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From 'Understanding' to 'Explanation'

Shiro KOYAMA

One of the crucial problems in contemporary philosophy of history is to determine which is more relevant—historical explanation or historical understanding. Writers on this question may be divided into three types—(1) Idealists, (2) Covering-law theorists, and (3) Reactionists, as M. Mandelbaum has summed them up. I think the only possible approach, in current theoretical arguments, is the third one, which accepts, besides explanation by covering-law, some sort of understanding, especially when it is concerned with a more complicated account of human actions. It does not necessarily follow, however, that understanding is a peculiar way of historical inquiry rather than a kind of provisional account which has still to be 'filled out' by some more rigorous explanation.

Historians surely try not just to describe the given events, but to explain them. Thus, 'understanding' might be said to lie in the middle of 'description' and 'explanation'; historians would first describe the events as they were given, and then by attempting to answer the 'why' of these events they would proceed to 'understand' them, and finally when this 'why' could be answered objectively such an 'understanding' might be replaced by an 'explanation.' This is basically the same in all areas of scientific inquiry of which history may be a rather incomplete one. Thus, the other several kinds of historical explanations, which are supposed to be peculiar to history according to W. Dray and others, would be after all reduced to the Hempelian model of explanation. It is true that historians may seldom succeed in giving explanations as satisfactory as those of physicists, but this does not preclude historians from filling out their explanations. I suppose that the very process of this 'filling out' constitutes progress in the field of historical

studies.

Scientific explanation is merely a logical instrument of our historical thinking, and need not be extended to a problem of, say, historical perspective, which is surely open to the philosophy of history.

On the Principle of Constitution in the Early Franciscan Order

Kokichi SAKAGUCHI

This essay intends to show what kind of ideal animated the constitution in the early Franciscan Order. In order to solve this problem, we must above all examine the writings of St. Francis of Assisi, especially the First and Second Rules of his Order. According to these documents, we can find the names and roles of officials in his Order, e.g. a general minister, a provincial minister, a custodian and a guardian. But it seems strange to us that their functions, competences and statuses are too vague. It seems to us that, among them, only the general minister has a clearly defined status and authority. Besides, his power and competence has no limit except for the revision of the Rule of Order. Therefore, some people might say that the general minister had almost absolute power and the early Franciscan government was a kind of dictatorship. It is true that the early Franciscans were exposed to such a peril. However, St. Francis of Assisi and his true followers strongly hated such an absolute power within the constitution of their Order.

2 Then, we must ask the reason why St. Francis conceived those Rules in which the peril to dictatorship originated. At first, we must notice that St. Francis and his followers renounced not only to the world and its properties but also to their legal status in the civil and ecclesiastical society. Following up such a heroic ideal, they could not form such corporation as a judicial person in its strict sense of the word. For this reason, when St.