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Behaviorism and Logical Positivism: A Reassessment of the Alliance. Laurence D. Smith. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1986, 398 pages, $42.50 hard.

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Although this is a historical work its appeal is not to antiquarian interests. Rather, it speaks to fundamental issues that are still very much alive in contemporary Psychology.

A preoccupation with its problematic status among the sciences marked modern Psychology from the beginning. At the time that the influence of neobehaviorism was at its height, around the middle of the present century, this preoccupation became a veritable obsession. In fact, a major factor in neobehaviorism's domination of American psychology was its successful claim to speak in the name of Science (with a capital "S"). And when many of the substantive doctrines of neobehaviorism fell into disrepute, its version of what constituted science did not necessarily suffer the same fate. Instead, neobehaviorist conceptions of scientific method survived and continued to exert a strong influence on subsequent research and theorizing.

But what were these conceptions of science, and what was the basis of their authority? There is a fairly well known standard account which emphasizes the connection between neobehaviorism and logical positivism. The two flourished during the same period, and certain historical links between representatives of the psychological and the philosophical school are undeniable. Moreover, neobehaviorists were not averse to deriving some advantage from appearing to be associated with what was after all the most influential philosophy of science of their time. But how close was this association really? Were the fates of the two schools of thought necessarily linked?

These are the questions that Laurence D. Smith attempts to answer by an examination of the historical evidence. For each of the major representatives of neobehaviorism, Tolman, Hull, and Skinner, Smith presents a careful examination of the links, both logical and historical, between their conceptions of science and those of the logical positivists. The conclusion he comes to is that these links, while they definitely existed, were of a relatively superficial kind. All three of these psychologists had formed very distinct views about the nature of scientific activity by the time that logical positivism became a factor to be reckoned with. These views implied a philosophy of science that differed in certain important respects from that of logical positivism. They reacted to the advent of logical positivism in different ways, with Tolman taking the most notice and Skinner the least. But even in Tolman's case, Smith insists, the degree of accommodation to logical positivism was not very profound, involving matters of terminology and rhetoric rather than matters of substance.

The kind of detailed analysis that this book presents is particularly effective in bringing out the fundamental differences that separated the major representatives of neobehaviorism. Their sentiments on matters psychological were often an expression of profound philosophical differences. Tolman was clearly in the tradition of American

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pragmatism whereas Skinner clung fast to an unreconstructed Machian positivism. Hull never abandoned mechanistic materialism, though logical positivism seems to have had the effect of turning him into a closet materialist.

This leads to an important point in the book's argument. The major neobehaviorists differed from each other, not only in their psychological theories and their philosophy, but also in their preferred methodology of psychological research. There was in fact a remarkable convergence of philosophy, psychological content, and research methodology in each case. The notion of a theory-neutral methodology with which the claims of rival theories could be objectively tested turns out to have been a myth. Each of the major protagonists actually favored a philosophy of scientific method that already presupposed the truth of some of their most cherished theoretical assumptions in psychology. It seems to me that the neobehaviorists were very far from being unique in this respect.

Smith's book makes a very significant contribution in demonstrating the importance of an informed historical perspective when fundamental questions of psychological methodology are at issue. It also establishes a standard of scholarship against which future contributions in this area will have to be judged. But it is unlikely to be the last word on the subject. As it shows so convincingly, the relationship between behaviorism and positivism can be analysed into a mixture of converging and diverging elements. But whether the converging or the diverging elements are judged to be fundamental while the others are "superficial" is not a matter that will be automatically decided by the historical facts. It will depend, rather, on how one interprets them. That is why I feel that Smith's book is itself a superb illustration of the untenability of the sharp distinction between history and its reconstruction that the author invites us to make. Smith chooses to order his historical material within a rational framework for which the distinction between "rhetoric" and "substance" is fundamental, and for which items identified as rhetoric are of subsidiary importance. It is this framework which leads him to emphasize the divergencies between logical positivism and neobehaviorism. But it is not the only conceivable framework for dealing with this topic. Someone with a different view of the nature and function of "rhetoric" might well question Smith's conclusions.

That is not to suggest that the issue can be resolved by the arbitrary choice of a framework. Irrespective of its framework this book makes an indispensable contribution towards a more differentiated understanding of the relationship between behaviorism and positivism and gives a clear indication of the direction which future work in this area might profitably pursue.