

¿Se llevará la psicología popular consigo la «Confusión conceptual»? Y si es así, ¿Qué quedará?

JUAN A. GARCÍA MADRUGA
UNED

Hace ya treinta y cinco años que se publicaron las *Investigaciones Filosóficas* de Wittgenstein en las que la Psicología era caracterizada por la existencia conjunta de confusión conceptual y métodos experimentales. Esta debilidad conceptual de la Psicología se había intentado superar ya por el Conductismo negando estatus epistemológico a los conceptos mentales, reduciendo la psicología al puro establecimiento de leyes entre el estímulo y la respuesta. Esta solución reduccionista es también la que eligen tanto los Churchland basándose en las Neurociencias, como Steven Stich proponiendo una Ciencia Cognitiva basada en el paradigma de la «Teoría Sintáctica de la Mente». José A. López Cerezo centra su artículo en la contraposición entre la Psicología Popular y la concepción de Stich, tocando sólo de forma secundaria el bastante extendido reduccionismo psicofisiológico. Táctica ésta que utilizaremos también en nuestro comentario.

Vaya por delante nuestro acuerdo con López Cerezo la utilidad, el carácter instrumental, de la psicología popular. Ahora bien, en nuestra opinión la psicología popular no cumple únicamente una función en «nuestra vida cotidiana», ni tampoco la psicología científica puede, como máximo, explicar las creencias y atribuciones de intenciones que realizamos. La psicología popular realiza una aportación imprescindible a la actual psicología científica que, con su revitalización de los estados mentales sostiene que la conducta de los sujetos depende de la representación que éstos construyen de la realidad, determinada entre otros factores por sus conocimientos, y de las operaciones que aplican a las citadas representaciones. Esta concepción cognitiva, por tanto, sitúa en el centro de la labor psicológica el estudio de los estados representacionales del sujeto y la explicación de su conducta en términos de una causación simbólica y no física. Esta concepción trata de construir, no sin problemas, a partir del «paradigma representacional», una ciencia cognitiva preocupada no sólo de la elucidación de los mecanismos fisiológicos subyacentes y de la sintaxis de los códigos simbólicos, sino también, y de manera fundamental, del contenido semántico de esos símbolos en el que se ponen de manifiesto las creencias, deseos e intenciones de los sujetos.

La importancia y aplicación de las concepciones populares en la actual investigación psicológica está por doquier y sirva sólo de muestra los estudios sobre la intención en la primera infancia. En los últimos veinte años, la psicología evolutiva ha revitalizado las concepciones sociales y pragmá-

cognitive factors, and that in many cases these factors—for example, the height of a candidate for political office, or the spatial position of an item in a merchandise display—do not contribute to the justifiability or reasonableness of the action, even from the agent's point of view¹.

My own position is that the aim of reason or motive explanations is, not to subsume actions under laws (as at least some versions of the theory theory imply) or to portray them as justifiable from the agent's point of view, but to discover which aspects of the agent's world—the world as the agent saw it—actually moved her to action². Why did Ann give flowers to John? Because John was sick? Because it was Christmas? Or because (as Ann mistakenly believed) it was John's birthday? Picking out the causally efficacious aspects of the agent's world will often, though (as I have indicated) not always, pick out aspects that make the action seem reasonable or justified. That is why explanitons of actions in terms of motives and reasons tend to serve also as justifications.

I think Cerezo is right in wishing to take a position that is independent of instrumentalism. But I am not clear how he means to distinguish his position from straightforward instrumentalism. His emphasis on «usefulness» rather than truth suggests that, even though people think they are talking about causes, the value of their enterprise has nothing to do with whether such putative causes exist. That sounds like instrumentalism to me.

One problem with the view that FP has predictive usefulness even if we are mistaken in thinking that people have mental states such as beliefs is that even in our predictions we are usually concerned with more than muscular movements described in non-psychological terms. For example, I predict (or, far more comonly, merely anticipate) that my approaching friend will greet me. But this is to predict not just that she will wave her hand but also that she will do so believing that I exist and further believing that as a result of her hand wave I will or at least may come to believe that she greeted me. Philosophers who are skeptical about explanations in terms of beliefs because they think beliefs are theoretically posited states that probably do not exist should also be skeptical about the alleged success of our predictions. For it is a consequence of their view that no one has ever greeted anyone. Thus most of our allegedly successful predictions—of greetings and other conceptually complex actions—would actually be unsuccessful. Those who simply think beliefs are theoretical posits about which one should remain agnostic until the neurophysiological evidence is in are committed to agnosticism even about our predictions of behavior: For all we know, it may prove to be the case that no one has ever greeted anyone.

In any case, I think it strange that philosophers seem to think it necessary to turn to purely instrumental values to justify inquiry into those aspects of the agent's world that actually moved the agent to action. They fail to see that to deny realism in such matters is in effect to deny that their own actions depend on circumstances. For example, I ask myself: Would I have bought that make of car if it had a poor reliability record? Obviously I am not inquiring into what I would have done if unbeknownst to me that make of car had a poor reliability record. I am suposing, in other words, not just that it is a fact that this make has a poor reliability record, but that I am aware of that fact: and thus, that I believe that this make has a poor reliability record. Philosophers who are skeptical about

explanations in terms of beliefs because they think beliefs are theoretically posited states that probably do not exist are telling me, therefore, that it is neither true that I would have bought that make of car if it had a poor reliability record nor true that I would not have bought that make of car if it had a poor reliability record. The more agnostic theory theorists are committed to agnosticism about the dependency of actions on circumstances. That, it seems to me, strongly suggests that there is something radically wrong with the «theory theory» of FP and the instrumentalist alternative.

Notas

¹ See R. E. Nisbett and T. D. Wilson, «Telling More Than We Can know: Verbal Reports on Mental Processes», *Psychological Review*, vol 84 (1977), 231-259; and R. E. Nisbett and L. Ross, *Human Inference: Strategies and Shortcomings of Social Judgment* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1980).

² For further elaboration, see my paper, «Folk Psychology as Simulation», *Mind and Language*, vol. 1 (Summer, 1986); and my book, *The Structure of Emotions: Investigations in Cognitive Philosophy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), particularly the final chapter.