

Analyse und Kritik

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Analyse & Kritik is a new journal for the social sciences in West Germany. In the following article, Anton Leist, one of its editors, explains the editorial aims.

I Historical background

During the 1960s the social sciences in West Germany were, in Kuhn's phrase, in a state of 'crisis'; but in the 1970s they reverted to the status of 'normal science'. The crisis had manifested itself in the so-called 'Positivism Debate', which involved not only methodological issues but also questions about the practical aims and influences of the social sciences. The ways out of crisis turned out to be various: mainstream social science dismissed the debate as 'merely philosophical' and returned to the everyday work of a more object-oriented inquiry. Some groups on the Left replaced social science with political action and a section of the Right turned to philosophy as a means of stabilizing law and order (the Bund Freiheit der Wissenschaft).

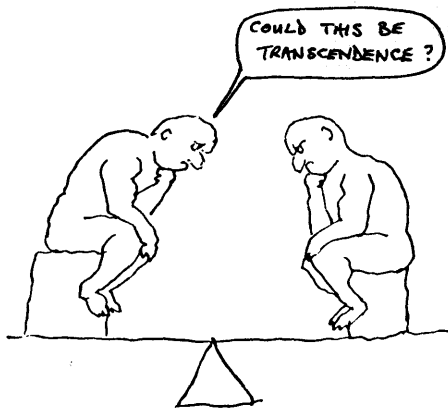
Though the launching of Analyse & Kritik does not itself form part of this history, its programme is still related in at least one central point to the Positivism Debate. This point is the conflict between political enlightenment and scientific rationality, or, more strictly, the conflict between political and analytical rationality. By political rationality we mean the goal of all efforts, scientific or otherwise, to discuss, defend, plan and realize a just or good society; analytical rationality, on the other hand, is the goal of every attempt at lucid, logical, theoretically precise and rigorous thinking. Analytical rationality is therefore a precondition of political rationality, and the relation between them may appear quite trivial. But the crisis of the social sciences in the 1960s showed that this relation, however trivial, is not always easy to secure. Nor is it clear what constitutes analytical rationality, and puzzlement about its meaning, extent and

justification was central to the Positivism Debate.

Whereas similar movements in the English-speaking countries (the Radical Philosophy Caucus, the Union for Radical Political Economy and the former Radical Philosophers' Newsjournal in the USA, Radical Philosophy and Ideology & Consciousness in Britain) turn away from the traditional contents of academic philosophy and social science, and engage with alternative methods and ideas, such as structuralism, existentialism, phenomenology, Western marxism, classical economics etc, the programme of Analyse & Kritik is founded on the critical assimilation of analytic philosophy, and is committed to employing analytical methods as one of its main pillars. The reasons for this have to do with the rather different scientific conditions from which our programme developed.

The most astonishing experience available to a student of social sciences in West Germany in the late 1960s was the sudden realisation that quite abstract philosophical distinctions, honoured by tradition, could lead to controversial political differences. Whereas the contributions of Popper and Adorno at the beginning of the Positivism Debate were strictly academic lectures about problems of method, the ensuing discussion was conducted in an increasingly politicised academic community and in the context of a general political crisis (the Vietnam war, economic recession, student revolt), and developed into a radical controversy about the function of social science in society. It was not only, or even mainly, a conflict between Popper's falsificationism and 'dialectics'; it was much more a confrontation between the liberal-conservative programme of piecemeal social engineering and the utopia of a classless society. One of the main points of contention was the maxim of the 'Frankfurt School' that philosophy cannot be separated or distinguished from empirical research, that is, that even the most abstract philosophical reflection is just as empirical as the most 'empirical' research, so that the philosopher is in fact a social scientist.

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Several empirical and practical lessons were learned from this: for instance, that in spite of their high degree of abstractness, controversies in epistemology and the theory of science can have quite radical and extensive implications for a scientist's practical work; that fundamental controversies within the social sciences are practical disputes about the political aims of social science and are by no means 'merely methodological'; and that one cannot tackle the problem of the political functions of science without implicitly or explicitly confronting the problem of the political aims of society itself. In short, within the social sciences, debates of a 'meta-scientific' kind are always about the creation of a better, or an ideal society.

However, the Positivism Debate taught us another, less gratifying, lesson: that the reverse argument is logically invalid - it is not necessarily the case that a philosophical position is correct if it leads to a preferable political programme. We could not fail to recognise that, while the German representatives of analytic philosophy, the Critical Rationalists, expressed themselves in clear language, the dialecticians were unable to free themselves from the language of German Idealism. This is not to say that German Idealism is in itself unclear, but that the arguments and paradigms of a philosophical tradition which belongs to a rather alien social and spiritual context have to be translated and transformed if they are to be understandable within present-day philosophical discourse. The ideas borrowed from German Idealism should have been applied much more concretely to the actual practice of the social sciences: then they might have achieved some influence on the practitioners' work, rather than merely making their jargon more philosophical. The dialecticians' impact, so far as their philosophical message was concerned, therefore came down to a short-lived fashion for talking 'dialectically'. Hand in hand with this went a second shortcoming. The Critical Rationalists oriented themselves in terms of the history and practice of the sciences (or so it seemed until the appearance of Kuhn's Structure of Scientific Revolutions), whereas the dialecticians (especially Adorno, Horkheimer and their immediate followers) only took a negative attitude to the sciences, denouncing them for their technological results and their instrumental thinking. And, whilst the former attempted to guarantee a steady progress of philosophical knowledge by taking account of experimental methods and by being

open to the possibility of criticism, the dialecticians tended to veil their central theses instead of expounding them clearly.

This account is somewhat simplified and stands in need of further elaboration. Jürgen Habermas, for example, who became more and more representative of the dialectical position, does not fit into it very well. Habermas went to considerable lengths to integrate themes from a philosophical, especially marxist, tradition with the standards and theories of present-day social science, whether Freud or Chomsky, Piaget or Parsons; and he certainly paid attention to the latest developments in the analytical schools. Even more so: in some cases, as for example Austin's and Searle's theory of speech acts, he even initiated a broad reception and further elaboration of linguistic analysis. But on the whole Habermas too remained quite a stranger to the analytical tradition and, though theoretically an immensely sophisticated scientist, he shared a certain abstractness of thinking with the philosopher-dialecticians. His work contains neither clear-cut conceptual analyses nor tough empirical studies. Like the philosopher-dialecticians, he wanted to have it both ways.

Wherever, on the other hand, the Critical Rationalists fell short of the advantages ascribed to their position, one had to recognise that Critical Rationalism was not quite representative of analytic philosophy. Because of the parochial state of German philosophy, the analytical schools were almost unknown, with the exception of certain figures of German origin like Wittgenstein and Carnap. One could only guess, therefore, at the real potential of analytical rationality represented in the actual state of inquiry in the English-speaking world. Consequently we were not able to formulate the Positivism Debate so as to present a clear choice for any social science committed to enlightenment.

Developments later in the 1970s confirmed this opinion. The position which had been denounced as 'positivistic' gradually revealed itself as more sophisticated than many of us originally realised. In general, the dialecticians had refused to recognise Popper's critique of Logical Positivism, or had even confined their attention to Logical Positivism. But as the analytical literature became better known during the 1970s, such over-simplifications became impossible. Politically motivated hostility towards the analytical position tended to be replaced by uncritical respect. There were at least three ways in which the attribution of a positivistic conception of science to the analytical position turned out to be over-simplified:

- (1) It had been assumed that the philosophy of science, especially in its Carnapian version, was rigidly normative, logical, and historically insensitive. The debate between Kuhn, Lakatos and Feyerabend on the history of science altered this conception. In West Germany, especially in the works of W. Stegmüller, a new, 'dynamic' philosophy of science was developed.
- (2) The naive identification of analytic philosophy with Logical Positivism in the field of ethics was eroded by the increasing influence of Rawls's theory of justice.

Although handicapped by the traditional German ignorance about utilitarianism, Rawls's 'normativistic turn' connected up with interest in the justification of norms and the legitimation of institutions, represented in West German social science by Habermas, Apel and the 'Erlangen School'. (3) The prejudice that analytic philosophy was a defence of syntactic reductionism, an attempt to reduce scientific and natural languages to the bare logical bones of a formal calculus, was eventually dispelled by the elaboration of linguistic pragmatics and speech-act theory - both of these topics being extensively discussed during the 'linguistic boom' of the early 1970s. In addition, as we became acquainted with the actual state of American and English sociology of science, we became increasingly convinced that it had already produced a more realistic model of science than that projected in the rather abstract sketches of the dialecticians.

Surprisingly enough, the increasing understanding of the analytical tradition did not lead to a new and less crude formulation of the problems raised in the Positivism Debate. One might have expected that the original desire to give structure and content to the idea of a critical social science would take a new and more serious form. But attempts to bring this about were quite rare. Academic sociology tried to solve the problem in a bureaucratic manner by appointing an official group for the comparison of different theory-paradigms, thus trying to concentrate on the more down-to-earth question, whether in sociology one needs five different theories on the same topic and if not, which one is the best. More fruitful approaches came from several scientists working in the Frankfurt school tradition, who either gradually opened their interests to the state of the art in other countries, whether French structuralism, Italian marxism or Cambridge economics from England and the USA, or who concretised the formerly abstract principles of a marxist philosophy in politically oriented empirical research, for example within industrial sociology (from the so-called 'Kern-Schuhmann study' to the present day). Part of the former work can be found in a series of volumes published by Suhrkamp under the title 'Gesellschaft'.

The picture of a flowering discussion, however, which might be suggested by the subtitle of this series, 'Contributions to Marxian Theory', is misleading. On the whole theoretical work amongst marxists in the 1970s became stagnant. In a decade when more and more studies in and about marxist theory flowed in from the English-speaking countries (the first attempt at a history of the Frankfurt school, for example, was written by an American, Martin Jay), there was no longer any extensive discussion amongst marxists in West Germany, still less a productive one. The increasing political pressure on the Left damaged the theoretical core of marxism. On the one hand, a kind of marxism grew up, for which any criticism of Marx was to be denounced as revisionism, while on the other hand marxism came to be used increasingly merely to sketch a general picture of the world's state: marxist jargon was preferred to the theoretical, and therefore abstract and academic, elaboration

of these terms.

In these circumstances, marxism in West Germany was capable of little more than textual exegesis, or of constructing closed systems of dogmas - as, for example, in the many volumes produced by the group 'Projekt Klassenanalyse' (Programme for Class Analysis). Given this mentality, there have, with the rare exceptions already noted, been hardly any attempts by marxists to deal with thoughts alien to marxism. Amongst many marxists and politically committed social scientists, crude and dismissive attitudes towards analytic philosophy have persisted, and analytical thought has remained an object merely of a critique of ideology.

Meanwhile, those philosophers and social scientists who did adopt the analytical mode of thinking were only too ready to follow their Anglo-American precursors in a well-worn attitude of dismissal towards marxism. They now defined their identity in terms of a commitment to clarity and precision, and because marxism is deficient in these respects they concluded that it could not have any scientific content. The result was that those who really became acquainted with the Anglo-American tradition did not develop but merely reproduced it - though perhaps with more German thoroughness. There was hardly any attempt to relate it to the social sciences, or to traditional philosophy (philosophers like O. Höffe, H. Schnädelbach, and E. Tugendhat being noteworthy exceptions) nor was there any interest in the conflict between political and analytical rationality.

II Theoretical Programme

Our conclusion from this short history is that the problem of the conflict between political and analytical rationality, which was raised during the Positivism Debate, has not been solved but only shelved. In making this conflict the core of our project, we are not, of course, proposing to return to the old battle-lines. But we do believe that the debate demonstrated the need for a critical social science which would resolve the contradiction between the two types of rationality, even if it could not satisfy that need. A fundamental part of the programme of *Analyse & Kritik* is our conviction that rationality cannot be divided into an analytical part and a political part, and that enlightenment in the realm of pure thought is impossible.

I have already described political rationality in terms of the attempt to bring about a better and more just society, and analytical rationality in terms of the ideal of lucid, self-reflective and empirically provable thinking. These are, of course, allusions rather than definitions. But a scientific programme should not be confined from the outset by over-rigid definitions. Only by carrying out such a programme can we approach a more definite answer to the question of what political and analytical rationality may be. For the present, these terms must be regarded as mere symbols for the creation of a just society by rational argument - which of course is not meant to imply that rational argument alone can bring about a just society. In referring to these symbols, our programme is not committing itself to specific versions of political or

analytical rationality, and is therefore not excluding the most various schools of thought.

Why, then, does *Analyse & Kritik* wish to bring the marxist and the analytical traditions into closer contact? And may it not be objected that the commitment to clear thinking can only be extremely trivial, since every science will claim to be clear and precise, and that no scientist would ever deliberately flout this norm? So how can the requirement of clarity be expected to give a new direction to critical social science?

We speak of a 'critical' social science (rather than 'marxist' or 'analytical') in order to make clear that the marxist and the analytical traditions are not to be treated as complete representatives of political and analytical rationality. And consequently we do not believe that a critical social science can be created by merging these traditions eclectically. Rather we should encourage a restructuring and critical re-assessment of these traditions by means of new types of argument. The marxist and the analytical traditions have in their own ways genuinely radicalised political and analytical rationality, so it seems reasonable to take them as starting points for the project. As far as analytical rationality is concerned, this implies that, despite a general commitment to clarity and empirical soundness implicit in the institution of science itself, there have been quite different degrees of effort to achieve clarity within the social sciences (and much more so in philosophy), and that the analytical tradition alone has given this effort top priority. 'Analytical tradition' can here, as elsewhere, be understood as including various uses of analytical tools within social science, and analytic philosophy should be thought of as an important part of what is meant by the 'analytical tradition'. The basic ingredients of analytical rationality can only be understandability and empirical truth - analytic philosophy tried to devise standards for the first, while the empirically minded social scientist tried to enlarge our knowledge concerning the second. Their concrete results may sometimes have been ill-founded and provisional. But they have given a much more workable shape to analytical rationality.

The distinction between an ideal and a concrete form of rationality points to the need of a corrective. Our programme suggests that in the case of analytical and political rationality each is a corrective of the other. Let me point out what is meant by this, first in relation to the analytical tradition. Despite, for example, the tendency of most analytic philosophers to define their method as 'conceptual analysis', thereby claiming that their work is purely logical and socially and historically neutral, analytic philosophy is obviously not such a pure embodiment of analytical rationality. The reliance on the 'is/ought' distinction, the separation between 'context of discovery' and 'context of justification', the teleological model of action and the contract model in ethics and political theory show its links with the legitimating models of social thought typical of capitalist societies. Analytic philosophy is

deeply embedded in specific social and political traditions whose thought-determining force has yet to be analysed. There is no analytical rationality without political rationality!

Nor is marxism a pure embodiment of political rationality. The label 'marxism' attaches to various social scientific theories, sharing a small set of principles and appealing to the same classics. These theories and principles depend on 19th-century social conditions much more profoundly than conservative marxists are willing to admit. The lack of any ethical or political theory, for example, within marxism is a serious defect at the present time, because the dissolution of bourgeois theories of natural right by means of ideology-critiques no longer carries conviction. The Hegelian heritage within marxism has to be justified as relevant to present tasks, and not just taken for granted. And since critical social science deals with social and political matters which are practically relevant for masses of people, it ought to be formulated as comprehensibly as possible. The obligation to elaborate a clear theoretical language is basically a matter of openness to intersubjective understanding. There is no political rationality without analytical rationality!

The project of *Analyse & Kritik* takes off from those traditions which represent rationality in its most radical form, but is not restricted to them. We too want to call in question the results and standards of established science, and to mount radical critiques of a philosophy which is turning towards Aristotelianism again, of an economics which is formally elegant but utterly unrealistic, and of a sociology which is pluralistically open but programmatically nebulous. We must also try to make Anglo-American work more widely available in Germany, especially in order to provide examples of combined clarity, empirical fruitfulness, and political relevance. We hope to keep our readers informed about work done by Anglo-American authors who share our general outlook. And we try to encourage extensive discussion between authors in the two traditions and in different countries. For this reason, the journal is bilingual. Articles and discussion-notes written by English-speaking authors will be published in the original, and articles in German will be accompanied by abstracts in English. We are convinced that only non-authoritarian, open, controversial and many-sided discussion will help to remove the weight of orthodoxy, and help us achieve good results on the way to a critical social science. Only by collective effort can the ideological structures of our thinking be identified and critically evaluated. We invite our English speaking colleagues and comrades to participate as much as possible in this task.

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