

Chapter 5: Conclusions

The development in this work has tried to characterize the study of mind in nineteenth century Britain as a cheerfully messy business, with a number of constitutive factors in play. My strategy to this end has been fairly straightforward, if necessarily dense in detail.

Chapter 1 established the outlines of the enterprise of mental inquiry in a set of texts produced between 1740 and 1860. The standard interpretations of this work in the history of science – especially psychology – and the history of philosophy were introduced, in the process making evident a set of difficulties with these interpretations. It emerged that existing models can do much to illuminate the overall significance of work on the mind – for science, for philosophy, or for the dynamic interface of the two – in the situated context of the nineteenth century. In anticipation of a move to consider this intellectual tradition more closely, my introduction to the issue also examined some methodological injunctions for the history of ideas stemming from the work of Quentin Skinner.

Chapter 2 proceeded to problematize the two assumed domains of science and philosophy, using a variety of STS perspectives as possible descriptive resources. Beginning with the classic study of Kuhn in *SSR*, I examined the model of sciences as paradigmatic enterprises characterized by traditions of distinctive content and practices, passing through normal and revolutionary phases. I then extended this same discussion to include traditions of philosophical inquiry, following the examples of Rorty, Heelan, Wood, and Macintyre. The possible contrast between scientific and philosophical practice thus became a key issue for investigation. Extensions of Kuhn's *SSR* model to the consideration of holistic conceptual systems, the material basis of work, and practical distinctions between natural and social science followed. Additional non-Kuhnian historiographic resources were drawn from proposals in the philosophy, history, and sociology of science. These indicated other possible science-philosophy distinctions arising from the intentional focus of participants, their commitments to affiliated domains such as religion, their participation in networks of social engagement, and the rhetorical strategies used to carve out intellectual authority within these social environments. In reviewing these various proposals for an historiographic framework, I suggested a set of

four structural perspectives from which to probe the subject of mental inquiry in nineteenth century Britain.

Chapter 3 develops each of these four structural perspectives, and attends to interactions among them. First, I compare in detail the conceptual structures of eighteenth and nineteenth century associationism and common-sensism. By charting relationships among concepts in the major works of my seven subjects from Hume to Bain, I identify dimensions of commonality and variation within their systems. This treatment is holistic, in the sense that it considers concepts as embedded within larger structures rather than in isolation. This method reveals a complex series of incremental shifts among concepts rather than treating intellectual change as an all-or-nothing proposition. Next, I turn to the direct consideration of the texts that served as vehicles for these conceptual systems. Here, I emphasize the dependence of intellectual traditions on the actual transmission of concepts from an author to an intended audience by means of texts. On the one hand, an ongoing tradition of text writing serves to codify an enterprise. On the other, the identification of stable conceptual structures is complicated by multiple treatments of a subject by a single author, dispersal of concepts through multiple works, editorial intervention, and changes in assumed background terms over time. Third, I introduce – within these texts – the structural dimension of iconic reference, or citation of authority. Patterns of citation reveal a claimed heritage that is partially-constitutive of intellectual communities. Furthermore, the detailed character of the citations themselves provides a window into practice within the community in question – not just who is cited, but in what regard, how extensively, and what the basis of their authority is intended to be for the matter at hand. Lastly, alongside this claimed heritage, I placed the fourth element of intellectual genealogy, or personal networks of association. The patterns of real-world interaction that emerge under this lens show the position of my subjects within evolving social contexts. This last structural element emphasizes the lived identities of my subjects, as members of actual communities, and serves as an indicator of possible organizational, professional or disciplinary affiliations implicated in the practice of mental studies. These various structural dimensions serve to highlight different aspects of the same enterprise. Chapter 3 uses them together to

identify an historical problematic surrounding the study of the mind in nineteenth century Britain – the set of active intellectual and social issues within which the work was done.

Throughout, these four elements are assumed to be interactive and dynamic, as revealed in two case studies that I undertake herein. At the end of chapter 3, a brief examination of editorial practice shows the influence that textual subtractions and additions had on the propagation of the conceptual systems of Hartley and Mill. Chapter 4 pursues the conceptual tension between science and philosophy in nineteenth century Britain as evident in the texts of my subjects as well as in the later rhetoric of the journal, *Mind*.

This study of science and philosophy, as understood in nineteenth century inquiry into the human mind, brings the discussion in the work full circle. Not only does it serve as an elaboration of processes of conceptual change within the historical problematic that emerged in chapter three, it also speaks directly to the issues raised in chapters 1 and 2 about how we understand the key concepts of science and philosophy today. In one sense, the development in chapter 4 is but one example of conceptual change in the particular intellectual community under consideration. In another sense, this chapter is itself a history of the historiography in chapters 1 and 2 – if we are to look for the roots of the present interpretive framework, we can find them in the boundary-work already being done in the nineteenth century to differentiate between science and philosophy and establish psychology in an intermediate position between them. The position of the study of mind in nineteenth century discourse – centrally moderating the terms of both philosophical inquiry and scientific method – is, I contend, foundational for the ways in which we study intellectual practice today.

This important reflexive aspect of my study is perhaps the most remarkable feature of the emerging story. Science and philosophy, of course, are not ‘things’ but conceptual constructs – practical categories - that emerged from particular communities of discussion, including the one I have surveyed. Nonetheless, in using these categories to describe specific episodes, we can produce more or less sophisticated stories. Many of the same issues still discussed today in the STS literature in regard to the proper descriptive criteria to utilize in carrying out this interpretive project find their initial formulation in nineteenth century British studies of the mind. The distinction between

science and philosophy is only the most basic of these. Also involved – as chapter 4 shows - are problems of the division of method and ontology, the intrinsic difficulty of dealing with mental and social phenomena without a materialist reduction, and issues of classification and the unity or disunity of the sciences. Each of these concerns was already active within the historical problematic I have identified, as part of the process of legitimation my subjects engaged in. Recognition of this fact casts a different light on contemporary historiography, since we must contend now with the fact that the work under investigation not only recognized, but actually formulated, the very historical questions we now attempt to put to it.

My stated goal from the outset was not to provide a definitive interpretation of the study of the mind in nineteenth century Britain, but rather to identify good and bad, useful and less useful, questions to pose in order to understand this intellectual tradition. This, then, has resulted in the formulation of an historical problematic revealed to be reflexively implicated in the terms of analysis themselves. What progress, then, does the present work represent?

We began with the following understanding: In 1750, there was an enterprise in British intellectual circles called ‘psychology’, which corresponded roughly with the philosophical-theological study of the soul. In 1900, there was an enterprise in the same environs called ‘psychology’, which was – and largely remains – an acknowledged experimental science studying human mental function. In between, there were many intermediary pursuits – mental science, moral philosophy, pneumatology, *etc.* – that were practiced by a heterogeneous group of inquirers (some having now have been considered in the preceding two chapters). What changed in between?

It would appear now, from an initial exploration of the historical ground, that the birth of scientific psychology was, to varying degrees, concomitant with a narrow construal of mind as a scientific object, the professionalization of philosophy as distinct subject, the secularization of naturalistic inquiry across the board, and the establishment of boundary-objects (like the journal, *Mind*) to police the intersection of science and philosophy. None of these simple conclusions in themselves are particularly surprising, nor – at the most basic level - do they fly in the face of the standard story outlined in chapter 1.

However, the details of this process, emerging from the structural analysis of chapter 3, are more interesting. In section 3.1, I identified a set of a dozen key conceptual clusters that appear to describe the intellectual space of the study of the mind fairly well. These each, and as an ensemble, deserve more attention as scientific objects whose biographies (in Daston's sense) need to be written more fully. The further practical evidence of expository structure, citation, and intellectual genealogy provides a firm context within which to pursue this closer history. These features of my development lead, I think to a history of nineteenth century science and philosophy reconstituted under a more sophisticated set of distinctions than previously available.

To take just one example, consider again now Laudan's contention (elaborated in section 1.3) that the history of the philosophy of science, as it developed in early modern Britain, can be considered as a history of method in relative isolation from ontological concerns. Having now closely examined the study of mind in that context, we find that this enterprise was instead a constitutive participant in the foundation of the philosophy of science, with the conceptual structures of mental philosophy (as modest ontological proposals) serving to provide a ground upon which methodological concerns could be developed. This parallelism of mental inquiry and method can be discerned in the textual tradition as well. Alexander Bain alludes to the complementary roles of mental inquiry and methodology in his references to J.S. Mill's *Logic* [*S&I*, p.520; *E&W*, p.587 n.] In these passages, Bain effectively divides the project of explaining knowledge acquisition into two parallel paths – a project of psychology (explaining the role of the mind in conditioning information about the world) and an epistemological project similar to that Laudan identifies (explaining the necessary methods for processing information, given the unavoidable ontological ground of psychology).

My study, while pursuing a number of avenues, has at the same time been closely circumscribed. I have considered only seven figures from two or three schools of thought in a century long tradition of inquiry. The chronological and topical bracketing of my subject has, of course, introduced some limitations. Work on the mind can be traced farther back than Hume, Hartley, and Reid, but it is to these three figures that the succeeding British work substantially referred. If another party were to be inserted, on the basis of the structural evidence, it would be Locke. More distantly, reference to the

work of Aristotle and Descartes could be valuable. But these are only the obvious referents in what we would now recognize as philosophical circles. Equally valid connections can be made from the work I have considered to early physiological investigations, to (particularly Protestant) theology, to iatrochemistry, to Stoic physics, and any number of other proto-scientific enterprises. These relationships are evident in the conceptual, iconic, and genealogical structures that have emerged from my survey of British work on the mind.

Outside the associationist and common-sensist traditions, there appear various excluded interlocutors. Other intellectual movements significantly influencing mental inquiry in Britain in the period of interest include romantic idealism (from which perspective Coleridge extended Hartley's views), Kantianism (which – along with the romantics – influenced Hamilton), and the French tradition including of Condillac and Cabanis (entering through the influence of this work on Brown). Even within the tradition I have traced, important figures – including at least Adam Smith, Joseph Priestley, Dugald Stewart, Herbert Spencer, and James Ferrier – remain interstitial to my explicit development. Further work, too, remains to be done on certain figures within my discussion, most conspicuously Hamilton, about whom little detailed information is available in the existing literature. These extensions of scope provide one avenue for further work.

More can be done within the defined bounds of the identified problematic as well. Two key topics demanding consideration include the relationship of such mental inquiry to a putative 'Scottish Enlightenment' and the reasons for the dissipation of the British textual tradition on mental subjects at the end of the nineteenth century. Consideration of these, and many related issues, can proceed I think from within the structural parameters I have identified.

If I have, then, established a basis – an appropriately-situated historical problematic - for such further inquiry, I will consider my task accomplished. This work can then serve as a prolegomenon for a better understanding of nineteenth century intellectual inquiry. As one commentator on this period has recently observed, "the greatest need of the history of social science at present is not to recognize its autonomy. It is to find new and richer ways to understand its interactions with the societies in which

it works... We need a more subtle historical appreciation of this complex, multifaceted tradition that gradually ordered the social during the nineteenth century and, in so doing, became social science.” [Porter, 2003, p.290] It is exactly this goal toward which I have been working here.