BOOK REVIEW

THE IDEAL SOCIETY AND IDEAL SOLUTION

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The topic of my paper appears to be a bit odd but it is not so. Apparently it looks to be a discussion between the nature of an Ideal Society and Ideal Solution, but in fact it is an examination of the relationship between philosophy and science which is a very old one. The relationship between philosophy and science was examined in every epoch of history when any significant development in the one affected the other.

Science separated.itself from the mainstream of philosophy from the earliest times in the cosmology of the Greeks and in modern times the breach was widened by the development of natural and biological sciences. Philosophy and science are important different disciplines (philosophy was termed as the science of sciences or the mother of sciences and this expression is still true in more than one ways).

Science tries to study the pattern of events found in the Universe by the direct method of observation and experiments; whereas philosophy studies these events as they effect human being with the help of interpretation and it is here that .a difference between matter and man is found. In the history of thought philosophy and science differed in the examination of various problems such as the nature of the Ultimate Reality, the Evolutionary Theory, the relation between mind and body, nature of space and time, etc.

When in the 16th and 17th centuries science succeeded in interpreting material world with the help of physico-chemical laws, it tried to extend its application to the phenomena of life, mind and society. It is at this point that philosophy became critical of science. Since then the battle between the two is going on for achieving supremacy in the explanation of the Universe.

New Dimensions of Sociology [128]by Dr. Mirza Arshad Ali Beg of the PCSIR, Karachi, was published by the Hamdard Foundation, Karachi. This book is an attempt to apply physico-chemical (especially chemical laws) to human behaviour. One prime analogy used in the book is that of an Ideal Society compared to an Ideal Solution. This book contains good comments by one able scientist Mehdi Hassan and Dr. Jamil Jalibi, the then Vice-Chancellor of the University of Karachi. My present paper is a critical examination of Dr. Beg's thesis.

In the 19th century history of thought, society was compared to a living organism and similarities were searched out between the two, but this organic conception of society did not work, as the dissimilarities between the organism and society were many. Dr. Beg has gone one step down in this attempt to liken the society to a chemical solution and tried to explain human behaviour in terms of physicochemical laws.

Dr. Beg attempts to coordinate two different kinds of experiences the physical and the social in terms of an analogical extension of a key idea derived from the one. It needs to be examined. For example he uses the key idea of solution and contends that the use of 'ideal' in both the cases of 'ideal solution' and 'ideal society' is identical.

Dr. Beg is constructing a theoretical model for society drawn from analogy with chemistry. It is to be examined what lies behind the significance of the key concept of 'solution' and what is the justification for its analogical extension to 'society'. There are two important questions in the use of such an analogy: (i) What lies behind the significance of some particular concept in a particular discipline, and (ii) what is the justification for its analogical extension to some other discipline.

IDEAL SOLUTION

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[128] Dr. M.A.A. Beg., New Dimensions in Sociology, The Hamdard Foundation, Karachi, 1987.

Dr. Beg gives three reasons for the use of the analogy of 'ideal solution':

i) He says that physico-chemical laws are operative in human behaviour and so "compilation of chemical facts and observable human behaviour data could provide a strong base for the universal application of physico-chemical laws"[129]. See the use of the terms 'fact' and 'behaviour' which have two quite different connotations. Fact refers to physico-chemical objects and happenings, but human being is not a 'fact' like a material object. It is an organism with consciousness and behaviour pattern. The term 'fact' when used in the context of 'historical and social facts' has quite a different connotation.

ii) An ideal solution can be compared to an ideal society. Dr. Beg say, if the interaction among solute and solvent are uniform, the solution would be ideal. Analogously, if the interaction among the components of the society are uniform, it could be an ideal society[130]. Such an Ideal Society was formed in the life of the Prophet Muhammad (pease be upon him)

iii) Like affinity in different chemical substances, if there is affinity between human beings, the process of socialization could be explained. Dr. Beg explains other social processes as assimilation, motivation, polarizing, force, decline, revolution, etc. in the same way.

Another important question is of disanalogy between solution and society and how extensive it is. An important part of the significance of any concept is given by contrast, by showing the kind of things to which it does not apply.

After drawing our attention to some positive analogy, the theorists generally fail to say something what the analogy is supposed to prove or suggest while they convey the impression that somethings important has been proved or suggested. Bare empty concepts, bare functional or structural analogies do not work. For example refrigerator and automobile may be the

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[129] Ibid., p. 22.
[130] Ibid., viii.

part of a mechanical system but this does not prove that a refrigerator is a kind of an automobile or vice versa.

Before examining the prime analogy between the 'Ideal solution' and 'Ideal society' I would like to examine some of the terms used in the physical sciences and their application to the social sciences. They are Solution, Laws, Model, Representation, etc.

SOLUTION: The scientist studies a solution, knows its ingredients and how they work. He can predict the formation of the solution. But when he applies this model or picture to the society, different results may emerge. The picture will be valueless. If the solution does not have any resemblance to society, and it will be unintelligible because the behaviour of the ingredients in the two cases (solution and society) will be utterly different.

"The physico-chemical laws that govern solution may not be the property of solution (nature) but of our way of looking at solution". The picture we draw of nature shows certain limitations. We cannot draw a perfect picture but make two or more imperfect pictures which serve our purpose. Sometimes different pictures give identical and different information.

LAWS & NATURE: For the simplicity of the physico-chemical laws we cannot sacrifice the quite different nature of man and society. Beneath the deep flowing stream of reality are the appearances at its surface which contain certain distinctions (matter, life, plants, animals and men) which cannot be eliminated even for scientific reasons. The recent physics ..has shown that all attempts at mechanical models or pictures have failed and must fail (as) the ultimate process of nature neither occur in, nor admit of representation in space and time[131], The true object of scientific study can never be the realities of nature but only our own observation on nature. 'Artificiality comes from man and not from nature[132]. We read ourselves and also read nature which are quite distinct and different. The nature does not read us.

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[131] James Jean, Physics & Philosophy, p. 175.
[132] Ibid., p. 183.

MODEL: A model taken from the physico-chemical laws is said to explain not phenomena at the physico-chemical level, but also at the social level. But this cannot be unless the model in some way corresponds to the reality lying in the social world. We can never be sure whether any model corresponds to the reality and we can have certain knowledge about the nature of the reality.

LAWS: Physico-chemical laws may be exact, fit or successful in the physical but when they are applied to the social they fail. They do not provide us with a coherent perspective. They are also not comprehensive because they fail to explain the diverse social facts of life. They are neither illuminating nor self-evident, because self-evidence changes from age to age. The scientific laws may be accepted, refuted, modified or given up according to their workability.

REPRESENTATION: The most important difficulty is to judge whether or not a scientific theory gives a true and faithful account of reality the obvious procedure of comparing descriptions with reality. There are many hazards in such a comparison of language with reality. It is at this point that practically all philosophical systems (from Plato down to Russell and Witgenstein) have collapsed. Descriptions are human descriptions, the product of human experience and symbolizing. There are difficulties in locating and explaining what may be called physical and social facts. There are many conceptual systems which characterise reality and we cannot easily select one system among others and substitute one conceptual system for another.

The physical laws are applicable to some classes of objects and for some circumstances. When they are applied to man and society they need to be critically examined. For example a sample mathematical proposition that 2 + 2=4 is purely formal and accepted in mathematics and logic. But when applied to social sciences it needs to be examined further what the two and two are? Are they things in existence or only in our minds? Are they numbers or objects (of what kind)? So even before asserting that two objects plus two objects or facts make four objects or facts we must find a definition of object or fact.

IDEAL SOLUTION & IDEAL SOCIETY

(1) According to Dr. Beg an ideal solution can be compared to an ideal society. He says, 'If the interactions between solute and solvent are uniform, the solution would be ideal. Analogously, if the interaction among the components of the society are uniform it could be an ideal society'. Such an ideal society was found in the life of the Prophet Muhammad (pease be upon him).

(2) Like affinity in chemical substances if there is affinity 'between human beings the process of socialization could be explained. Dr. Beg explains other social processes as assimilation, motivation, polarizing, force, decline, revolution, etc.

CRITICISM: One similarity between an ideal solution and ideal society is that in both cases the components interact uniformly. But some other differences are also found which are also very great and very important.

(1) An ideal solution is easily made whereas an ideal society is created after great efforts and struggle.

(2) Components in a solution come together naturally according to certain chemical laws but the components (individuals and groups) of the society are brought together by some force, factor, circumstance or person. (The human factor is very important because man creates history).

(3) The ideal solution stays whereas an ideal society changes very rapidly due to various socio-political factors.

(4) An ideal solution can be judged very easily but an ideal society cannot be so judged. It depends upon various factors, their interdependence and interpretation. It is very difficult to determine the criteria of an ideal society. Ideal societies have existed in different times of history in different groups and nations for different periods of time and for different reasons.

(5) To say that an ideal society existed in the life time of the Prophet (peace be upon him) is not enough, because the components of the society did not from such an ideal society on their own and by themselves, but it was the Will of God, the personality of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his

untiring efforts and favourable circumstances that created the ideal society and soon after the death of the Prophet (peace be upon him), the process of disintegration set in. Moreover, the ideal society was formed in Medina and not in Mecca where the Prophet (peace be upon him) spent 50 years of his life. The conditions in Medina for an ideal society were more favourable than in Mecca.

(6) An ideal society consists of human beings when they interact. What is important here is the working of the human mind which acts and reacts on the environment and carves out an ideal environment for the society.

(7) While referring to the ideal society, Dr. Beg says when society is homogeneous, it is ideal, whereas when it is heterogeneous, it is not ideal. The Buddhists were an ideal society, whereas the Hindus were not. Similarly, Pakistani society being composed of heterogeneous groups working for regional interests and national benefits is not an ideal society (p. 27). But this is an oversimplification of the matter. Homogeneity and. Heterogeneity cannot be so easily explained, They may be overlapping and there may be a mixed state. Both the two aspects may be found in one group at one time with different results. For example all Muslim countries are homogeneous so far as the Islamic faith is concerned, but they are heterogeneous in their national interests. Israel composed of heterogeneous national groups of the world is homogeneous in its national outlook, especially when faced with the Arabs. Similarly the heterogeneous groups of the Hindus unite when they face the Muslims. America, a country .of heterogeneous nations of the world, is ideal because the American national interest is predominant.

(8) Dr. Beg seems to be moving from 'is' of likeness to 'is' of identity between the ideal society and the ideal solution. Unless some kind of identity is found between the two, the physico-chemical laws cannot be applied to society.

DISANALOGY: I would now discuss the question of disanalogy between the solution and the society with reference to some terms used and observations made in the book.

When Dr. Beg explains economic, social and psychological phenomena in purely physico-chemical terms, he seems to be committing the fallacy of-misidentification. The distinction and demarcation between the physical and the social are already ingrained in nature, because they refer to two different aspects of nature. See some of his remarks in the book. 'The molecule cannot be identified from the other ...[133] but an individual can be from another individual. 'An individual is like a drop in a glass of water. 'but he is not. 'Rural - Urban migration would be viewed as evaporation at higher temperature ...[134] and to interpret migration as the push and pull of two societies (rural and urban) and affinity, fugacity, motivation, etc. in purely physico-chemical terms is going too far (rather crossing the prohibited limit). The mechanism of evaporation works on the components of the solution as a whole, whereas rural-urban migration is selective and related to a part of society. Some of the individuals who are affected and motivated migrate, others stay behind in spite of unfavourable circumstances (e.g. Muslims in India). There is the difference between human beings and molecule.

Dr. Beg says, 'Social changes could be viewed as a mix of physical and chemical changes'[135] but this is not so. They are quite different in nature. 'Conflict' (p. 88) in groups of society is not as simple as the generation of heat in the solution, and 'Peace' some kind of an equilibrium in society. Heat and equilibrium are simple chemical processes but conflict and peace are complex many-sided social processes. Slums are compared to the formation of coarse-grained solid (p. 21) and Islamic society in the life time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to the crystalisation process. Scieties are compared with solids, liquids and gases which refer more to the from than to the content of the society and is again an oversimplification. Dr. Beg says that the Muslim rulers of India were not the real servants of Islam. Being Kings and Emperors they build castles and monuments of beauty as the Taj Mahal. For him 'the Taj Mahal is an example of polarisation or Munafiqat.[136] because the Prophet Muhammad (peace be.upon him) objected to the construction of a house by a Sahabi. What would Dr. Beg say

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[133] Dr. Beg., op. cit., p. 23.
[134] Ibid., p. 37.
[135] Ibid., p. 82.
[136] Ibid., p. 123.

to the present structure of House of God and the Masjid-i-Nabavi and their continuous improvement and extension? Do they need to be demolished and brought back to their original forms? Do the Bayt Ullah and Masjid-i-Nabavi not serve a religious need to house lakhs of people who come for Haj and visit Medina every year?

The Taj Mahal is a piece of Muslim architectural beauty. We-cannot call the 'Muslim rulers as Munafiq'. They had the human weaknesses and were not religious divines. Their service of the spread and consolidation of Islam (in spite of their personal faults) cannot he minimized.

Dr. Beg is applying Occam's Razor to the society.' Entities must not be multiplied without necessity.' Dr. Beg thinks that complex social processes could be explained in simple physico-chemical terms and laws, which however is not justified.

CONCLUSION

Materialism interoduce an unwelcome simplicity into human life. The whole world is constructed out of matter and motion, matter being the only reality an animal with a material body, his thoughts and emotions resulting from mechanical motion of the body. Man could not choose his path. He is fully determined a cog in the machine.

'The whole intricate fabric of civilized life was a standing record of achievement, not by atoms pushed and pulled by blind purposeless forces, but by resolute minds working to pre-selected ends[137].

It is granted that chemistry is a wonderful science and that both the precision of its conceptual structure and its power to predict and control far exceed those of the behaviour sciences... Still it does not follow from all this that the way to solve conceptual problems in sociology is to abandon sociology altogether in favour of chemistry. If chemicalizing of sociology can solve these problems, then there are not really any problems at all. We can much adequately describe and explain the behaviour of people in our

[137] James Jean, op. cit., p. 2.

everyday language and in sociological terms than in the concepts of chemistry.

In spite of all this comment, I an all praise for Dr. Beg's pioneering effort in providing a 'physico-chemical approach to human behaviour'. The early behaviourists in Psychology (Dr. Watson) tried to furnish the physiological basis for the human behaviour in their attempt to deny 'mind'. Dr. Beg seems to have laid the foundation of a new interdisciplinary branch of knowledge in Pakistan which may be called 'Socio-chemistry or the Chemistry of Society.