

predictions. Biological sciences are not as exact as physical sciences but, in any case, a theory has to be "testable" for either "verification" or "refutation". This brings us to the problems of psychoanalysis. (The term is not clarified but presumably it refers to the Freudian and its neo branches). There is no doubt that it impresses by its "apparent explanatory power". It appears to be able to "explain practically everything. . . you saw confirming evidence everywhere, the world was full of verification of the theory. Whatever happened always confirmed it." It is, as if aided and abetted by psychoanalysts, the whole society has become Freudian! Incidentally, Popper levels the same charges against the Marxist doctrine. The simple question is when can a psychoanalyst be wrong? Then there is the question of "good" verification and "bad" verification. The inherent circularity of the theory leads to "bad" practices like collecting favourable evidence and ignoring unfavourable ones. Ad hoc "auxiliary hypothesis" is added on to the pre-existing one in order to explain anything new. The interpretations and predictions are "sufficiently vague" to destroy the "testability" of the theory and it ends up overdetermining the data.

The author's suggestion that "transference" could be akin to the problems of subatomic phenomenon in quantum physics, though interesting, does not lead us any further. Arguments by analogy infer that, because "this" is like "that" in some respects, "this" and "that" must therefore be similar also in others. As deductions such conclusions obviously do not follow. Here I agree with Rachel Brown; the onus is on the psychoanalysts.

Two related matters also deserve comments. First—do we have to subscribe to the rational/empirical model of science? Does a theory have to be amenable to objective and quantitative analysis? Is "sense" not a sufficient criterion? Some sociologists, perhaps understandably, take this anti-science view. In such a case, any theory is as good as the next plausible or one any other system of belief. This view finds an echo in Feyerabend who considers Western Science as simply a "dominant ideology". This has been called "an extreme form of epistemological relativism" which carries its own seeds of destruction. For if "all truth is relative to a given world view and cannot claim objective correctness, then this must apply to the *truths* which the relativist himself claims to profound". Such a self destructive claim is also applicable to psychoanalysis because "if all judgements are

determined by unconscious forces, and this makes them in some sense suspect, then this must apply to the judgement of the Freudian himself".

The second matter relates to that part of human "existence" (as commonly understood) which existentialists believe cannot be made a subject of objective enquiry. Such aspects can only be felt or understood by empathy, and this point is discussed by Ebmeier. Existentialism is a philosophical attitude as distinct from a particular system. Surely any transcendental or intuitive knowledge is a fore-runner of reason and there is no reason to suspect that "erklaren" and "verstehen" are mutually exclusive. In psychoanalysis the empathetic understanding goes beyond the root meaning of the words, beyond the contextual/connotative meaning to arrive at utterly deterministic metaphors. These hazy concepts then become the connotative meanings.

The traditional scientific model has evolved from a simple polarity into a more sophisticated interactive model of multiple interlocking determinations. For psychologists interested in a cognitive approach, the central concern is how the uptake of new information is influenced and partly directed by the existing knowledge (in term of memories). Research on text analysis has proved a useful paradigm for the cognitive studies in general. The psychological reality of psychoanalysis across different cultures is hard to see unless it is adopted (or internalised?!) as a faith. The "obviousness" is relegated to the web of symbolism which can inspire an artist with its new language but does little for its scientific credibility. For psychoanalysts, the problems of testability and "good" verification (if not refutation) remain. How can the interesting metaphors of Freudian talk be translated into something more testable? Does calling subconscious a partly accessible memory improve matters?

Otherwise, like Winnie the Pooh, it will still all be very impressive and it will make sense but it would be non-scientific.

RAJ S. SHIWACH

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#### REFERENCE

- FEYERABEND, P. (1962) Explanation, reduction and empiricism. In *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Sciences* (eds. H. Feigl and G. Maxwell). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

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## Correction

An error was printed in the letter from Dr S. A. Wilkinson on defence association subscriptions (*Bulletin*, December

1986, 10, 362). "Full sessions" *should have read* "five sessions".

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*The Editors request that contributions to the Correspondence section be typewritten.*