CHAPTER SIX

DRIVES AND CONSUMMATORY ACTIONS¹

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1. The Necessity of the Drive Concept

A large proportion of academic psychology occupies itself with what may broadly be called instrumental aspects of behaviour; that is, with the mechanisms of perception, with the development of skills, with the analysis of intellectual abilities and disabilities, and so on. All these, of course, are perfectly legitimate and important areas of study, but the question in the background is, for what are these skills employed? It may be important to understand, say, a person's mechanisms of access to his or her 'internal lexicon' while talking or listening, and why the wrong word may sometimes be selected, but one would also like to know what communication he or she is trying to make, and why? What effects are to be produced in the hearer, and to what end? The basic psychological question remains, why did this person act so? The large forms of the kinds of answer that have been offered are what I have been discussing.

Given that a science of behaviour, as with any science that deserves the name, will reject teleological explanation for the sorts of reason canvassed earlier, then the causes of behavioural events, as of any event, are to be found in the conjunction of external stimulation and the relevant internal states of the organism. As we saw, the 'internalise' approach defended by Woodfield sums up the internal states as a desire for a certain goal and the belief that a certain be-

haviour is likely to promote it. I have argued that, even given an unopposed desire for G, it is not self-evident that the belief 'B promotes G' should give rise to the behaviour B, once we reject the idea that a person simply decides to act on the basis of the belief. One can only posit that beliefs are state variables and modify the course of existing behaviour patterns [See Maze, 1983, Chapter 4], which leaves open the question of where those behaviour patterns come from and what sustains them.

What of the other part of the couple, the desire for G? How does it stand as a causal state variable? Certainly, some motivating process is necessary, as well as the cognitive one, because identically the same belief 'B promotes G' could as well result in the avoidance of B as in the performance of it, if the person had turned against doing whatever action the letter G denotes. Factual beliefs alone do not imply policy. I argued that some account of motive states needs to be given other than 'desire for G', because the latter is relationally defined and so cannot be an intrinsic state internal to the organism—the kind of causal variable we are seeking. What is needed, I contended in the Introduction, is rather the conception of driving mechanisms or 'biological engines' which could conceivably be given an intrinsic description, which is to say, the kind of thing that could conceivably be found as physiological entities, and whose operation would be such as to render causally understandable the form and the cyclical or periodic nature of 'goal-seeking' behaviour.

However, there is a good deal of opposition from certain psychological quarters to the concept of primary drives; not only from existentialists and their academically more orthodox cousins, purposive humanists such as Gauld and Shotter (1977) and many others, but from behaviouristically inclined determinists as well. Since I have said all I can about the deficits of purposivism, I shall leave it aside and turn to the latter.