

Inquiry, Not Authoritative Proclamation

"I may have my faults, but being wrong is not one of them."

Science deals with a set of controlled observations. Data result from experiments, not from what someone else said about the situations. Science rejects its own authoritative sources when data prove them wrong. Science accepts facts even though they go against the hoped for or predicted results. The subject matter, not the scientist, knows best. Facts are accepted no matter how distasteful their momentary consequences.

- 11-1 The weakness of the appeal to authority as a method for resolving doubt lies in the fact that it:
- A. is applicable only to chemistry
  - B. endows authority with more than it can claim
  - C. can be applied only by the philosopher (B)

- 11-2 Science rejects its own authoritative sources when \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_. (data prove them wrong)

People looked to the authority of Aristotle, and others at times, for conclusions about such things as the number of teeth in a horse's mouth. If the person would have found a different number of teeth, then the horse would have been wrong!

Galileo didn't accept authoritative source. Neutralism in science demands that we withhold judgment until the data becomes available. Along with this idea of neutralism, a very important notion is accepting "as of today" e.g., Boyle's law was inadequate when first proposed. A scientist must be ready to change conclusions as data comes in.

Psychology as a scientific study of behavior is a relatively new science. The emphasis on the study of environmental influences on behavior is even more recent, and certainly there are unanswered questions. As a matter of fact, it has been suggested, as a feature of experimental inquiry, that the job never ends. Each answer suggests questions which seem relevant and which appear useful to follow up.

One simple distinction that states what we are trying to suggest is that there is a difference between announcement and pronouncement. The scientist does his experiment and in effect announces the results. This differs from the authoritative proclamations which have traditionally dominated the psychological literature.

Skinner, in his autobiography, illustrates what we have been presenting on the Inquiry vs. Authoritative Statement or Announcement vs. Pronouncement issue.

S.B. 11-1

"But in general, my effects on other people have been far less important than my effects on rats and pigeons or on people as experimental subjects. That is why I was able to work for almost twenty years with practically no professional recognition. People supported me, but not my line of work; only my rats and

pigeons supported that. I was never in any doubt as to its importance; however, and when it began to attract attention, I was wary of the effect rather than pleased. Many notes in my files comment on the fact that I have been depressed/frightened by so-called honors. I forego honors which would take the time away from my work or unduly reinforce specific aspects of it."

(Boring, E.G. and Lindzey, G. 1967, A History of Psychology In Autobiography V, Appleton Century, p. 408.)

- 11-3 As terms were used in this unit, science deals with \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. announcements
  - B. pronouncements (A)

We can never change the rat's behavior by working with desires, wishes, or hopes. We can; however, modify the rat's behavior by manipulating certain consequences of the behavior. One position often suggested is that it doesn't hurt to give certain behaviors a name, such as a trait. The problem is that traits usually begin as adjectives, the almost inevitable result is that an adjective becomes a noun. The things to which these nouns refer are then taken to be active causes of the behavior. We begin with "intelligent behavior," pass next to "behavior which shows intelligence," then to "behavior which is the effect of intelligence." At no point is contact made with any environmental events outside the behavior itself which would justify the claim of a functional relationship.

This has been presented in the following fashion in some texts:

In Chapter #1, the authors assure you the word is not a thing. It will be just a shorthand expression (e.g., personality does not exist).

In Chapter #2, the thing is a concept.

In Chapter #3, the concept is causing behavior. Consider how many shorthand expressions turn to causes. (e.g. because of Joe's personality he is delinquent.)

"It was more of a 'Triple-Blind' test. The patients didn't know which ones were getting the real drug, the Doctors didn't know, and I'm afraid, nobody knew."