is our only source of truth and factuality with respect to the human past, that Olafson tries to tie such things to his sense of historicity.

State University of New York at Binghamton LEON J. GOLDSTEIN

Forms of Explanation. Rethinking the Questions in Social Theory. By ALAN GARFINKEL. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1981. Pp. 184. $16.00.

Alan Garfinkel, a student of Hilary Putnam's, has outlined for us a philosophy of explanation in the style of Putnam. 'Style' is the appropriate term, for the text is distinctive primarily for its adherence to Putnam's special philosophical and rhetorical manner, including such features as the analogical use of examples from arcane branches of physics or mathematics with some intrinsic interest but questionable relevance, the heavy use of exclamation points and italics for emphasis, snappy dismissals of other people's philosophical worries, and a breezy 'haven't got time to work this out but you get the idea' pace.

The risk of writing philosophy in this way is that one may zip right past all the important problems and end up with an irrelevant, though technically clever, conclusion. The great advantage is that by passing up a lot of badly framed worries you can get to a point where you can solve problems which, once solved, show the original worries to be pretty much misguided and irrelevant themselves. In such a chaotic realm as the problem of social science explanation, it is perhaps a good bet that many of the original worries are indeed misguided. So an attempt to pass by the old issues is not implausible *prima facie*.

Garfinkel's primary line of attack is through the notion that an explanation tells us why something happens in *contrast* to various other things that do not happen. On different levels, we have different contrasts in mind, and our explanations are designed to exclude different kinds of possibilities. If we are explaining why Joe had an accident, we might be concerned with the contrast between Joe and any number of equally drunk revellers, between Joe and ourselves, or between Joe, who had six children, and his bachelor neighbour. We do not get an answer to any of these questions by what Garfinkel calls a 'microstate' explanation, i.e., a reductive explanation, since that explanation is concerned with something like, say, the contrast between the moment the accident began and the moment before it began. The reason this will not provide an answer is because the 'contrast space' for the microstate question is different from the 'contrast space' of these other questions, just as the spaces defined by the various other contrasts differ from one another. Put another way, there is a lot of redundancy in these explanations. When we say, 'he was drunk', 'the tires lost adhesion', 'inertia carried the car through the guard rail', 'he wasn't paying attention', we are explaining the same outcome in ways which do not really conflict, but overlap, and involve different contrasts.

This is a useful point to make, and Garfinkel goes on to apply it to disputes in social theory. The general aim of his discussions of examples is to show that microstate explanations aren't satisfactory substitutions for 'structural' presuppositions, then goes on to social science. We are about two-fifths of the way through the text by the time social examples begin to be seriously discussed. These discussions, two chapters designed to refute 'individualism as a method in social theory', are reminiscent of Putnam as well, in a different way. Putnam is fond of inserting little favourable references to Marxism here and there. Garfinkel goes beyond this. In one chapter he develops a Marxist critique of market explanations of income. Unfortunately, the discussion has trouble getting be-

yond the Harvard Yard—the chapter pillories Nozick, through a discussion of Jencks, appealing to the authority of Galbraith, with a conclusion discussing Rawls!

The argument in this chapter is roughly as follows. Market explanations of a person's wealth constitute an explanatory frame in which one can ask the question, 'how did Joe get a salary of $40,000 a year?', but not questions like, 'why is there inequality?' He takes Nozick to be saying something like, '"why is there inequality?" is a bad question; all you really get an answer to is "why does Joe make $40,000?"' Yet Garfinkel thinks he has an answer to the question, 'why is there a given distribution of income?', which is more than a conjunction of individual explanations of Joe's, Jack's, and George's incomes. The explanation is structural: 'the return to a social position is explained by the degree of coalition surrounding that position' (p. 96). If you want a raise, in other words, join a union or a cartel.[1] So the lesson of the chapter on market explanations is that they are insufficient because 'structure' explains something. The next chapter is on Social Darwinism, construed as a programme of individualist explanation of the success and failure of individuals, and teaches the same lesson to Jensen and Herrnstein: individual differences do not explain stratification, structure does, because stratification would happen even if there were not individual differences. Social Darwinism, then, is barking up the wrong contrast space.

Given these failures, it might be considered desirable as an ideal to combine the various redundant explanations of something into a full, complete explanation. Garfinkel says that you can't get a 'full' explanation because you cannot exhaust the possible contrast spaces. However, choosing to stop at some particular set of contrasts is a value-choice. Individualism, which amounts to a particular restriction of admissible contrast spaces, is an example of this. A bad consequence of this restriction is shown in the example of the authors of an article in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* which recommended lobotomies for rioters. Their reasoning was this: some people riot and some do not; this *must* be the result of an individual difference; hence, the potential rioters can be selected out in advance and fixed. This 'must' amounts to a methodological commitment to an individual form of explanation, a refusal to make the 'structural' contrast.

Yet the conceptual impossibility of 'full' explanations seems to leave us in a relativistic situation with respect to choices of relevant 'contrast spaces'. In the final chapter Garfinkel deals with this by arguing that the structural explanations are 'better'. 'All objects of explanation are not equal. Some give rise to stable causal relations, and others do not' (p. 169). Jencks is again the example. Looked at individually, inequality is pretty much a matter of chance. Looked at as a structural pattern, in a Marxist fashion, we see that inequality is stable and explainable.

1 If the explanation had any merit it would be difficult to explain, e.g., why union membership in the United States is slipping or why England, which is much more heavily unionized than the United States, is not a workers' paradise. This 'empirical' difficulty raises a philosophical one. If the 'principle' Garfinkel formulates here is a general law in the traditional sense it is obviously false or incomplete. If, however, it is claimed to be valid 'relative to the contrast space' Garfinkel happens to be interested in, we seem to end up with such a drastic form of interest-relativity that the notion of explanation itself becomes difficult to get a grip on. Can any explanation, no matter how daft, manage to find a contrast space where it has some power? Do crazy people just have an interest in the wrong contrast spaces? When Garfinkel gets around to these problems in the last chapters, he does not push them very far.

'Evaluating' an argument like Garfinkel's is somehow beside the point. The concepts of contrast spaces, redundancy, and so forth are interesting and revealing, though they are not developed much beyond the point of getting across the general idea. The concept of structural explanation is not clear enough to be interesting, and Garfinkel's own example is breathtaking in its simple-mindedness. One wishes that he had instead done something on the order of scrutinizing some of the many supposed 'structural explanations' already extant and defended some of them, or reconstructed them. Many readers will wonder what Garfinkel would say about the standard problems over social explanation, which he almost totally ignores. His knowledge of social science and social life seems to be extraordinarily limited. At one point, for example, we are told that '"full employment without inflation" is easily accomplished' in a 'slave economy' (p. 150). We are constantly told such things as 'it is surprising how little social scientists know about the simple model of observation and the confirmation of theories' and about Toulmin and Hanson. He admits that Kuhn's *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* 'had a certain vogue', but even that 'is not well understood' (p. 135). Garfinkel does not tell us where he acquired these strange impressions. Perhaps they should be taken as ethnographic remarks about Harvard. Yet in spite of these many irritating failings, Garfinkel's discussion of contrast spaces and redundancy is something more than 'irrelevant but technically clever', even if it is a good deal less than a replacement for the traditional issues.

University of South Florida STEPHEN TURNER

Philosophical Disputes in the Social Sciences. Edited by S. C. BROWN. Sussex and New Jersey: Harvester Press and Humanities Press, 1979. Pp. x + 277. £15.95.

Whether or not symposia on the philosophy of the social sciences ever begin in wonder, they frequently create it—wonder not in the sense of rapt attention to the strikingly new, but in the sense of awe directed at intractable mysteries. Two of these large-scale, and apparently permanent, puzzles are discussed in these papers drawn from a conference held at the University of East Anglia in 1977. The first puzzle is that of the objective character, if any, of the social sciences; the second puzzle is that of the intellectual compatibility, or incompatibility, between the systems of basic judgements to be found in different cultural traditions. Since a contributor's answers to one of these problems is likely to affect his answers to the other, the two problems and their answers often re-appear in each other's section of the book. Because many, but not all, of the fifteen papers were written to be heard rather than read, and thus do not contain detailed examinations of limited topics, the connections between various claims tend to be asserted rather than shown. The benefits of mutual support are correspondingly reduced. None of these features, however, creates any difficulty for the reader; his difficulties come from elsewhere and they begin early in the book.

The opening paper is Karl-Otto Apel's 'Types of Social Science in the Light of Human Cognitive Interests'. Its commentator, Peter Winch, refers to it as 'both elaborate in structure and densely packed in material'. He politely fails to mention that the structure of Apel's English is a simulacrum of German academese. It urgently demands, but is unlikely to receive, the sort of hermeneutical treatment which Apel is fond of recommending for much more lucid