

Science and Philosophy are Separate

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Editor:

Mr. Baumgardner persists, in his latest letter (2 Feb. '97), in trying to reverse the laws of logic and causality. By taking "authentic science" out of context, he attempts to argue that it can then inform us of its own limits. Science cannot be taken out of its context and applied willy-nilly to support philosophical positions antithetical to those it was derived from -- that is the fallacy of the "stolen concept." Ayn Rand, in her Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology makes the point succinctly: "It is not the special sciences that teach men to think; it is philosophy that lays down the epistemological criteria of all special sciences."

One metaphysics (Aristotle's, Rand's) tells us that existence exists, that what exists has identity, and that consciousness is the faculty of perceiving it. This metaphysic, coupled with the validity of the senses and a proper theory of concept formation based on the application of logic to experience, tells man that his mind is efficacious and able to know reality and that his ideas can be true and certain within the context in which they were formed.

Another metaphysics (Plato's, Augustine's, Kant's and Baumgardner's) says that there are two realities, one related to existence (phenomenal, this worldly) the other related to consciousness (noumenal, other worldly), that human senses do not deliver valid information about one or the other world and that "intuition" and "faith" are the proper tools of cognition. This philosophy says that science has no real connection to the world -- that monkeys could type scientific papers as easily as scientists, and that regardless of the source, theories can only aspire to be falsified, never verified -- that no knowledge about any important reality is possible to man except through faith.

The former philosophy tells its scientists that reality has identity, that contradictions do not exist, and therefore scientific theories (the conceptual models of reality based on experience and logic) may not admit contradictions either. Paradoxes that arise from juxtaposing two separate theories must be

resolved by a unified conceptual framework, and Lorentz' work on electromagnetism is an example of work done in this style.

The latter philosophy on the other hand does tell its followers that science has limits -- limits determined by the Holy Roman Inquisition in the case of Gallileo, limits determined by Commissar Lysenko in the case of Russian biology -- limits determined not by science itself, but by the whim of whoever is in charge of philosophy in the societies that are based on such philosophies.

These two philosophical systems both lead to specialized fields of intellectual activity. But, because the essential characteristics of those activities are so different, it would be a perversion of human language to lump them together under the same concept. Fortunately. English has two words: my philosophy allows one to do science; Mr. Baumgardner's only allows one to practice magic.

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