

THE PSYCHOLOGIST'S RETURN

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Review article

Andrew Brook, *Kant and the Mind*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, 327 p.

Martin Kusch, *Psychologism, A Case Study in the Sociology of Knowledge*, London: Routledge, 1995, 327 p.

Eva Picardi, *La Chimica dei Concetti, L'Ingegneria, Logica, Psicologia, 1879-1927*, Bologna: Il Mulino, 1994, 326p.

Edward Stein, *Without Good Reason, The Rationality Debate in Philosophy and Cognitive Science*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, 296p.

In a recent account of contemporary naturalistic trends in epistemology, Philip Kitcher (1992) remarks that Ernst Haeckel, one of the intellectual stars of XIXth century's naturalism, would have been quite surprised to learn that one of his obscure mathematics colleagues at Iena, Gottlob Frege, has been considered to have overthrown naturalism and psychologism, and to have opened the path for the leading XXth philosophical movements, analytic philosophy and phenomenology. Frege himself would have been equally surprised to learn that, after a century of anti-psychologism and anti-naturalism influenced by his critique, many philosophers who took the "linguistic turn" have taken the naturalistic turn, and come back full circle to a position close to that of his colleague Haeckel. It is generally acknowledged today that one of the major influences for the contemporary reversal to naturalism has been Quine's critique of the analytic/synthetic distinction, and his rejection of the division between conceptual and factual matters, philosophy and science¹. This has led

¹ Kusch (p. 11) reminds us usefully that the original subtitle of Quine's epoch making paper "Epistemology Naturalized" was: "Or, the Case for Psychologism"

philosophers, in America in particular, to scorn conceptual, logical and linguistic analysis and to consider themselves to be giving various “naturalized” accounts of knowledge, intentionality, rationality, or ethics, on a par or continuous with science. In a sense, it was just what the XIXth century naturalists and psychologists were doing, with the scientific tools of their time, for they tried to fit the mental, cultural, and in general normative phenomena in the mould of psychology, biology, history and sociology as empirical sciences. This provoked the opposition of the advocates of a strong division between the *Geisteswissenschaften* and the *Naturwissenschaften*, and in logic and mathematics the reactions of Frege and Husserl. In Britain, Moore’s and Russell’s earlier platonism was also the reaffirmation of the objectivity and irreducibility of norms (logical, epistemological, ethical). The positivists did not espouse this platonism, but they insisted on keeping separate the world of facts and the world of values. In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein gave the motto: “Psychology is no more closely linked to philosophy than to any other natural science.” (4.1121) Many analytic philosophers, and many phenomenologists, could have added: Psychology is *even less* linked to philosophy than any of the other natural sciences. For years, psychology has been considered as a “permanent calamity” for philosophers (Husserl). Given that many contemporary analytic philosophers faithful to the linguistic turn, and, to take up Dummett’s phrase, to the priority of the philosophy of language over the philosophy of mind, believe that the recent naturalistic turn is but a reopening of Pandora’s box of psychologism², it is quite interesting, in this context, to reconsider the history, in the XIXth century, of the rise and fall of psychologism, and to reevaluate the credentials of this doctrine in its contemporary setting. The psychologism debate, however, is not simply a creation of late XIXth century German philosophy. It casts a much longer shadow in the history of Kantianism, at the beginning of the XIXth century, for the term “psychologism” itself was first employed by some disciples of Kant who debated about whether Kant’s theory of knowledge should be interpreted in mentalistic or in “purely transcendental” terms. It was against this background and this vocabulary that Frege and Husserl and their readers understood the debate. This has tended to be forgotten by analytic philosophers, since Kant’s idealism has not been very much their cup of tea. When some of them, like Strawson, have given a Kantian orientation to their work, they have wanted to do so by getting rid of the mentalistic apparatus of Kant’s faculty

² see in particular Dummett’s interesting reaction to this turn in his (1993)

psychology.³ But more recently, some Kant scholars (especially Kitcher 1990) have attempted to bring it to the forefront, precisely in the light of recent work in cognitive science.

For these reasons, the works listed above are particularly timely. Kusch's book is an historical account of the psychologism debate in Germany from 1860 to 1930. Picardi's is a set of articles about Frege and early analytic philosophy, focusing especially on his critique of psychologism. Stein's is an examination of the recent debates about the notion of rationality in cognitive psychology. Brook's is a reevaluation of Kant's doctrines about the mind and of their contemporary relevance. Together, they invite us to reconsider the credentials of psychologistic and naturalistic theories of knowledge.

For many years Frege scholars who wanted to introduce his doctrines to analytic philosophers have done so in a quite anhistorical manner, without paying much attention to the precise context of the views of his German contemporaries. In sense, it was quite justified, since, on the one hand, it was important for them to distinguish Frege's views in semantics and logic from Carnap's and Russell's, and to assess them against more recent trends in the philosophy of language, and since, on the other hand, it seemed that Frege, a mathematician by training, had actually read quite little in philosophy and was something like an absolute beginner, who more or less invented alone the analytic way of dealing with philosophical problems. At least this is the picture which emerges from Dummett's epoch making *Frege, Philosophy of Language*.⁴ More recent commentators, however, including Dummett himself, have recanted from this picture, and paid more attention to the German context.⁵ Picardi's work pushes this line further. She gives a most faithful analysis of the development of Frege's views in logic and in the philosophy of language and compares them with great scholarly expertise to those expressed in contemporary logical manuals, like those of Lotze, Sigwart, Lipps, Erdmann, Rieffert, Schuppe, Heymans, Wundt, as well as with those of many neo-Kantian *Erkenntnistheoretischers* of the time, such as Rickert, Windelbrand, Natorp, or Cohen. Of particular interest are her discussions of Frege's controversy with Bruno Kerry, her careful and accurate reconstructions of the Fregean doctrine of concepts and objects, of sense and reference, and of assertion

³ Strawson 1966.

⁴ Dummett 1973.

⁵ e.g. Sluga 1980, Dummett 1991, Haaparanta & Hintikka 1988

and judgment, as well as of their relation to Ramsey's and Wittgenstein's views. She shows convincingly that Frege's antipsychologistic views were much more documented than it is usually thought, and that a number of his arguments were actually directed at specific passages not only from Lotze (p. 189 ff), as Sluga had already emphasized), but also from Wundt (p.61), and Mach⁶ (p.31). I particularly recommend the title essay "La chimica dei concetti", where Picardi traces the famous Fregean metaphor of the analysis and decomposition of judgments and concepts as a form of chemical analysis back to Condillac, Schopenhauer, and later Boole, Schröder and Peirce. The chemist's notion of *valence* is compared to Frege's concept of the *value* of a function, which Lotze also exploited, and to his doctrine of the insaturatedness of functions. The chemistry of concepts was conceived by the empiricists as a form of decomposition of the real causal elements of thoughts from simple ideas. Frege turned it upon its head, by conceiving it as the analysis of real entities, concepts, which had nothing to do with the causal natural order.

Picardi, however, does not give a global picture of the intellectual context which led philosophers, logicians and epistemologists of the time to embrace various forms of psychologism and to react against these. The usual presentations of Frege's and Husserl's criticism of psychologism have tended to make us think that this doctrine was quite unified, and that the various people quoted by them were more or less holding the same view. Because Frege and Husserl's criticisms have been so influential, we have also tended to forget that the criticisms of psychologism were not made only from a sort of platonistic standpoint, emphasizing the objectivity of logic knowledge against its dissolution in "ideas", but also from quite different standpoints, in particular of neo-kantian inspiration. Martin's Kusch's inquiry corrects these pictures, and gives what is, today, the best historical account of the psychologism controversy before and after the turn of the century.⁷ The originality of his approach lies in the fact that he is not concerned simply to write a chapter of the history of early contemporary philosophy. His approach is sociological: he views the psychologism controversy as an exemplary episode in the sociology of knowledge, and considers not only its scientific and philosophical dynamics, but also its

⁶ She points out in particular that in *Der Gedanke*, much of Frege's argument against empiricism and solipsism is actually directed at a specific passage of Mach's *Analyse der Empfindungen*.

⁷ He is certainly not alone in this enterprise. Notturmo (1985, 1989), Kitcher (1990), Rath (1994) and a number of other writers had dealt with these issues. But none of them had the systematicity of Kusch's book.

underpinnings in the institutional and political conflicts of the German universities. In this respect, the story of the ascent of psychologism from 1860 to 1910, and of its demise in the 1920s, is not only the intellectual story of a fight over ideas, but also the story of the progressive implantation of psychology in the academic field, and of the philosopher's reaction to the birth of this new science, which they first welcome as an ally, and later rejected as their worst enemy, when their institutional *Lebensraum* was threatened. When, in the late 20s, the debate was over, psychology had more or less acquired the status of an autonomous scientific discipline, with its tools, methods, and particular objects, but the psychologists had left the philosophy departments which hosted them in the beginning. "The psychologists were leaving, but the philosophers were slamming the door over them." (Sober1978) It is quite obvious, and it is particularly well documented in Kusch's book, that this sociological and institutional side of the debate existed and was important. But it is one thing to say that it existed *in addition to*, and in *parallel with* the intellectual controversy, and quite another thing to say that the driving force of the psychologism debate itself was a political fight over who would, in the end, get the power in the intellectual field. Kusch, however, does not want to commit himself to a most extreme form of reductivist sociology and history of knowledge, which would be ignorant of the content of the specific views held by scientists and attentive only to their effects on the institutional scene. He allows ideas to have a life and a logic of their own, and believes that the sociology of philosophical knowledge cannot be done from an external standpoint from philosophy (p.23). I shall, however, leave this methodological issue aside for the moment.

Kusch's third chapter contains a good parallel between Frege and Husserl's respective criticism of psychologism, stressing their similarities and dissimilarities. Both rejected the idea that mathematics and logic are part of psychology, denounced the psychologist's dissolution of the exactness of mathematical concepts into the fuzzy realm of ideas, emphasized their objective character, accused the psychologist's of confusing the reasons and justifications of beliefs and knowledge with their causes, the descriptive character of mathematical and logical laws with their normative character, and truth with the recognition of truth. They both accused psychologists of solipsism, scepticism, relativism, and "anthropologism". Frege, however, never used the term "psychologism", and, unlike Husserl, he did not try to sort out its various species nor to give real arguments against them. In a somewhat Wittgensteinian fashion, Frege considered psychologism to be the the syndrome of a disease of the

time (a *Zeitkrankheit*, as Picardi (p.14) reminds us), which did not need any particular refutation. Kusch suggests that Husserl may have felt obliged to consider the variety of psychologist views in more detail than Frege, for, unlike him, he was committed to discuss other philosophers. This can account for why Husserl was much more successful than Frege, since he attracted more attention from his quoted colleagues. Kusch could have added here that Husserl came indeed from a quite different background, i.e from Brentanian psychology, that his previous adherence to a version of the psychologistic view (notoriously bebutted by Frege) made him more cautious: once bitten twice shy.

Chapter 4 contains highly interesting material, about how the people criticized reacted to Husserl's criticisms. Both Frege and Husserl agreed that the laws of logic are normative, and not descriptive of psychological processes. But, as Kusch point's out (p.64-66), they held a further thesis as well: that the normativity of the laws derived in the end from *descriptive* statements about ideal, abstract, entities. But a number of critics, especially from Rickert's school, did not agree with this view of normative statements, and refused to base norms on as species of (super) facts. Other critics, like Schlick, pointed out that the argument against the assimilation of logical laws to psychological laws on the ground that the former but not the latter were inexact begged the question, for one could as well have argued from their identity that the psychological laws *are* exact. Schlick also pointed out that Husserl's views on truth were based on an unjustifiable realist conception, according to which truth must be totally independent from our knowledge of it. Other complained at the self-evidential and a priori character of logical truths that Husserl postulated, as again a *petitio principii*. I mention these criticisms, because a number of later day critics of Frege's realism and of Husserl's recourse to intuition have expressed them in different contexts. They show at least that it is not enough to stress the objectivity and normativity of logic and mathematics, but that one has also to understand in what they consist, and that many contemporaries were quite aware that the problems had not been completely settled. In fact, contrary what to the usual presentations of Husserl's and Frege's antipsychologism imply, no consensus was reached.

Chapter 5 documents this further, by showing that the very term "psychologism" was used, between 1866 and 1930, in quite a variety of contexts, and that at least eleven schools used it in different senses, according to their specific commitments. Because he draws from an impressive corpus (see p.282-285) and has carefully noted all the occurrences of the term, Kusch is able to provide, at several

places, various very informative tables displaying the names of all the people who used “psychologism” either as a positive qualification of their views, or as a negative label imposed on their adversaries and the presumed allies of these (for instance p.97 we have a list of more than 100 philosophers, of all sorts of philosophical persuasions, including Frege, who were alleged to be “psychologists” a number of times — Husserl and Lipps score at 21 and 20 —). In the end, the word seems to have followed the same fate as “bourgeois” in the mouths of Marxists. And naturally, as in the *Kindergarten*, there is an obvious *tu quoque* answer to such accusations. At this point, Kusch’s sociology of the controversy is on strong grounds, for the wider the descriptive content of a label and its applicability is, the more it becomes only a tag, used for reasons which fall short of being purely philosophical. But even if, in retrospect, we sometimes do not understand today why some people were accused of psychologism, at least the contemporary protagonists knew the reasons why they were called by this name or accused others. Some were self-proclaimed psychologists (Meinong, Cornelius, Lipps), others were reluctant psychologists (Brentano, Stumpf), and most neo-Kantians were among the accusers, but also got the label in return. The criteria, as Kusch’s table p.117-118 shows, were quite diverse, and depended of course upon the particular views of knowledge, mind, and metaphysics that each individual or school advocated. At this point, Kusch’s purely classificatory strategy finds its limits: for to have a deeper understanding of the contents of the controversy, it is almost a complete account of German thought in the XIXth century that would be needed, and in particular of the successive interpretations of Kant’s philosophy, as I shall suggest below.

The origins of the debate were not simply philosophical, however. If psychology itself had not been an emerging *scientific* and *experimental* discipline during the period, and if it had stayed at the level where it was in the hands of the British associationists, or at the level of introspective analysis in the hands of the French spiritualists, probably the threat for philosophers would not have been so great. But the attraction too. Chapter 6 describes how, in Germany, psychology arose as an increasingly autonomous field from both the work in physiology of Johannes Müller and Helmholtz and the work of Wundt, Ebbinghaus, and Külpe. Institutionally, however, its autonomy was reduced, for psychologists were first housed in philosophy departments. Some philosophers, in particular the Brentanians, welcomed this, for they conceived their work as lying exactly in between a purely *a priori* analysis of mental phenomena and a more experimental work. Some psychologists, in

particular Wundt, the key figure of the period, welcomed too this “hybrid” status, for they thought that psychology had *both* to do with introspective analysis and with more physiological and experimental data. Together these helped to create a new figure, that of the philosopher-psychologist (or the reverse). But others, like Külpe and Ebbinghaus, were less favorable to an *Anschluss* : they thought that psychology had to free herself from philosophy. The Kantians and the Diltheyians were their objective allies, for just the opposite reason.

In chapter 7, Kusch shows how the latter joined their forces, and protested, together with Husserl, as “pure” philosophers, against the “new psychology”, first through philosophical arguments and later on institutional grounds. Exasperated by the growing influence of psychologists in academic politics and in society (increased during the war by the use of psychological tests in the army), they mounted in 1913 a petition, signed by 107 philosophers, asking that no more philosophical chairs be transformed into chairs of experimental psychology. This was the peak of the debate, for Wundt reacted, followed by new counterreactions of the Kantian and Husserlian camp. The last part of Kusch’s story is told in chapter 8. He shows that the Great War created a division of labour between the philosophers, who celebrated it, and the psychologists, who focused on the training of troops. The war and the external political elements, in particular the atmosphere of the Republic of Weimar, led also German philosophy to a rejection of purely theoretical debates, and to the advent of irrationalistic doctrines. *Lebensphilosophie* and existentialism occupied the scene which had been occupied during the previous period by naturalism and neo-Kantianism. Here Kusch emphasizes the role of Scheler in particular, who helped the triumph of existential phenomenology. In a sense, Husserl had won his battle, but he had soon to hand on his sceptre to Heidegger.

Kusch’s careful and very documented resurrection of these controversies ⁸ will be of invaluable help for those analytic philosophers who are curious about the origins of debates with which they are more familiar.⁹ But, as I have noted, he is not

⁸ Some critics may complain that he does not give enough place to Austrian, as contrasted with German, philosophy, and in particular does not go into the details of the views of the Brentanians. They were obviously both outside some of Kantian debates which preoccupied their German counterparts, for they rejected transcendental philosophy at the outset.

⁹ It would be quite interesting also to examine the fate of similar debates outside the German speaking world during the same period. Admittedly the French, the British, and the Americans did not have a “psychologism” controversy of the same intensity as that which happened in Germany during the same period. But it does not mean that they were not concerned with the place of psychology within philosophy. Russell and Moore’s reaction was both to naturalism and to Hegelian idealism. The French spiritualists opposed the psychology of their time in the name of a mixture of introspective psychology

simply concerned with their philosophical relevance. He takes his history as a “case study in the sociology of philosophical knowledge”. In so far as these intellectual controversies have sociological underpinnings, he seems himself to be committed to some form of naturalistic doctrine about knowledge, in the general sense in which naturalism is the view that the products of philosophical inquiry do not live a life completely of their own, and depend upon the context of, and possibly can be explained by, factors which are situated at levels below the purely platonic world of philosophical theories. His preferred version of these factors is not psychological, but sociological. Ontologically speaking, the dependence is obvious, and Frege himself did not deny it: if we had no bodies, no minds, no institutions, we could not have thoughts, and we could not even discuss about psychologism or indeed about any philosophical theory at all. But explanatorily speaking, the dependence is less obvious. What the antipsychologists were denying was that thought and its laws could be completely, let alone partially, explained by causal factors outside the purely objective realm. Although the psychologism debate in itself did not focus so much on the social factors, most of the anti-psychologists were prepared to extend their argument to all varieties of naturalism, historicism, and sociologism. As I said above, Kusch does not want to adhere to a reductionist sociologism, although he reacts against the purely philosophical style of doing the history of philosophy (p.17-22). His aim, he claims, is to *situate*, in descriptive fashion, where the philosophical arguments and controversies come from, through an internal analysis of how they were received, ignored, or promoted. Following the sociologists of knowledge David Bloor (who prefaces his book), Harry Collins and Bruno Latour, he pretends that this purely descriptive inquiry can be achieved without taking sides in the very philosophical debates examined, without judging the development of ideas in any normative fashion, as true, rational or progressive. But this is hardly as uncontroversial and as neutral as it pretends to be. First, it is not clear that it alleviates any commitment to any form of sociologism. For what are the “situations” and the “networks” of views, of people and of groups revealed by this inquiry if not some sorts of *causal determinants* of the evolutions of ideas? We may call them “contexts”, but is it useful to call them so if it is not to point out that they *influence* in some way the fate of ideas? If so, what

and metaphysics. The American pragmatist tried an original combination of idealism and naturalism. Probably the French context, after the 1920, was the closest to the German one, for there too existential phenomenology “won”. If one keeps this in mind, together with the fact that probably these debates never really stopped completely in the respective traditions, there is still some room to write comparative stories of the controversies about philosophy vs psychology from 1860 to...2000.

is the nature of this influence and of the factors which enter into these contexts? If not, and if other, different, contexts could have produced exactly the same set of ideas, why insist that the ideas have to be replaced in a context, and not follow the purely abstract course of the controversies? Second, is it obvious that we can refrain from any normative consideration about the truth, rationality or value of the controversies? After all is it not because so many philosophers today pass the judgment of “psychologism” in front of their colleagues’ attempts to introduce cognitive science into philosophy, and because the latter are quite proud to call themselves “naturalists”, that we have an interest in the way these issues were debated one century ago, and want to see *who is right*? Admittedly, Kusch could answer that he could do, in the same cold and neutral manner, the story of *today’s* psychologism controversy, and that he could locate quite new “networks” and “contexts”, without having to judge the truth of the matter. But the very fact that he would have to *compare* the issues, and to *understand* them, in their respective settings, would show that he could not grasp their intellectual content without asking for himself whether the respective positions have a chance to be true or correct. If the sociologist of knowledge insists that one must pay attention to the *contents* of the particular controversies, and not only to the political, social, or other interests of the protagonists, I doubt that the understanding of these contents can be fully achieved by sticking to some sort of sceptical suspension of judgment as to their truth. Could we even understand these theories if we did not suppose that those who held them *took them to be true*? Is the history of these issues exhausted by an analysis of the “rhetorics” and of the “interests” of the protagonists? Whatever is the last word on these matters¹⁰, it seems to me that an inquiry into the psychologism controversy

¹⁰ In a recent paper (to appear) which he has kindly allowed me to read Kusch examines further these methodological issues. He suggests that there is a “third way” between psychologism and platonism about knowledge, which he calls “sociologism”, and which he takes to be close to views of sociologists as Bloor, and of philosophers like Wittgenstein, Anscombe and Searle. In so far as it is a naturalistic view, I agree with the idea as so such third way has to be found. I indeed myself suggest a third way below. But where I detract from Kusch’s way is in the fact that the naturalistic facts that we have to appeal to do not seem to me to be limited to sociological facts (biological and psychological facts about knowledge have to be considered), and that I don’t think that knowledge, philosophical or otherwise, can be analysed in a norm-free, purely descriptive way. I would certainly disagree, for instance, with the idea that Kusch expresses, that Husserl’s arguments against psychologism can be evaluated as “decisive” or not *relatively to the consensus* they reached among his German colleagues. Erdman or Lipps may have been right or wrong, whatever the consensus that their views reached before Husserl’s criticism, and whatever the absence of consensus that they encountered after. For me a philosophical argument is decisive or not for philosophical reasons, period. In that respect I side with the classical attitude of analytic philosophers, and do not accept psychologism or sociologism about philosophy. This seems to me to be compatible with the weak form of antinaturalism advocated below. The fact that our norms and epistemic values emerge from natural facts does not make them less objective and more relative.

which would not attempt any philosophical appraisal of these issues, both in comparison with their present setting and as to the truth of the various views, would be singularly impoverished.

Since we live today at a time of what is perceived by many as the triumphant imperialism of the cognitive studies in the social sciences and in philosophy, what are exactly the prospects of renewed forms of naturalism and of psychologism? And could we content ourselves, in front of modern versions of these doctrines, to repeat, over and again, Frege and Husserl's arguments, in the "same old story" style? I don't think that we can. The context has changed. No one, today, would believe that the "laws of thought" could be reduced to the laws of associationist psychology, in the way in which this was held by XIXth century philosophers and psychologists like Mill, Bain, Spencer, or Lipps. Practicians of modern psychology, from Piagetian to cognitive psychology, no longer think that logic can be *reduced* to psychology, in something like the style of nomic reduction. Logic itself has changed, and increased its domain in ways which were unsuspected by the participants of the debates analysed by Kusch. It is not even obvious that logicians would talk of logical *laws* : they study instead *formal systems*, and since Gentzen they have adopted a formulation of logic in terms of *rules* which no longer matches the axiomatic formulations favoured by Frege and the logicians. No one suscribe any longer, at least in the domain of logic, to the form of extreme platonism espoused by Frege. In the philosophy of language, empiricists accounts of meaning in terms of private and subjective ideas have died out. Even those who, like Dummett, have adapted Frege's theory of meaning to hold that meanings are essentially public and communicable, do not take meanings and thoughts to be eternal and timeless *Gedanken*. Still, it may be said that the overall shape of the turn-of-the century debates has not disappeared. We could formulate it in general in the following way. There is a certain set of phenomena which have a *normative* character, and which can be expressed in statements the meaning of which seems to resist any account in terms of factual truth conditions. Among such normative statements are those about meaning, about moral values, and about epistemic evaluations of the contents of our thoughts, such as claims about the rationality or justification of beliefs. These normative phenomena seem to resist any incorporation into the natural or causal order. But do they? After all, we are members of the natural order, and it would be incredible if there existed a realm of superfacts totally divorced from it. If we have norms, they must have at least

some relation to nature, and in particular to our psychological nature, for we would not even be able to grasp them and to use them if they were completely out of access from us. In other terms, “oughts” imply “cans”. When Husserl’s contemporaries were resisting his and Frege’s views that normative statements depend upon the truth of some descriptive statements about “the laws of truths”, they were just asking this question. Platonism about norms is not the only option: one can agree that some statements have a deontic status without reducing it to the existence of a variety of superfacts. We can take the Kantian line of explaining them as referring to an idealized, coherent, rational order, or we can accept their deontic status while trying to explain how this status emerges out of social practices and of agreed judgments in a community. Many philosophers, today, are prepared to take this rather Wittgensteinian line. This would, as some have noticed, come close to what Husserl called “anthropologism”. Others would like to push further, and try to account for our agreed conventions and norms as expressions of psychological states of acceptance, and as emerging from social-biological situations of coordinations between individuals.¹¹ This would come close to what Mach, Boltzmann, and the early evolutionists were suggesting. The prospects for contemporary forms of psychologism and naturalism along these lines are not absent from the contemporary scene. It is not clear that Fregean and Husserlian arguments could dispose of them readily. I myself advocate the possibility of a weak or non-reductive form of psychologism and naturalism, which would accept the irreducibility of normative to natural facts, but which would nevertheless allow that the realm of the normative is not completely independent of the realm of the natural, and that the former depends, or is supervenient upon the latter. We may call this *normative naturalism*.¹² It is not here the place to defend this view.¹³ This and similar views, however, seem to stumble upon two major objections. One was anticipated by Husserl in his *usteron-proteron* argument¹⁴: the ideal of a normative body of knowledge cannot be justified by a naturalistic account showing how this body emerges out of biological or psychological facts, because such an account already presupposes this normative body of knowledge. A modern version of this argument is given by those thinkers who, like Davidson, claim that rationality in knowledge and in action cannot be

¹¹ for an account along these lines, see Gibbard 1990.

¹² This label has been used, in a somewhat different context, by Larry Laudan.

¹³ see Engel 1996 for an attempt to develop this perspective.

¹⁴ Husserl 1901, § 56. See Kusch, p.58, and the rejoinder by Jerusalem quoted p.87-88

explained naturalistically for these naturalistic explanations would presuppose the very normative ascriptions of rationality that they are supposed to explain. The other objection has a somewhat similar shape and comes from Wittgenstein's famous "rule following" considerations: any account of normative and rule governed behaviour which would appeal to psychological and biological dispositions of individuals or groups is bound to fail, for it would have to presuppose the very correctness conditions which are set by the rules or norms. I take it that a reasonable form of naturalism would have to answer such regress arguments, which belong to the predicament of the contemporary naturalist.

A good place to start may not be simply to stick to the abstract sphere, but to consider how these problems arise in current psychological research. In that respect, Stein's book is an excellent guide. It analyses the vast literature that cognitive psychologists have devoted to our logical competences and performances in the domain of the psychology of reasoning, and the far-reaching claims about the nature of human rationality to which they had led. Much of the relevant psychological literature comes from two experimental paradigms. One is the Wason selection task for propositional conditional reasoning. The other is Kahnemann and Tversky's "heuristics and biases" program, which tests human performances on probabilistic and statistical reasoning. Both seem to display evidence that human subjects fail at most elementary tasks of everyday reasoning, and diverge strongly from what are usually taken to be the norms of reasoning, either deductive (elementary logic) or non deductive (probability calculus and Bayesian standards). In that sense, one might say that people are not rational. As Thagard (1988) has amusingly summarized the ordinary reactions to these experiments, they fall in three categories: a) people are fools; they are simply unable to follow the appropriate logical norms; b) psychologists are fools; they have been unable to take into account all the variables which affect human inferences; if these variables were considered one could show that people actually respond to the appropriate norms; c) logicians are fools; they evaluate logical behaviour against inappropriate logical norms. The truth is probably that the three can be combined, and that everybody is a fool sometimes. Simplifying somewhat, Stich (1990) represents answer (a), Cohen (1981) represents answer (b); and Gigerenzer (1991) answer (c). Stein maps out the various answers, and examines carefully the respective arguments in favour of the rationality or of the irrationality thesis, and the respective

meanings of the corresponding claims. He devotes in particular a lot of space to arguments of type (b) about what Stich has called “the presumption of rationality”, which purport to show that irrationality cannot be demonstrated experimentally, either because revelations of performances errors to do threaten a general rational competence (Cohen), or because interpretation of logical behaviour has to rest on principles of charity (Davidson), or again because evolution necessarily guarantees that an overall rationality (Dennett). He shows the merits of these answers, but finds them wanting as arguments in favour of the rationality thesis. I cannot here do justice to the details of Stein’s dialectic, which raises highly the standards of discussion that these topics have received until now. If I understand him well, the upshot of his inquiry is the following. Much of these debates presuppose what he calls “the standard picture” of rationality, according to which there are normative principles of reasoning, which people follow or fail to follow, and which stem from the usual principles of logic, probability theory, etc. Two objections can be raised against this picture (p.255-257). One is that it is not obvious that logic, probability theory or other normative theories of reasoning can really be “normative” if the norms they prescribe are not *feasible* or, so to say, followable by finite human agents. This is in line with the “oughts” imply “cans” point mentioned above, and with what is often presented as a solution to the rationality debate: optimality models fail, and a more flexible notion of “satisficing” (Simon) or of minimal rationality fare better. The other objection is that the standard picture is “epistemically chauvinistic” (Stich) in that it gives undue weight to our ordinary intuitions about what is rational, normative, etc., which may come from the local circumstances of our lives. There is no guarantee that we could ever reach a stable equilibrium between these intuitions and our principles. This objection is directed at the “reflective equilibrium argument” that, following Rawls and Goodman, some partisans of the rationality thesis have advocated. Stein grants this but nevertheless believes that the (wide) reflective equilibrium method is a plausible account of the formation of norms, if we modify it so that it can include in its input not only our ordinary “intuitions” about reasoning, but also relevant “scientific evidence” about it (namely neurophysiological, psychological, biological, etc.) (p.167). He calls this “the naturalized picture” of rationality (p.255). An important feature of this new picture, Stein claims, is that it does not exclude normative elements from a naturalized account of norms, contrary to what most descriptive versions of naturalized epistemology (e.g. Quine’s) do, when they pretend to analyse knowledge, belief, and rationality in purely causal and scientific terms. It

shows how norms emerge out of a process of reflective equilibrium of the kind he envisages, but does not absorb norms into natural facts. So the question of the nature of rationality is partly empirical.

One can, however, raise some doubts about this solution. First, it is not clear how, when a scientific input is added to the reflective equilibrium, its relevance to the normative question of rationality can be assessed. Presumably, this evidence does not come norm-free, and we must have some standards about reasoning to assess whether given data are relevant to reasoning. For instance much of the work on the Wason selection task presupposes that subjects *are* doing, although badly, conditional reasonings. But some (e.g. Sperber, Girotto and Cara 1995) have argued that their errors are only due to the interpretative processes of understanding of the sentences presented to them, and so the task does not test anything about their “reasoning”. How are we to sort out these hypotheses if not by presupposing what the task is *about*? Similar remarks could be made about Gigerenzer’s (cf. p.273) attempt to show that Kahneman and Tversky’s results would not arise if other norms of probabilistic reasoning (frequentist instead of subjectivist) were used. Stein can answer that these evaluations of relevance are still a matter of reflective equilibrium and that, apart from scientific evidence, intuitions and norms can still be relevant (p.255-256). But it’s not completely clear how this would work. In any case, it would be wrong to conclude that the rationality issue is wholly empirical, and Stein does not go as far as that. Second, it seems to me that Stein does not pay enough attention to the nature of rationality in the practical realm, and to the instrumental or teleological sense of the term, although he does envisage it in the context of his discussions about evolution. A complete answer to the question should include this. But, as Stein admits (p.272) it is not so clear that the rationality debate deals with a unified phenomenon, rationality, and so it is not so clear that we can get a unified answer. ¹⁵

Stein’s analysis seems to me to be consistent with the view that I have sketched above under the name of non reductive or of normative naturalism. It can give us an answer to at least the *usteron-proteron* objection to such views. For if the process of

¹⁵ An important point here is that not all our normative principles are on a par: we can distinguish *first-level* principles or norms (for instance in logic some basic rules of inference, in ethics, particular imperative) from *second-order* higher level norms, such as coherence. Unlike what happens with logical systems, where we can prove the former from the latter (for instance through completeness proofs), it is not clear that we can do so for human rationality in general. If normative principles at the first level are codifiable, it’s not clear that higher level ones are. Bayesian attempt to find a correspondance between the two through Dutch book arguments, but it’s not clear that coherence, in this sense, is a necessary criterion of rationality, just as logical omniscience is not necessarily one.

assessing norms is a reflective equilibrium, it is bound to be circular: if there is a balance between normative principles and our intuitions, necessarily we shall assess the former through the latter and vice versa. But the circularity is not vicious, and it is not guaranteed at the outset of the process (cf.p.260)

A more general worry that such a normative naturalism raises may be formulated thus: by allowing that we cannot completely separate norms from facts, the *very conditions* of rational thought and action from their causal underpinnings, aren't we committing the very mistake that antipsychologists have denounced all along, the confusion of the rational with the causal? Aren't we trying to derive "ought" from "is" and aren't we committing what is well known as the naturalistic fallacy? The answer is that it is not obvious that it is a fallacy, or rather that there are only two alternatives: the realm of normative principles and the realm of natural facts. There may be both, as Andrew Brook suggests in *Kant and the Mind*: "There is a third alternative: an account that explore *both* the necessary conditions of the mind's operations *and* the actual psychology of these operations and that does the latter precisely by doing the former."(p.6).

It will come as some surprise that such a suggestion occurs in a book on Kant, for wasn't Kant the philosopher who insisted most forcefully on the separation of the world of norms from the world of natural facts? Doesn't he say, famously, in his *Logik*, that deriving the laws of logic from psychology would be as absurd as deriving morals from life? Doesn't he draw a sharp line between a transcendental inquiry on the *a priori* conditions of thought and mere empirical psychology? Orthodox Kantians would agree, and it was the main argument of the neo-Kantians such as Natorp, Cohen, Rickert, Windelbrand and others against the psychologists of their time. But this orthodoxy is not completely secured by Kant's writings. Famously the first edition of the *Critique* is hesitant, and Kant's treatment of these issues is still pervaded by the vocabulary of his faculty psychology. This led a number of Kant's early disciples, such as Fries and Beneke, to claim that Kant's critical enterprise was better seen as a species of psychological or anthropological investigation into the origins of *a priori* knowledge. They did not intend, however, to revert simply to empiricism and to assimilate the *a priori* to the contingent, but they wanted to insist that Kant's language of mental faculties and their "logical rules" was not merely an extraneous *ad hoc* feature of his transcendental inquiry, but an essential part of it. In fact, if one attends to the series of debates between the "psychologists" interpreters

of Kant and the post-, then neo-Kantians of the second half of the XIXth century (including the exploitations of Kant's theory of intuition and of the categories made by Helmholtz from a physiological standpoint), one will probably discover that the story of the psychologism debate made by Kusch has a real prehistory, and that the later German philosophers respective accusations of psychologism were made under this background.¹⁶

Kitcher (1990) has taken up these issues, and suggested that Strawson's rejection of the topic of transcendental psychology as an "imaginary subject" for Kant for misguided. She believes that there is room for an investigation into the *a priori* conditions of experience which does not pertain only to a transcendental *logic*, but also to a transcendental *psychology*. Such a psychology, however, is not to be assimilated to empirical psychology, but determines "the general specifications for a mind capable of performing various cognitive tasks." In other words, transcendental psychology operates at a level which is both less abstract than a pure transcendental logic, and more abstract than a mere physiology of the "inner sense". She points out that much of the work in contemporary psychology is relevant to that task, and that Kant in fact anticipated it. It would be a mistake, however, to believe that one can simply read off from Kant's quasi psychological claims, so to say, ideas and results similar to those of modern psychology, as Kitcher is aware. For Kant himself did not have the same concept of psychology as the one that we have today. In fact he did not even believe that psychology could be a science, as witness his famous declarations in the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, to the effect that inner sense cannot be subject to a mathematical analysis or measurement. Our psychology allows measurement and quantification, not his. The role of transcendental psychology, according to Kitcher, is not to test and measure empirical hypotheses about the mind; it is rather to formulate, at an abstract level, hypotheses which an empirical psychology could confirm. So in this sense, his work is relevant for cognitive science.

Brook follows this path. But he criticizes Kitcher for distorting Kant's actual views by integrating them too much into the straightjacket of contemporary research and of current philosophy of mind. For instance he points out, rightly, that Kant's doctrine of the unity of the self and of consciousness is not to be understood in the

¹⁶ Hatfield 1990 is a good guide to this prehistory, and Kitcher 1990 in part. But more attention should be paid to Fries, who was in many respects the key figure. See Bonnet (to appear). His most famous disciple was an active participant in the psychologism debates. Herbart is also a figure who invites reconsideration.

contemporary sense of a diachronical identity across time. But, as his declaration quoted above shows, his project belongs to the same family of interpretations as Kitcher's, and probably, two centuries back, to the psychologistic readings of the early "anthropologizers" of Kant's views. In particular he ascribes to Kant a basic view which is close to functionalism (p.12), since Kant's view of the mind is centered on how the mind *works* rather than on what it is, or on its substrate (either mental or material). At such a very general level of analysis, this is certainly correct, although it overlooks the commitment to materialism that many contemporary functionalists in the philosophy of mind have advocated. The topic in contemporary naturalistic theories of mind which lies, at first sight, in the the farthest end in the logical space of ideas from Kant's views, is probably the question of consciousness. Much current conceptions, especially of functionalist persuasion, develop notoriously elusive or eliminativist conceptions of consciousness, which appears to be a mere epiphenomenon. Consciousness, as Thomas Nagel and others have argued, is the most notable feature which seems to resist any sort of functionalist or materialistic account of the mind starting from the "third person point of view". Materialists, however, do not to deny, the existence of consciousness and self-awareness. Moreover, any theory of mind has to locate how its multiple activities and sub-modules can be integrated together and form a unity. But materialists tend to convey it on the model of introspection and their version of the unity of the mind is problematic. This, Brook shows, is precisely what Kant did not. This leads him to a fascinating rereading of Kant, through a dialogue with contemporary views, and to the claim that Kant's views on the unity of consciousness are in many ways preferable to a number of contemporary views, although they remain compatible with them.

It has still to be seen whether this work of translation and of dialogue between Kant's views on the mind and contemporary views leaves Kant's text intact, and whether, if Brook is right, philosophers inspired by cognitive psychology should embrace some form of transcendental idealism, or whether Kant should rather be conceived as a realist of a more straightforward kind, since presumably naturalism is not very hospitable to idealism. Orthodox Kantians, or those who purported to be so, would certainly balk at such consequences, just as orthodox functionalists and naturalists would balk at finding themselves with such a strange bedfellow as Old Kant. The former will not doubt claim that something must have gone wrong in Brook's very starting points. The latter too will get the impression that some deep category mistake is going on. But Brook's and other readings of transcendental

idealism have the merit of remind us of the third way between straight psychologism and straight antipsychologism, and he has certainly raised the standards of scholarship in this tradition to a higher level. Even if his reading were false, it opens the space of possibilities and allows us to rediscover that this third way, what I have called normative naturalism, is still alive, and it leaves the issues of the previous psychologism controversies wide open.

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