

SUBJECTIVITY AND SCIENTIFIC METHOD IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

C. Sivanesan

(S. L. Customs, Colombo 1)

The physical sciences are supposed to be objective and though experiments and observations arrive at universal and impersonal knowledge which is certain and verifiable. Though the social sciences attempt to approach the objectivity, impersonality, universality, certainty and verifiability, of the physical sciences, the intimate involvement of the researcher in the social processes studied hampers such detached objectivity and freedom from subjective understanding.

A deeper understanding of the nature of scientific research in the physical sciences, especially in high-energy physics, (one of the most scientific subject) shows that objectivity is not possible in studying the underlying substance and essential nature of the universe, and that it is impossible to formulate the laws of quantum theory in a fully consistent way without reference to consciousness, and that the observer is always a participator.

In all scientific research at the higher levels in any subject the non-rational subjective intuitions, dreams, bold speculation and creative imaginations play a vital role, though the conclusions have to be rationally demonstrated and proved.

In the social sciences, one can be intimately aware of psychological emotions, conflicts and thoughts, economic wants and motives, political rights and obligations and other sociopsychological processes, and such subjective understanding, (which is not possible in the physical sciences) instead of being a liability can be used to great advantage if the personal biases, prejudices and conditionings can be reduced through inter-personal comparisons and checking through objective research.