriminations laboured in vain, perhaps, as far as Dr. Gopalan is concerned by last few generations of Philosophers between rules, prescriptions, commands and evaluations or theoretical analysis of these. Of course, Dr. Gopalan very fully covers the familiar corpus of social thought in his weighty eight chapters (280 pages) he covers more than once materialistic, sceptical, positivistic and rationalistic, spiritualistic concepts and traditions in regard to 'society—in his introduction', than follow it up by a review of theory of social justice as *Value, Ideal and Norm* in his second chapter. Taking up social justice as value in III and IV chapters; Social justice as An Ideal in his V, social justice as a Norm in his VII reviews some contemporary theories of justice in VII, finally states his conclusions in his VIII.

His above review of ethical and political philosophies in the west as well as some what less in the east also tries to delineate Human Condition as in some sense involved in several antithesis and dichotomies such as those between natural-nonnatural, fact-value, historical-transcendental dimensions of man. Generally Dr. Gopalan decisively disapproves of any sharp contrasts. According to his mind all values and ideals are observed responses of individuals who only embody the collective standards of their reference groups. As such he suggests a pliant, supple value metaphysics of integralism. These standards have indwelling possibility of being acknowledged globally. Dr. Gopalan is convinced of Anti—positivistic account of Man.

Dr. Gopalan's present essay runs and alternates on three distinct levels : one ontological as it reconstructs the notion of Man. two, as it comments on the transcendental and the ethical principles as related to Good, and also three, when it seeks analysis of those diverse psychosocial conditions and their dynamics producing collective ideals — the concretised individual values. Consequently, 'selfhood', 'obligatoriness' and 'justice' are intimately incorporated in these themes blended into some sort of Axiological grounds of social ideals based on 'Good'. What is interesting in this relatively simple account of evolution of human ideals are his metaphysical asides and comments on 'transcendence', 'fact', 'value' or dichotomies of 'means and ends' or those of 'intrinsic and instrumental values'. Dr. Gopalan (in so far as I understand him on this point) would be happy to dislodge these dichotomies, and wish smoothly blend their contents in some comprehensive metaphysic of value-spirit akin to transcendent idealism. Of course, he would seek specificity of the historic pluralities of ideals also. How he can do both these without either confusing the mode of Norm possibility with actual history or without denying the existence of plurality of ideals really followed in different societies is not at all clear. One wishes he has used this book to explore and spell out the implications of this integralism of Value a little more adequately.

Dr. Gopalan despite the use of first person plural often in the course of his analysis, could not very precisely express what he holds. He himself confesses to this vagueness, here, about value (p. 249, bottom Para). However, his rationalization of this inept-

ness are neither convincing nor articulate. While reading his text one feels that our learned Author seems to assume naively that tell-tale quotes from well-known writers such as 'Aristotle'. A Kant or Hume would form themselves into a compelling argument, steering what he prides to call his axiological inquiry or its own internal delineation! All this in his unhurried, relaxed, leisurely pace reaching out conclusions well set in advance, and easily foreseeable also by his audience much before he draws them to familiar doctrines of conservative liberalism, moderation and happy harmony between Tradition and Experiment. As such the crop that Dr. Gopalan is obligated to harvest practically on many pages of his study is that of stale platitudes wearing thin and totally tiring, hardly following in any sense from learned interventions that precede them.

What can pass in this crowd of amorphous quotes from classics is perhaps his only innovation. I mean his prized distinction between 'value', 'ideal', and 'norm'. He does not of course, wholly give up the old-fashioned 'purpose' 'goal', or 'end' altogether but, here he surveys this family of notions in the context of analysis and conceptual-framework or new behavioural sciences and of course, often perhaps by design contrasting then with earlier humanistic studies and their background perspectives, from the west and also from some cursorily mentioned east. This review is diligent and comprehensive, though still it lacks sharp focus. Despite His vast competent scholarship in the field, unfortunately, the end product of this overview as it settles down in cold print is disappointing. As far as claiming for formulation of a new theory of social justice is concerned, here, in the text there is no evidence to buttress this claim. Dr. Gopalan has to my mind succeeded here in a circuitous style reiterating the traditional conventional Hindu wisdom of Samastivada and Samanvaya, of course, rephrasing these axioms in the juxtaposition of modern best sellers of social sciences as Westermarck, Weber, Hobhouse, Durkheim, Ginsberg and others. He visualises a la Aristotle a kind of 'golden mean' between several contrived antithesis to stamp his new theory of social justice.

Another feature which the author embosses on his thesis about social justice is his foursome scale comprising of following legs (1) Radicalism/Conservatism (2) Optimism/Pessimism (3) Isolation/Integration (4) The scale of Scientific integrity,

constituting the different aspects of a theory of Social justice, proposed in the work. (p. 121 & p. 253). He has not been able to elicit implications of this innovation for his theory (?) despite his insistent groping for the elaboration in several sections of his work. It had promise, but this has failed to mature.

This hoped breakthrough towards a new theory of social justice despite careful unflinching attention to Author's arguments never gets stamped on the reader's mind. The last sentence reveals the regrettable lapse of the writer that despite extreme unctuous urgency the book does not reveal what the author takes the sense of justice, to be. Briefly put, Dr. Gopalan holds value-experience to be co-eval with Man, for without intrinsic 'value-consciousness' we do not have 'Man', all we may have, may be, a latter day ape. Once this consciousness is acknowledged, we ought to formulate value-theory through articulation of 'ideals' which are to be subsequently institutionalised. While in short run conditions of humanly conceived institutionalization differentiate these ideals that embody values, in the long run Mankind gropes to seek out some 'norms' out of these institutionalization of Values. This is a parallel historical as well as Moral or normative progress, he writes:- '... this will lay bare our thesis that the phenomenon of Social Change can be comprehended by tracing the genesis of ideas and ideals and their being channelled into society by a process which testifies to the dynamism of individuals and reciprocal nature of good-living...' (p. 115.) Dr. Gopalan thinks that he has for the delectation of his readers given some new analysis, but how for his readers would gain and reckon this thesis, at least the present reviewer is not at all sure.

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Date V. H. *Upanisads Retold* : Allied Publishers Private Limited
(1979) Price; Rs. 40/-

The Upanisads will continue to interest and inspire mankind forever. The sublimity of Upanisadic thoughts, their richness and their depth along with their relevance to human situation make their teaching universal and eternal. The moment one enters the Upanisads, one feels ennobled and uplifted. But the Upanisads are also difficult to understand and so any book which seeks to explain them is welcome. Prof. V. H. Date is a very well known scholar and author. He has published a number of books on Indian Philosophy and Religion. What is more, Prof. Date is not merely a scholar; he is also a practitioner and that gives a kind of authenticity to his writings. So the first volume of Prof. Date is most welcome.

The present volume of Prof. Date is the first of the two volumes to be published on the Upanisads. This volume is concerning six upanisads—Īśa, Kena Kaṭha, Muṇḍaka, Praśna and Bṛhadāraṇyaka. The author first gives a translation of the Upanisadic text and then his explanatory comments. There is no doubt that his translation is very lucid and his comments very helpful. He does not always seem to follow Śaṅkara. He depends more on his spiritual teacher's (Prof. Ranade's) book *The Constructive Survey of Upanisadic Philosophy*.

Scholars differ regarding the question whether there is a unity of teachings in the Upanisads or they are a "compendium of various trends of philosophical ideas" Prof. Date is inclined towards the latter view while the orthodox view is that there is a unity of thought in the Upanisads. And even those who see a unity in the upanisadic teaching differ regarding the question whether the teaching is theistic or absolutistic. But everyone agrees that four basic questions have been raised and answered in the Upanisads : the nature of supreme reality, the nature of the self, relation between self and Brahman and finally the way of attaining the supreme goal of our life. There is also general agreement that by realising our relation to Brahman (whether it is of union or of identity) we attain freedom, eternity and bliss. Moral purity and the spirit of renunciation are necessary for that. An aspirant having the

necessary qualifications can have Brahaman realisation here and now even on this earth (atra brahma samaśnute) and this is the most remarkable teaching of the Upanisads.

Upanisads retold is well brought out and deserves to be in every library whether personal or institutional. The Index the at end is very useful. I recommend the book to every lover of Indian Philosophy.

Varanasi

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