

PHILOSOPHY: THE MOTHER OF SCIENCES

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses how philosophy is the mother of sciences. Philosophy, in many ways, is a comprehensive science. It criticizes and synthesizes the sciences, and is the mother of sciences. A critical look needs to be taken on the premises and conclusion of the sciences. Each science makes assumptions which may be unjustifiable; each science presupposes other sciences and arrives at conclusions which may be in conflict with those of other sciences.

Key Words: Philosophy, sciences

INTRODUCTION

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines Philosophy as 1. 'the study of the nature of the universe and human life'. 2. 'a particular set or system of beliefs resulting from the search for knowledge about life and the universe'. 3. 'a set of beliefs or an attitude to life that guide somebody's behaviour'.

PHILOSOPHY: A COMPREHENSIVE SCIENCE

In at least three ways, philosophy functions as a comprehensive science. It criticizes the sciences, synthesizes the sciences, and is the mother of the sciences. All sciences such as biology, physics, astronomy, sociology, psychology, semantics, aesthetics, etc., stand in need of criticism. Such criticism is of two types:

- (i) that directed towards premises
- (ii) that directed towards conclusions

Each science makes presuppositions which, if observed carefully enough, may be found to be untenable or at least unprovable. The task of philosophy is to carefully examine something. Again, each science makes presupposition of other sciences. Each science eventually arrives at results which may appear to conflict with the conclusions of other sciences. The task of philosophy is to compare assumptions and conclusions.

Second function that philosophy performs for the sciences is Synthesis. Each science dwells on one aspect, or phase, of experience. Each does its part. But wherever there is a part,

there is a whole. To know only a part is to have an incomplete or distorted view. The final goals of science should be to understand the whole, to see the picture complete. Philosophy seeks constantly to perform this function as a science of sciences, as a supreme science, or as a comprehensive science.

According to Broad, 'The object of philosophy is to take over the results of the various sciences, add to them the result of religious and ethical experiences of mankind, and then reflect upon the whole, hoping to be able to reach some general conclusions as to the nature of the universe and as to our positions and prospects in it.'

At one time, no distinction was made between philosophy and science. Gradually, as reflections upon problems became increasingly complex and as special techniques were developed, specialists limited the range of their enquiries, and the particular sciences were born. Among the first sciences were Mechanics, Mathematics and Astronomy. Among the latest were Sociology and Psychology. Philosophy's future promises more than intellectual pioneering. Each new science presents another challenge to the hope for wholeness and total coherence.

Can philosophy develop by itself, without the support of science? Can science "work" without philosophy? Some people think that the sciences can stand separately from philosophy, that the scientist should actually avoid philosophising, the latter often being understood as baseless and generally blurred theorising. If the term philosophy is given such a poor interpretation, then of course anyone would agree with the warning "Physics, beware of metaphysics!" But no such warning applies to philosophy in the higher sense of the term. The specific sciences cannot and should not break their connections with true philosophy.

Science and philosophy have always learned from each other. Philosophy tirelessly illustrates from scientific discoveries fresh strength, material for broad generalisations, while to the sciences it communicates the world-view and methodological impulses of its worldwide principles. Many general guiding ideas that lie at the basis of modern science were first expressed by the observant strength of philosophical deliberation.

The latest theories of the unity of matter, motion, space and time, the unity of the discontinuous and continuous, the principles of the conservation of matter and motion, the ideas of the infinity and inexhaustibility of matter were stated in a general form in philosophy.

Besides influencing the expansion of the specialised fields of understanding, philosophy itself has been significantly supplemented by development in the concrete sciences. Every major scientific innovation is at the same time a step forward in the development of the philosophical world-view and methodology. Philosophical accounts are based on sets of facts studied by the sciences and also on the system of propositions, principles, concepts and laws discovered through the generalisation of these facts. The achievements of the specialised sciences are summed up in philosophical statements

If we trace the whole history of natural and social science, we can notice that scientists in their specific researches, in constructing hypotheses and theories have always applied, occasionally involuntarily, methodological principles and world-views, classes and logical systems evolved by philosophers and absorbed by scientists in the process of their training and self-education. All scientists who think in terms of theory constantly speak of this with a deep feeling of gratitude both in their works and at regional and international conferences and congresses. So the connection between philosophy and science is mutual and characterised by their ever deepening interaction.

Some people think that science has reached such a level of theoretical thought that it no longer needs philosophy. But any scientist, particularly the theoretician, knows in his heart that

his creative activity is closely linked with philosophy and that without serious knowledge of philosophical culture the results of that activity cannot become theoretically effective. All the outstanding theoreticians have themselves been guided by philosophical thought and tried to inspire their pupils with its beneficent influence in order to make them specialists capable of comprehensively and critically analysing all the principles and systems known to science, discovering their internal contradictions and overcoming them by means of new concepts. Real scientists, and by this we usually mean scientists with a powerful theoretical grasp, have never turned their backs on philosophy. Truly scientific thought is philosophical to the core, just as truly philosophical thought is intensely scientific, rooted in the sum-total of scientific achievements. Philosophical training gives the scientist a breadth and access, a wider reach in posing and resolving difficulties.

The common ground of a considerable part of the content of science, its facts and laws has always related it to philosophy, particularly in the field of the theory of knowledge, and today this common ground links it with the problems of the moral and social aspects of scientific discoveries and technical inventions. This is understandable enough. Today too many gifted minds are oriented on destructive goals. In olden times, as we have seen, nearly every notable scientist was at the same time a philosopher and every philosopher was to some extent a scientist. The connection between science and philosophy has endured for thousands of years. For example, philosophy and physics were at first organically interconnected, particularly in the work of Galileo, Descartes, Kepler, Newton, Lomonosov, and Einstein, and generally in the work of all scientists with a broad view. At one time it was commonly held that philosophy was the science of sciences, their supreme ruler. Today physics is regarded as the queen of sciences. Both views contain a certain measure of truth. Physics with its tradition, the specific objects of study and vast range of exact methods of observation and experiment exerts an exceptionally fruitful influence on all or nearly all spheres of knowledge. Philosophy plays a remarkable integrating role in scientific knowledge, particularly in the present age, when knowledge has formed an extremely ramified system. Philosophy is not simply an abstract science; it also possesses an evaluative aspect, its moral principles. Science has given man a lot of things, but ethics or, to put it more bluntly, conscience is not one of them.

As a comprehensive science, Philosophy has the functions of, first, giving birth, secondly, settling quarrels, and, finally, harmonizing in one house several somewhat self-centred sciences. And, it is well said that, 'since births and quarrels continue, a mother's work is never done.' Philosophy, besides all its other functions, goes deep into the personal side of human life.

CONCLUSION

That's why it is well said that Philosophy is the mother of the sciences, as mother's work is never done, in the same way Philosophy's role is. We apply philosophy in every subject while pursuing a Ph.D/M.Phil. degree. Whether a person pursues doctorate in medical sciences, engineering, humanities, law, business, etc. in every field one has to philosophise the thesis that is why the degree is conferred as Ph.D/D.Phil, or M.Phil. i.e. Doctor of Philosophy or Master of Philosophy in that subject.

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