

positivism by contemporary historians and philosophers of science.<sup>11</sup> I am also aware that the analysis I am presenting is controversial. It should be, because if it is an accurate description of the logic of functionalism, then this well-known, almost common sense, explanation is in serious trouble regarding its claims as an explanation of religious phenomena; I would extend this to include explanations of any cultural or social phenomena.

The point which needs to be stressed is that I have not invented functionalism as a model for explaining religion. I have not created titles such as Spiro's for an explanation of cross-cousin marriage. I am not interested at the moment in whether "explanation" must be broadened, or revised. The central issue is this; does the history of functionalism in the human sciences, as we know it, fit Hempel's model? I have yet to find one critic who has demonstrated that it does not. In fact, several functionalists I have read explicitly state that this approach to explaining the elements of society and culture is at best a heuristic device and they have reached this conclusion because of Hempel's analysis.<sup>12</sup> Once again, it is what functionalists claim they are doing as cultural scientists that is the issue. What the critics will have to demonstrate is that Hempel did not capture this in his analysis of the logic of functional analysis. With this clarification in mind, let us turn to the analysis.

1. At time  $t$ , a society  $x$  functions adequately in a setting of kind  $c$ .
2.  $x$  functions adequately in a setting of kind  $c$  only if a necessary functional requirement  $z$  is satisfied (let  $z$  = social maintenance).
3. If unit  $y$  were present in  $x$ , then, as an effect condition  $z$  would be satisfied. (let  $y$  = a ritual)
4. Hence, at  $t$  unit  $y$  is present in  $x$ .

Both the logical and empirical requirements of functional explanations are clear in the above model. The first premise gives us, in abbreviated form, the empirical observations of a society at a particular time. It also describes the conditions in which the society is found. It describes rather nicely what we find in the first chapter of many texts which are about societies studied by anthropologists and sociologists. The society is usually placed in its geographical setting, and a full description is given of natural resources, social structure and the like.

The second premise states a necessary condition which must be met in order for the society to function adequately. In our example, it is the necessary requirement of "maintenance" that must be satisfied in order for the society to function adequately. In some explanations this necessary condition is often cited as a "functional prerequisite." Premise three states that if a ritual were present, then, as a consequence, the necessary condition would be satisfied, i.e., the satisfaction of  $z$  is the function of  $y$ . The existence of the ritual is explained by what it does. The conclusion, however, is invalid. We have not explained why the ritual is present in the society, and this is precisely what it was we wanted to explain. We want to explain why ritual or religion is present in a society. This assertion has often been misunderstood. I am not saying that the conclusion is false. All that has been shown is that the argument is invalid. The conclusion may be true, but the invalid argument does not establish its truth.

The argument is invalid because it commits the fallacy of affirming the consequent. It asserts that "if  $y$  then  $z$ ;  $z$  therefore  $y$ ." It is a simple fallacy which we often commit when we are careless. Here is a clear example of the fallacy: "If John misses his bus he will be late for class; John is late for class. Therefore, he missed the bus." Clearly many other events could have taken place to explain why John was late for class. All we can conclude is that something must have happened to make him late for class and one possibility is his missing the bus. In our table of necessary and sufficient conditions, the conclusion contradicts "c" under necessary conditions.

The above conclusion is the same for functional explanations. Instead of explaining why a particular ritual is present in the society, or persists in the society, all we can conclude is that somehow the necessary condition of maintenance is being satisfied in order for the society to function adequately at time  $t$  under the specified conditions  $c$ . I believe that most functionalists since Malinowski have seen this problem, and the history of functionalism can be viewed as a history in which revisions were made in an attempt to overcome the problem.

One way of correcting the result is to introduce the notion of "functional equivalents" into the explanation. We may, for example, introduce new terms into the third and fourth premises. Thus, premise one and two would remain the same, but three becomes,

3. If unit  $y$ , or its functional equivalent, were present in  $x$ , then, as an effect condition  $z$  would be satisfied.