

POST-SCRIPT

Human beings after their arrival in this world come to know it through the experience. They get their knowledge about this world by means of their five senses. These experiences are discrete and separate. Only when they are unified or synthesized in some way or other, they have knowledge of objects. As these objects are found to be of different types, each type constitutes a particular universe of discourse or subject-matter. We study each of these subject-matters as and when we consider it to be important. Having decided that some particular subject-matter is important, we, the human beings, must next have to consider how the chosen subject-matter is to be studied, and our method will depend on what we think about them in which linguistic articulation of the key topics of the subject-matter can best be gained.

There are two possibilities, we may claim that some intuitive insight into the nature of that which is studied enables us to say with complete certitude what the correct articulations are. They are then guaranteed beyond any possibility of doubt and our particular study will consist simply in analysing these linguistic articulations in order to find out the inferences that can be drawn from them. This method, which was widely approved and followed in philosophical circles before the 17th century, is known as rationalism.

Alternatively, we may hold that no such certainty is to be expected and the linguistic articulation — when systematized they are named theories and definitions — are working hypotheses. In other words, they are not, as they stand, necessary truths but simply suppositions whose only claim to validity rests on the possibility of confirming or refuting them by an appeal to the facts. This method of regulated perception or observation is known as empiricism.

Now, it may be thought that the choice between these methods is clear and evident. But this is far from so. Quite a good case can be made out for either of them. Consequently, what is only too likely to happen is a confusion of both. For rationalism it can be argued that most of the subject-matters, if not all, are concerned, not with what is but with what ideally should be the case.

For example, psychology, it will be said, has the task of discovering ultimately how people should behave from how people do behave, and the task of sociology will be to discover what the ideal relations of human beings one to another are in society from their actual relations. In other words, the reference to actual behaviour has been made in a quite incidental way and no appeal to actual facts to confirm or infirm the conclusions arrive at is needed.

Thus following the paths charted out by these two methods respectively we reach diametrically opposite results. This confrontation of methodologists^e~~s~~ giving rise to opposite results sets in motion our thinking about the adequacy and the range of applicability of each of them.

Empiricism as a method studies what actually is and it enriches our stock of cognitive content by bringing in novel informative contents. However, these cognitions remain separate and loose and as such fail to constitute systematic knowledge as a whole. Rationalism gives us principles of unification for systematization of knowledge. But it fails to give us informative contents to be unified. Thus it transpires that both empiricism and rationalism are inadequate not in what they affirm but in what they deny.

Kant saw clearly the inadequacy of both empiricism and rationalism. Empiricism errs in denying the importance of unification and systematization while rationalism errs in holding that human mind, like a spider, makes the web of knowledge out of itself without any help from external world observed through our senses. Knowledge to be knowledge must have both 'content' and 'form'. It is the merit of Kant that he saw clearly the real source of inadequacies of these methods. There cannot be any knowledge if there is no 'content' and 'content' is supplied by experience gained through senses. Likewise, knowledge is nothing but a blooming, buzzing, speechless confusion if it is not systematized and unified. And only in and through the principles of systematization supplied by human reason discrete sensory elements be unified and transformed into objects of knowledge. Thus Kant is found at once in both the camps and his seminal contribution cannot be over-estimated.

Philosophical problems have the tendency to recur in different countries having different cultural set-up; ~~at~~ although in different garbs. Thus the basic problem encountered by the above two methodologies is : how is the contribution of the 'given' and 'mind-imposed' be estimated? We saw the replies to this question given by the empiricists,

rationalists and Kant respectively. However, this problem has also been a bone of contention among the Indian Philosophers too and their replies are no less interesting than those of their European counterparts. This is the justification of undertaking of this work.