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Book Reviews

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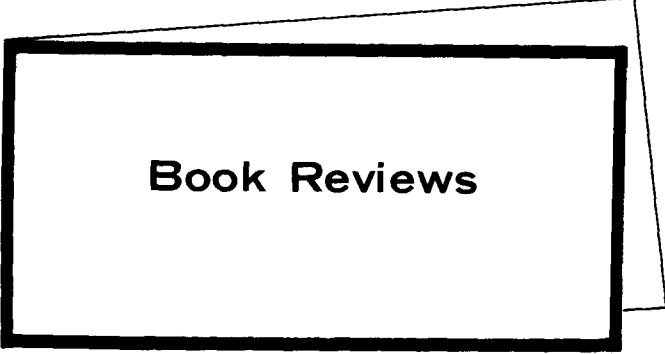
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Book Reviews

DIESING, PAUL, *Patterns of Discovery in the Social Sciences*. Chicago: Aldine-Atherton, Inc., 1971, 310 + Xpp., \$11.75.

Now and again there appears a book which opens up a new world not by revealing what is strange, but by revealing what is familiar. *Patterns of Discovery in the Social Sciences* is such a book. Here is a whole world of stuff which you have lived with, stuff you supposed to be, by its nature, incommunicable, and somebody has managed to communicate it. The effect is to break down, at any rate momentarily, the solitude in which the social scientist works. (If the book review were allowed a title, I should have called it "inside the whale"; barring this possibility, I have contented myself with the above borrowing from "Inside the Whale," pp. 493ff in *An Age Like This*, edited by Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1968.)

How does he do this? What has he done? The second question is the easier one to answer and provides a partial answer to the first. Years ago anthropologists developed the participant observer method of studying "primitive" societies. To oversimplify the method, it consisted of the scientist going to live among the natives and reporting back what he discovered about how they lived. This is what Paul Diesing has done. He has gone forth and lived among social scientists, an act of bravery which is surely commendable, and has written this book on what he found about how they worked.

The book focuses, in turn, on formal methods and theories, participant-observer and clinical methods, and methods in the philosophy of science. Experimental methods are gradually developed as a counterpoint in the discussion of the above methods. The emphasis is on what scientists do. There is little overt discussion of what scientists should do, but a great deal is said about this topic all the same. It turns out that what scientists do is interesting. Perhaps, though, some credit here should go to the author. This is a well-written book. The chapter on structural-functional theories is particularly noteworthy for laying out clearly and concisely a difficult and often misunderstood topic. The only writing flaw is an occasional lapse into loaded jargon. However, even this may be deliberate on the author's part. The effect of these lapses is like a cymbal stroke; one stops and thinks before continuing.

What can be done with knowledge of what scientists do? Consider first the communication issue which has begun to worry management scientists. By and large management scientists tend to use formal methods and theories. They also tend to have difficulty communicating with other social scientists

and/or managers who do not use such methods. This book is an invaluable guidebook to understanding how others view the world. Understanding the other persons world view will not necessarily produce communication, but without it communication becomes very unlikely. It can be concluded that this is a valuable book to any management scientist who feels he or she faces such communication problems. Those who don't feel such a need should read this book as an antidote to their smugness.

A second point is the curious fact that years of use of the case study in business education seem to have led to no discovery about the nature of business. The older cases are no longer relevant so they merely fall into disuse and are forgotten. How can so much effort have accomplished so little from the point of view of scientific discovery? The answer is that case material should be collected within the framework of a holist theory, and should feed back into further development of such a theory. Years of business case collection based on no theory whatever have yielded no theory, just a bunch of cases. Obviously what is needed is some theory. This book should be a challenge to the case oriented management scientist to develop some theories so that another twenty years of case writing doesn't produce only old cases that no one can use in the classroom anymore. The point is that cases should be used to develop a general theoretical framework for understanding business behavior, and this potential has not been properly exploited. The reader need only compare the examples Diesing gives from other social science fields with what has happened with business cases to see this point clearly.

At the end the question "Is Astrology Scientific?" is discussed. But you will have to read the book yourself to find the answer. Then if you feel so inclined, you can rationally consider the question: Does TIMS need a College of Astrology?

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