

## **The Autonomy of the Human Sciences: Three Generations of Non-Reductivists**

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This paper considers the argument for the autonomy of the human sciences as it has been presented by three generations of non-reductivists who have articulated their claims in the philosophy of history and social science, the philosophy of mind and action and, more recently, in cognitive psychology. The paper argues that whilst non-reductivism has won the battle, naturalism has won the war. Thus whilst non-reductivism may have gained the upper hand, it has done so at a price: the gradual erosion of the traditional conception of philosophy as an epistemologically 'first science' and as a quintessentially a priori armchair activity.

### **Three generations of non-reductivism**

The nature of action explanation and the question whether the human sciences employ a distinctive methodology has been a hotly debated issue in the philosophy of history, social science, the philosophy of mind and action and, more recently, in cognitive psychology. In mid-century many of those who, like Dray (1957a/b, 1963), Wittgenstein (1953, 1958), Winch (1958, 1964), Melden (1961), and Von Wright (1971), defended the methodological autonomy of the human sciences were broadly committed to what became known as the logical connection argument and were united by the slogan that "reasons are not causes". For this generation of non-reductivists the main argument in support of methodological autonomy was that

whereas in event explanations the relation between the *explanans* and the *explanandum* is an empirical relation established through observation and inductive generalization, in action explanations the relation between the *explanans* and the *explanandum* is a logical or conceptual relation: explaining an action requires describing an occurrence in the light of a telos or goal, not establishing a causal connection between temporally distinct events. Thus the opening of a window is not "caused" by the raising of the arm; it is the raising of the arm described in the light of a telos or goal. By and large, first generation non-reductivists believed that the reasons/causes debate was essentially a conceptual debate that could be settled a priori from the philosophical armchair and that the primary task of the philosopher was to settle what is the form of explanation that best matches up with our concept of "action" and "event". A priori elucidation of such concepts would be vital in preventing classification across categories of the kind that would occur when one employs the methodology appropriate to one domain to explain another.

In the mid-sixties, the claim for the autonomy of the human sciences fundamentally altered its character. As the debate concerning the relation between explanation in the social and the natural sciences became more heavily concerned with the ontological implications of the argument for the autonomy of social science explanation, many sought to marry the

methodological non-reductivism that had predominated in mid century with a naturalistic picture of reality. Davidson's Anomalous Monism sought both to uphold the claim for the explanatory autonomy of the human sciences *and* at the same time to address the ontological issues that were left hanging by a generation of non-reductivists that had been focussed primarily on the methodological dimension of the *Geisteswissenschaften/Naturwissenschaften* distinction. Under the influence of Davidson's 1963 essay "Actions, Reasons and Causes" supporters of the claim for methodological autonomy ceased to believe that a commitment to non-reductivism entailed a commitment to non-causalism.<sup>1</sup> Second generation non-reductivists such as Davidson conceded that reasons and causes are conceptually distinct, whilst at the same time claiming that a commitment to ontological monism entails that, metaphysically speaking, reasons are indeed causes. Whilst the first and second generation of non-reductivists agreed that a defence of the autonomous character of the human sciences involves a commitment to a distinction between normative and descriptive explanations, they disagreed about whether the question of the relation between the *Natur-* and *Geisteswissenschaften* confronts us with merely a conceptual problem about the nature of explanation in different forms of enquiry, or whether it also demands a solution to the metaphysical problem of psychophysical inter-action. Davidson's Anomalous Monism changed the character of the non-reductivist claim for it severed the link that had previously tied the argument

for methodological autonomy to a non-causalist position.

More recently the debate for and against methodological unity has found a new home in cognitive psychology where the claim for the autonomy of the social sciences has been defended by proponents of simulation theory. In this new incarnation the debate is between 'theory theory' and 'simulation theory'. Advocates of simulation claim that the ability to explain and predict the actions of others depends on our ability to empathise with them and that such empathetic abilities do not require any appeal to a body of folk-psychological generalisations. Simulation theorists thus ground their defence of the autonomy of social science explanation in the claim that empathy is the distinctive methodology of the social sciences. In contrast to simulation theorists, advocates of 'theory theory' claim that a body of generalisations is required in order to explain and predict behaviour and that such generalisations must be tacitly presupposed if simulation is to be possible. In this respect the argument of contemporary theory theorists against simulation theory may look like a present-day replay of Hempel's (1942) attack on Collingwood's defence of the autonomy of history, an attack that reignited the debate for and against the autonomy of the human sciences in mid-century.

This paper looks at how the claim for methodological autonomy has been articulated by these three different generations of non-reductivists. I chart the development from the first to the third generation of non-reductivists by outlining the changing fortunes of R.G. Collingwood and either the rejection or reappropriation of his work at the hands of these different schools. Whilst Collingwood was a source of

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<sup>1</sup> I have discussed this claim in more detail in D'Oro (2008).

inspiration for the first generation of non-reductivists, especially Dray, the rise of a causalist consensus after the publication of Davidson's "Actions, reasons and causes" and the return of ontological problematics that had been absent in first generation non-reductivism spelled the decline of Collingwood's popularity amongst the proponents of the autonomy of the human sciences. Collingwood, on the other hand, enjoyed an unexpected revival at the hands of simulation theorists who see themselves as developing a motif in the tradition of hermeneutic 'understanding' or *Verstehen* and often cite his account of re-enactment as an ancestor of simulation theory.<sup>2</sup>

My goal is twofold. The first is to correct a misunderstanding of Collingwood's account of re-enactment and to challenge the view that it belongs to the tradition of empathetic understanding. I argue that any similarities between the simulation proposal and Collingwood's account of re-enactment are only superficial since the debate between Hempel and Collingwood. This debate conducted largely via the interpretative efforts of W. H. Dray, was not about whether it would be possible to predict the behaviour of others without appealing to a body of folk-psychological generalisations. It was about whether the normative character of action explanation gives them a distinctive logical structure that makes them irreducible to the descriptive/causal explanations employed in natural science. The second goal is to vindicate Collingwood's particular brand of non-reductivism and to argue that if the debate about the autonomy of the human sciences is to be

understood as a philosophical debate, it must retain an a priori dimension that is sometimes lost in the third generation of non-reductivists. I shall begin from what I have referred to here as the third generation of non-reductivists and work my way backwards from there.

### **Third generation non-reductivism: simulation theory vs. theory theory**

As mentioned above, the debate between theory theorists and simulation theorists is between those who, like Gopnik (1995) and Wellman (1995), claim that the ability to predict the behaviour of others requires appeal to a body of psychological generalisations, and those who, like Gordon (1995) and Goldman (1995), claim that there is no need to ascribe a sophisticated body of psychological knowledge to individuals; the ability to predict may be more simply explained by the ability to empathise with others, i.e. we ask ourselves what is it we would do were we in somebody else's situation without any appeal to nomological information, be this innate or acquired.<sup>3</sup> Theory theorists accuse simulation theorists of presupposing the very laws which they deny are necessary in order for simulation to take place. Simulation theorists, on their part, accuse theory theorists of adopting an impartial third person perspective that neglects the subjective point of view of the agent and which fails to differentiate sufficiently between the explanation of action and

<sup>2</sup> See Goldman (1995) p. 96, footnote 7 and Stueber (2006).

<sup>3</sup> Theory theorists differ amongst themselves on the issue of whether folk-psychological knowledge is innate or acquired. Jerry Fodor is amongst those who hold that folk-psychological theory is innate. See his *Psychosemantics* (1997), pp. 132-3.

that of events. Let us consider these opposing positions in more detail.

Theory theorists endorse what may be broadly construed as a functionalist account of the mind which conceives of beliefs and desires as internal and thus hidden causes of behaviour. On this view, understanding why people act as they do is not an enterprise that is fundamentally different in kind from the attempt to understand events which have external observable causes since in both cases explanation and prediction require knowledge of general laws. That the generalisations employed to predict the behaviour of others have to be framed by employing a vocabulary that is specific to a special science such as psychology makes no difference to the nature of the explanation provided. Theory theorists concede that the domain of human affairs may be much harder to predict than the natural world because folk-psychological generalisations are always ridden with *ceteris paribus* clauses, but ultimately they hold the explanation and prediction of behaviour of other human beings to be no different from the explanation and prediction of the behaviour of any other event in nature since all explanation, so they claim, is at bottom nomological. Dennett gives voice to the view that all explanation, including simulation, employs a psychological theory by using the following powerful example:

How can it (simulation) work without being a kind of theorizing in the end? For the state I put myself in is not belief but make believe belief. If I make believe I am a suspension bridge and wonder what I will do when the wind blows, what 'comes to me' in my make believe state depends on how sophisticated my knowledge is of the physics and engineering of suspension bridges. Why should my making believe

I have of your beliefs be any different? In both cases knowledge of the imitated object is needed to drive the make believe "simulation" and the knowledge must be organized in something like a theory. (Dennett, 1987, p. 100)

For their part simulation theorists retort that simulation offers an alternative that does not neglect the first person perspective and is in a better position to account for the experimental data. Let us consider these last two points beginning from the claim that simulation theory is better equipped to account for the experimental data.

To understand this particular line of argument we need to bear in mind that the debate between theory theorists and simulation theorists has unfolded in cognitive psychology and in particular in developmental psychology and that simulation theory was originally advanced as an alternative hypothesis capable of accounting for why children aged three, unlike older children aged five and over, fail the so-called "false belief task". The false belief task consists in the following.<sup>4</sup> Children are shown a puppet show which features two characters: Mum and Maxi. Maxi observes Mum while she puts some chocolates in a box. Then Maxi goes out to play. When Maxi is away, and unbeknownst to him, Mum takes the chocolates and puts them in a cupboard. Then Maxi returns. The children are asked the following question: "where will Maxi look for the chocolates: in the box or in the cupboard?" Experiments conducted under controlled conditions have shown that whereas the five year olds have no difficulties in answering

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<sup>4</sup> For an overview of the false belief test see Gordon (1995), and Davies and Stone (1995). The classic studies are by Wimmer and Perner (1983) and by Baron-Cohen, Leslie and Firth (1985).

correctly that Maxi will look for the chocolates where he believes they are, i.e. in the box, the three year olds answer incorrectly that Maxi will look for them where they really are, i.e. in the cupboard. The question is: why is it that the five year olds pass the test whilst the three year olds fail it? Which account is best equipped to capture the experimental results? If theory theorists were right, the gap between the three and five year old children is essentially a cognitive gap: the older children pass the test because they have grasped the distinction between beliefs and knowledge and have a more sophisticated theory of the mind than the younger ones. If simulation theorists are correct, the gap between the three and five year old children is essentially an emotional gap: the five year olds pass the test because they have learned to empathise with others and thus to see the world from a non-egocentric perspective.

Whilst simulation theorists such as Gordon and Goldman believe that these experiments support the view that the older children pass the test because they have developed their imaginative skills and learned to take a different point of view, it is unclear that the empirical evidence can settle conclusively the debate between simulationists and theory theorists. The latter can always retort that the development of a theory of the mind is a gradual affair and that the inability of the younger children to make the correct prediction is simply due to the fact that their theory of the mind is still rudimentary, rather than either unnecessary or absent. Simulation theorists may at best be able to claim that their proposal is compatible with the experimental data and that, given the compatibility of experimental data with both theory theory and their own proposal, simulation ought to be

endorsed on grounds of conceptual economy.<sup>5</sup> But whether or not simulation theory has the explanatory edge over theory theory, what is significant is that both simulationists and theory theorists regard the ability to account for the experimental data to be one of the criteria by which the superiority of one theory over the other could in principle be determined. This requirement provides an indication of how far the claim for the autonomy of psychological explanation advanced by contemporary simulationists has moved away from the traditional terrain of armchair philosophical reflection and from the way in which the defence of the autonomy of the *Geisteswissenschaften* was conceived by the first generation of non-reductivists. The very expectation that the debate could be settled experimentally puts a priori reflection at the service of an empirical programme, rather than locating empirical enquiry in the wider context of a debate aimed at elucidating the methodological assumptions at work in different forms of enquiry. Equally significant, in this connection, is simulation theorists' ambition to provide theories which are not only explanatorily correct (in the sense outlined above) but also descriptively adequate, i.e. able to capture what actually goes on in our minds when we explain and predict their behaviour. In the words of Goldman:

“No account of interpretation can be philosophically helpful, I submit, if it is incompatible with a correct account of what people actually do when they interpret others. My question, then, is: how does the (naive) interpreter arrive at his/her judgments about the mental attitudes of others?” (Goldman, 1995, p. 74.)

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<sup>5</sup> See Heal (1995).

This requirement is at loggerheads with the view that philosophy is not concerned with the *quid facti* but with the *quid iuris*, that it seeks to answer questions about our entitlement to make certain claims, not describe actual psychological processes.

To give an indication of how different the context in which some contemporary simulationists advance the autonomy claim is from the one from which Collingwood articulated his defence of the autonomy of the sciences of mind, we need to remind ourselves that Collingwood developed his defence of methodological autonomy. It was within the context of a metaphysics of absolute presuppositions whose task was to make explicit the fundamental principles which structure the domain of enquiry of the sciences of mind and nature. This project entailed teasing out the a priori assumptions made by the practitioners of different sciences. To accomplish this, the metaphysician must begin immanently by analysing the notion of experience or the conception of reality operative for the historian and natural scientist. Absolute presuppositions must answer to experience in the sense that they must explain how it is possible. Thus Collingwood claims that historians presuppose a sense of causation that is radically different from that at work in the natural sciences. To explain in an historical sense is not to find a general law which connects the explanandum to the explanans, but to provide a motive which enables us to understand what an agent does as rational.

In Collingwood's metaphysics of absolute presuppositions the a priori assumptions made in different disciplines must "fit" the data of experience, but the idea of such a "fit" between absolute presuppositions and

experience is radically different from the view that philosophical claims should be supported by or be compatible with experimental data because the process of uncovering such absolute presuppositions involves a logical regression from a fact of experience to the conditions of its possibility in the manner of a transcendental argument.<sup>6</sup> In so far as contemporary simulation theorists regard the simulation hypothesis to be superior on the grounds of its enhanced ability to account for the experimental data, they employ a notion of justification that is essentially *a posteriori*. By contrast, Collingwood's claim that absolute presuppositions must explain how experience is possible is a claim that is derived *a priori* or through reflection; the very idea of an experimental philosophy would have been anathema to Collingwood and to first generation non-reductivists more generally who, despite other differences, tended to conceive of the task of the philosopher as being that of elucidating the concept of action and of event respectively, and to outline which methodology best served to explain an occurrence as falling under either category.

However, to present the debate between simulationists and theory theorists purely as a debate between competing empirical hypotheses would be an oversimplification since not all those who take up arms in support of the simulationist cause believe that the debate can be settled on a purely experimental basis. Whilst Goldman and to some extent Gordon have championed simulation primarily as an

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<sup>6</sup> For a reading of transcendental arguments as offering a logical regression from what is presupposed to its presuppositions see Ameriks (1978) and Malpas (1997).

empirical hypothesis, others, like Heal (1995) and Stueber (2006), have trodden over the more traditional philosophical terrain of a priori argumentation. Heal claims that the theory theory approach deploys a functionalist strategy whose core

“is the assumption that the explanation of action or mental state through mention of beliefs, desires, emotions, etc. is causal. The approach is resolutely third personal [...] We are said to view other people as we view stars, clouds or geological formations. People are just complex objects in our environment whose behaviour we wish to anticipate but whose causal innards we cannot perceive” (Heal, 1995, p. 45)

For Heal we have reason to reject the functionalist picture because the explanation of human agency has a normative dimension that is not captured by theory theory:

“The difference between psychological explanation and explanation in the natural sciences is that in giving a psychological explanation we render the thought or behaviour of the other intelligible, we exhibit them as having some point, some reasons to be cited in their defence... This is the feature of psychological explanation that the replication method puts at the centre of the stage” (Heal 1995, p. 52).

Like Heal, Stueber’s defence of simulation is not based on an empirical claim concerning the compatibility of the simulation proposal with the experimental data, but on an a priori argument aimed at showing that the egocentric perspective which lies at the heart of the simulation proposal is essential to our ability to understand beliefs and desires as reasons rather than as mere internal causes of actions, and that it is precisely this that makes the explanation of human agency distinctive. For Stueber the egocentric

perspective is key to a defence of the autonomy of folk-psychological explanations. Stueber’s argument for the superiority of the simulation proposal is thus not based on questions of empirical fit, but on the (Davidsonian) consideration that the explanation of action involves rationalisations and that rationalisations are understood from the first person perspective. Yet even the more aprioristic defence of simulation one finds in Heal and Stueber radically differs from the account of the autonomy of action explanation articulated by Collingwood and the first generation of non-reductivists. There are at least two crucial differences between the two approaches. First, for Stueber (and maybe for Heal) the explanatory divide between the sciences of nature and mind is driven by an epistemological gap between the first and third person perspective. On the other hand, for Collingwood and first generation non-reductivists the explanatory gap is conceptual, not epistemological.<sup>7</sup> Secondly whereas for Stueber explanatory and metaphysical questions are to be settled independently of one another, for Collingwood method and metaphysics are inextricably intertwined. Let’s consider these differences in turn.

Stueber (2006) sees himself as vindicating a form of empathetic understanding and in so doing he traces the origin of the methodological distinction between the sciences of nature and mind to the epistemological divide between the first and third person perspective.<sup>8</sup> The former is the engaged perspective of agency, the latter is the impartial dispassionate perspective from which we understand

<sup>7</sup> See D’Oro (2007).

<sup>8</sup> See Stueber (2006), p. 131

events. It is because we have different modes of access to our own mental states that we can explain actions (whether our own or those of others) normatively and explain them in a radically different way from events. In other words, it is because there is an epistemological gap between the way in which we access our own mental states and that in which we access what goes on in the external world that there also is an explanatory gap between the methodology of the sciences of mind and nature. For Stueber, as indeed for contemporary supporters of the “explanatory gap”,<sup>9</sup> the distinction between the soft science of folk-psychology and the hard sciences is driven by the epistemological distinction between the ways in which we access the internal and external world. First generation non-reductivists certainly agreed with third generation non-reductivists such as Stueber and second generation non-reductivists such as Davidson, that the normative descriptive divide is crucial to an understanding of the distinction between the sciences of nature and mind.

Collingwood regarded the sciences of mind as criteriological<sup>10</sup> and compared them to logic and moral philosophy. But for Collingwood the explanatory gap between the sciences of nature and mind is not an epistemological, but a conceptual gap. The important questions are not epistemological: “how do I know my own mental states? What is distinctive about knowledge of first personal states?” but conceptual: “What does it mean to explain something as an action rather

than an event? What logical structure do event and action explanations have?”<sup>11</sup>

Whilst Collingwood did claim that actions differ from events because they have an ‘inside’ that the latter lack, the inside/outside distinction was in fact no more than a metaphorical way of expressing the view that the sciences of mind and nature have different absolute presuppositions and do not compete with one another because they seek to answer different sets of questions. Interpreting the distinction between the sciences of mind and nature as the distinction between the investigative goals and methodologies of different sciences does not entail assuming that a defence of the autonomy of action explanation is inextricably linked to the existence of a distinctive, first personal access to one’s mental states. Dray<sup>12</sup> persuasively argued that there is no need to ascribe hidden internal monologues to agents in order to defend the autonomy of action explanations because the methodological differences between the sciences can be gleaned from their explanatory practices alone.

There is a second crucial difference between third and first generation non-reductivists. For contemporary simulationists the epistemological distinction between the first and third person that lies at the basis of the methodological divide between the sciences of mind and nature has no metaphysical implications. This is because third generation non-reductivists such as Stueber operate with a layered view of the sciences that was alien to Collingwood and first generation non-reductivists. This

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<sup>9</sup> See Levine (1983) and McGinn (1997)

<sup>10</sup> For an account of Collingwood’s distinction between criteriological and descriptive sciences see his *Principles of Art*, p. 171 (note to p. 164).

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<sup>11</sup> See D’Oro (2007).

<sup>12</sup> Dray (1957a) and Dray (1963)



becomes clear if one goes beyond the methodological dimension of the debate to take a look at the underlying ontology. For Stueber, the fact that the human sciences have a distinctive methodology does not entail that the explanations articulated within their domain may have any metaphysical pretensions. When we explain an action by rationalizing it we appeal to beliefs and desires and thus employ a vocabulary that is specific to folk-psychology. Although such rationalising explanations are irreducible to lower level explanations, they pose no threat to the completeness of physics. To believe that acknowledging the autonomy of psychological explanation generates the problem of causal overdetermination and demands an answer to the issue of psychophysical interactionism is simply to conflate matters of epistemology with matters of ontology.<sup>13</sup> Thus whilst Stueber defends the methodological autonomy of the human sciences, he denies that the methodological distinction between the sciences of nature and mind is of any metaphysical significance. The metaphysically relevant explanations, and thus the ones that have genuinely causal power, are not the higher order explanations which employ the folk-psychological concepts of beliefs and desires but the lower order explanations of physics. The former stand to the latter in a relationship of supervenience. Metaphysical matters, for Stueber, are ultimately not informed by the conceptual distinctions between actions and events that underpin the methodological differences between the sciences of nature and mind and our common sense, pre-theoretical ways of looking at the world alike.

This is certainly not the way in which Collingwood viewed the relationship holding between the sciences of mind and nature for he has a very different conception of the relationship holding between method and metaphysics. The explanations at work in different sciences, according to Collingwood, make use of different sets of absolute presuppositions which respond to different senses of the term 'cause', none of which has the ontological edge over the others. Collingwood's defence of the methodological autonomy of the human sciences is inscribed within the project of a "descriptive" metaphysics in which no one sense of the term 'cause' wears the ontological trousers. By contrast, the layered view of the sciences which informs Stueber's understanding of the relationship between action and events operates within a commitment to "real" metaphysics that privileges one form of explanation over another.

The notion of descriptive metaphysics that I appeal to here was introduced by Strawson who contrasted it with "revisionary" metaphysics. Descriptive metaphysics, according to Strawson, seeks to uncover the fundamental concepts which are required for thought or experience to be possible. Descriptive metaphysics is a form of conceptual analysis conducted at the highest level of abstraction and generality for its task is to

"lay bare the most general features of our conceptual structures [...] a massive central core of human thinking which has no history [...] the commonplaces of the least refined thinking [...] the indispensable core of the conceptual equipment of the most sophisticated human beings." (Strawson, 1950, pp. xiii-xiv.

Revisionary metaphysics, by contrast, seeks to obtain knowledge of the

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<sup>13</sup> See Stueber (2006), p. 185.

fundamental structures of reality and in so doing aims not to describe, but to change our conceptual scheme by advancing another that is more suitable for the purpose of science. For Strawson whilst descriptive metaphysics promotes a static view of concepts, revisionary metaphysics promotes a dynamic view as it allows for the possibility that entrenched common sense or folk-psychological distinctions, such as the one between actions and events, may be challenged by the progress of natural science.

The conception of descriptive metaphysics matches Collingwood's account of a metaphysics of absolute presuppositions which is said to be historical, not in the sense that it holds the action/event distinction to be relative to time and place, but rather in the sense that it denies that the presuppositions at work in different sciences are ontologically real and thus 'cut nature at the joints'. As a science of absolute presuppositions metaphysics is a science of the internal questions which investigate reality as it is viewed from the perspective of different sciences. Since there cannot be a science of external questions that apply to reality as it is in-itself, or independently of the investigative goals of the sciences, descriptive metaphysics effectively undermines the very possibility of real/Cartesian distinctions and with it the gap between real and descriptive metaphysics. Metaphysics can only be practiced as a descriptive science which asks internal questions and investigates being from the perspective of different sciences.

The metaphysics which underpins Stueber's defence of the autonomy of the sciences of nature, by contrast, is not of a descriptive kind because answers to ontological questions are

disconnected from the conceptual distinctions between actions and events which inform common sense understanding and the methodological differences between the sciences of nature and mind alike. Whilst Stueber does not suggest that the common sense distinctions between actions and events should be overthrown in the light of scientific evidence, he endorses a view of metaphysics that is revisionary in so far as he disconnects metaphysical from methodological questions and allows metaphysics to be carried out independently of conceptual analysis. For Collingwood, by contrast, metaphysics is conceptual analysis, albeit at the most abstract level of generality.

Since the idea that any justification of our entitlement to distinguish between actions and events should ultimately engage with the real metaphysical implications of drawing such a distinction rather than limiting itself to conceptual analysis was revived by Davidson, I will now turn to discuss the relationship between second and first generation non-reductivism.

### **From second to first generation non-reductivism and back.**

Davidson's Anomalous Monism spelt the decline of the non-causalist consensus which prevailed in first generation non-reductivism. It did so by challenging the assumption, shared by first generation non-reductivists, that reasons are not causes. First generation non-reductivists had claimed that to deny the tenet that "reasons are not causes" would entail committing the kind of category error one makes when one erroneously identifies love with jealousy. Whilst love and jealousy may co-exist in the same individual who is both in love and jealous, they are conceptually

distinct. The task of philosophy was to make such conceptual distinctions even when they did not, as indeed in the case of the action/event distinction, cut nature at the joints. As Collingwood put it, the task of philosophy is to distinguish between concepts that coincide in their instances<sup>14</sup> by disentangling the different sense that the term 'cause' has in different explanatory contexts<sup>15</sup>. Whilst this was Collingwood's own formulation of the role of philosophical analysis, the view that philosophy is a form of high level conceptual analysis was a shared assumption amongst first generation non-reductivists who, by and large, tended to construe the attempt to go beyond such conceptual analysis as an attempt to jump out of one's own philosophical skin. Davidson put an end to such a view of philosophy and to the kind of non-reductivism that went along with it because he challenged the view that philosophy could stop at conceptual analysis. Conceptual dualism or non-reductivism must be articulated within a monistic ontology and the methodological differences between the natural and social sciences must ultimately be made to reckon with the fact that, metaphysically speaking, Being does not bifurcate along such conceptual lines. One must thus give an account of how actions and events can be ontologically the same even if they are conceptually distinct. Endorsing type-type reductive materialism would not have been an option for Davidson because he agreed with first generation non-reductivists that action explanations have a normative element that cannot be reduced to the descriptive explanations of natural science. Davidson opted for a non-reductive monism which stated

that whilst all events are physical, mental events cannot be described in purely physical terms. As he puts it:

"Anomalous Monism resembles materialism in its claim that all events are physical, but rejects the thesis, usually considered essential to materialism, that mental phenomena can be given purely physical explanations. Anomalous Monism shows an ontological bias only in that it allows the possibility that not all events are mental, while insisting that all events are physical". (Davidson, 1980, p. 207.)

Davidson's Anomalous Monism shares with Collingwood's metaphysics of absolute presuppositions the belief that the divide between the sciences of nature and mind is captured by the is/ought distinction and that to ignore it would be tantamount to committing a naturalistic fallacy. But there is also a crucial difference between Collingwood's claim that the sciences of mind and nature have different absolute presuppositions which employ different senses of the term 'cause' or 'because' and Davidson's Anomalous Monism. In Davidson's Anomalous Monism the relationship holding between the physical and the mental is analogous to the relationship holding between Lockean primary and secondary qualities, where secondary qualities such as colours, smells etc., are said to exist in objects only as a configuration of primary qualities. Thus whilst primary qualities are both predicates which apply to macroscopic objects and properties which apply to the minute invisible particles which make up the real essence of an object, secondary qualities are mere predicates by which we describe the nominal essences of macroscopic objects; they are not properties which make up the inner constitution or real essence of things. As it is modelled on the Lockean account of the relationship

<sup>14</sup> See Collingwood (1933) p. 51.

<sup>15</sup> See Collingwood (1940) chapter XXIX.

between the primary and secondary qualities, Davidson's version of non-reductivism has an ontological bias in that it holds that causal explanations apply to events independently of how they are described, i.e. either as mental or as physical.

In Collingwood's descriptive metaphysics, by contrast, particulars are identified as physical in so far as they are explained by the method of observation and inductive generalisation. They are identified as mental in so far as they are explained rationally. The former are (physical) events, the latter are actions. From this perspective particulars are not (physical) events which may be given mental descriptions: to describe them as events is already to individuate them by employing the explanatory framework of one science, not to give them a topic-neutral description. From the perspective of Collingwood's metaphysics of experience it would make no sense to say that "whilst all events are physical, mental events cannot be described in purely physical terms". To make such a claim would be tantamount to saying that whereas the predicate of being physical is also a property that all particulars have independently of how they are described, the predicate of being mental is only a description and as such not a real property.

The difference between Davidson's and Collingwood's non-reductivism may be ultimately traced back to their differing notions of Being. Davidson conceives of Being along the lines of an underlying Lockean substratum which may be described in different ways. Collingwood by contrast conceives of Being as the most abstract concept, one from which all conceptual determinations have been removed. It is because Collingwood conceives of

Being as the most abstract concept as opposed to an ontological substratum, that he claims that there can be no such thing as an Aristotelian science of pure being, or metaphysics understood as the study of what there really is independently of how reality is carved up by the explanatory practices of different sciences. Also metaphysics may only be pursued as a science of internal questions which arise within the horizon of the explanatory practices and investigative goals of a given science. Whilst Collingwood is not a Berkeleyan immaterialist, he would agree with Berkeley that there is no concept of substance or of being as such and thus no such thing as metaphysics traditionally understood as ontology.

Having gone backwards from third to first generation non-reductivism I now want to retrace my steps in the other direction. The debate for the autonomy of folk-psychological explanations has moved very far from the form it took in mid-century when it was firmly located in the philosophy of history and social science, rather than in the philosophy of mind and action and then in cognitive psychology. One way of characterising the changes from first to third generation non-reductivism is in terms of a progressive decline of the traditional conception of philosophy as an armchair discipline. In mid-century, when the debate between reductivists such as Hempel and non-reductivists such as Collingwood and Dray took place, the debate was primarily a conceptual debate about the logical form of explanation in different forms of enquiry. In this golden age of non-reductivism the argument against methodological unity was underpinned by a conception of philosophy as an epistemologically 'first' science whose goal was to determine a priori the domain of enquiry of different sciences

and to spot the application of the method of each science beyond its legitimate boundaries. As the debate moved from the philosophy of history and social science it acquired an ontological dimension that had been previously not only absent, but had been also dismissed as generating philosophical pseudo-problems. Non-reductivists such as Davidson came to see their task as being that of explaining how the methodological distinctions that had been argued for by the previous generation of non-reductivists could be feasibly defended against the background of a return of heavy-duty metaphysics and the rise of naturalism. Thus Davidson sought to defend the conceptual distinction between actions and events against the background of a commitment to the explanatory superiority of natural science in the way in which Locke sought to defend the primary/secondary quality distinction in the light of a prior commitment to the corpuscolarean theory of matter. Philosophy changed from an epistemological first science to the under labourer of science. Finally in third generation non-reductivism of the kind defended by Gordon and Goldman the debate between reductivists and non-reductivists became a contest between empirical hypotheses to be settled on an experimental basis. The role of the philosopher is reduced to that of assessing the compatibility of competing hypotheses with the experimental data, and philosophical reflection is put at the service of an empirical programme. If this story is correct, the picture that emerges is one in which non-reductivism may well have gained the upper hand. But whilst non-reductivists may have won the battle, naturalism has won the war. Reclaiming the work of Collingwood as an advocate of descriptive

metaphysics, rather than a thinker working within the tradition of empathetic understanding, should help us articulate a form of non-reductivism that challenges the naturalistic framework in which the question of the autonomy of folk-psychological explanations is posed in contemporary debates.

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