

'INTO THE FUTURE'  
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The entire history of western intellectual thought for the past century and a half may have been based on a misunderstanding. Two questions arise: what is the misunderstanding and how could it persist. In this abstract of a much larger report in progress I will address both issues.

At the turn of the 16th century there was a rise in an instrumental approach to nature. This is much illustrated by the work of Francis Bacon. The apparent success of the instrumental approach to nature led to a 'deification' or canonisation of this approach under the terms of 'scientific method'. This term is largely undefinable and in the end is probably more honorific, i.e. it allows an argument or claim to be dismissed as 'unscientific' without further ado, than factual or descriptive. (This is of course a logical error - if something is true it really does not matter whether it fits with our current understanding of the 'scientific method' - a point Richard Feynman regularly repeated.)

With the success of the instrumental approach to nature within a fairly narrow band of natural experiences, the canonisation of 'scientific method' led to a belief that the method was of widespread if not universal application - a claim that simply cannot be proven. Any attempt to disprove it is met with the delaying response e.g. our knowledge has not yet attained to the level of science in this matter under discussion but will do so in the future. We are offered a blank post-dated cheque.

The enlightenment involved a revolt against canonisation of methods, of restrictions on freedom of thought. This was reversed by the 19th Century where the rise of a new social instrumentalism illustrated by the work of Auguste Comte combined the canonisation of methods with the enthronement of a new intellectual class. The Enlightenment had sought to disrobe all agents of thought control and specifically aimed their arrows at the current priestly caste. The technocrats of the 19th century reinterpreted the Enlightenment as specifically an attack on priests and established religions and sought to occupy the space largely vacated by priesthoods. Now a new doctrine of an intellectual 'priesthood' arose and whereas the old priests claimed special access to knowledge by their access to the almighty the new priesthood claimed special access to knowledge by their access to high intellectual methods such as but not exclusively 'the scientific method' and religious orthodoxy was replaced by 'scientific truth'. The new intellectual class could now arbitrate what was 'acceptable thought' in no less a powerful manner than the old priesthood and as a clever manoeuvre their heirs in the 20th Century claimed that this was the inheritance from the Enlightenment! This was clearly a breathtaking deception of a mass of people which more or less confirmed that the masses were not capable of understanding the truth or they would have been able to spot the deception, and consequently important matters of thought should be left to those skilled in these crafts.

This new social instrumentalism required a view of social behaviour that fitted the methods and so we need to look for underlying laws. The existence of the underlying laws becomes the key bedrock for sustaining the new intellectual priesthood.

However there was a fundamental mathematical error in the project.

If we take a large sample and seek the key variables to explain behaviour 'W' we may

discover that the most important variable is 'x' and no other variable comes close in correlations etc. We then conclude that the most important factor to explain the phenomenon 'W' is 'x'. This a complete error. This claim allows economist to claim that self interest is the key motivator in economic behaviour, ethologist that power and sex and reproduction are the underlying dynamics of social behaviour, that human reproduction is the ultimate dynamic driving human behaviour and on and on... Many of these claims fly four square against everyone's human experiences, but the new scientists then come up with a variation of 'false consciousness'... we don't to fully understand our own behaviour or our experience are illusions required for social evolution to continue.

What is the error?

I will take an extreme case to make the point - mathematicians love extreme cases! Take a large sample with many different variables  $x_1, x_2, \dots, x_N$ , associated with a behaviour 'W'. Now imagine for example a world where  $x_3$  is everyone's fifth most important factor in making a choice of behaviour in 'W'. However because the number of variables is potentially infinite we could have a case where for absolutely no one is  $x_3$  above fifth place, but also where no one has any variables in the first four places in common. Statistically  $x_3$  will be the most important variable correlating with behaviour 'W' but for every single person  $x_3$  will be a variable of little importance. To suggest that people's behaviour is governed by variable  $x_3$  will of course be nonsense ...but that is what the entire academic establishment and the whole world of western 20th Century intellectuals, the heirs of Comte, have sold their governments and the rest of the world.

For those not mathematically inclined let me use a simply everyday example. It has been suggested that in seeking a mate women would rate income highly as this would signal ability to maintain a family. There is something plausible about this but the intuitively obvious is taken way too far. We can then imagine a world where economic considerations are for every girl the 5th most important issue. Then in choosing between boys if the first 4 variables have equal weight then a higher score of the 5th variable could win the day. But this is concealing the fact that a lower score on the fifth variable would be ignored if a boy had a significantly better score on the number one variable. This simply accords with our human experience.

Similar examples can be put together for other aspects of human behaviour. The interesting conclusion would be that when men and women get together for collective behaviour than in an extreme case the one variable that they may have in common may well be variable  $x_3$  even though it is of minor importance to each individual. A corporation maybe able to agree on a line of action where it can be shown to achieve significantly higher returns and does not conflict strongly with anyone's first four variables. If the returns are not significantly higher then one will often witness arguments along the lines ' This is not our way of doing things, this does not fit our vision of our business etc'. The expression lowest common denominator comes to mind. But this hypothetical case merely reminds us that we are human beings and as a matter of fact we have many things in common such shared concern for family, children, community, a sense of compassion, and a sense of values.

Another fundamental error which is also related is the 'logical explanation'. This goes as follows: Rationality means we do A because we want B and B will give us A. This seems plausible but is in fact nonsense. If we look at the logical form : if B then A, we want A , then we must/will do B. Generally tis is used retrospectively as in why did X do B? Answer : because if B then A , and therefore because he/she wanted A. First if this peic

of formal logic were acceptable we should be able to add ANY additional true statement and still make another true statement. If B then A, but also if B and C and E (C and E are true statements) then F,G, H! In reality there are an infinite number of additional true statements. The first problem is that our subject may not know that F,G and H are true! We then have to restrict the logical conditions to those known to the subject. But even if we do we can still create a set of additional possible infinite true statements with additional consequences that now easily defies reality and any explanatory validity. Not only is there a problem with the additional true statements at pre-condition level, we have a problem with the termination of the logic. In the general case we start with a piece of behaviour requiring explanation i.e. C, and then work backwards via 'If B then A, and if C then B' to conclude that our subject did C to obtain A. However the power of logic cannot be stopped ... it continues to infinity. So we must add 'if A then L, and if L then M etc'. We will end up with an infinite chain. Additional true statements at pre-condition and at post-condition (i.e. before and after we arrive at the behaviour to be explained) are potentially infinite and the additional consequences are also potentially infinite. A stock response that humans are not entirely rational strictly speaking invalidates every step but is simply band aid on a deep wound. It argues that if only people were fully rational our explanations would work rather than accepting that the simple observation of human behaviour contradicts this theory's attempt to explain it. We have here an attempt to map logic to the pattern of human behaviour driven by the wish to enshrine underlying newtonian laws to human behaviour. The commitment to this theory is only the reason why the patent conflict with reality is ignored.

If we understand this error then it will free us from the tyranny of the new intellectual class, it will free policy from the hidden agendas of power, it will allow us to reject the new 'social newtonians' view that values are illusions and that we are simply self interested self replicating machines. We will be able to recapture our humanity at the level of policy and look at our past and future with new eyes.