

Scientific Philosophy and Metaphysics

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Admitting the existence of problems that must be investigated on a philosophical plane, Marxism has tried to pretend that these problems can be solved by using the discoveries made by the experimental sciences. The way Marxist writers go about doing this is that they first give an example from nature, and follow it with an example drawn from social or historical phenomena. Their third step is to draw a general conclusion by forcing a connection between these two examples, thereby, in their own imagination, proving the philosophical principle in question. Supposedly, the whole exercise authorizes them to call their philosophy as "scientific" and as based on discoveries made by the experimental sciences. Although this procedure may have some effect on those who are unfamiliar with philosophical problems and scientific methodology and are, therefore, unable to distinguish the weak points and fallacies hidden in this line of reasoning, it has no philosophical value and is considered a form of sophistry and public fraud by those who are knowledgeable in such matters.

We do not deny that there has been a fragmentation in the sciences caused by the extensive specialization of the various fields, and there is, therefore, a need for synthesizing the results of their investigations and bridging the gaps separating the numerous fields of science. Nor do we have any objection to such an endeavour's being called "scientific philosophy," since there is no ethical or legal injunction against coining new terms and names. What we do object to, however, is the abuse of terms and covering up of facts under misleading labels. This, we believe, is reprehensible and must be fought against.

It should be kept in mind that Marxist writers have not created their so-called "scientific philosophy" in order to serve the world of science and scholarship, by making a synthesis of the results of the investigations of the different sciences, and by connecting the endeavours of the diverse fields with one another. Far from such altruistic aims, their real motivation is to provide a justification for their baseless ideology and a philosophical foundation for their immature and inconsistent ideas. Moreover, even though the very notion of relying on scientific findings for finding solutions to metaphysical problems is incorrect and unfruitful—and as it has been stated before, philosophical issues cannot be settled in such a manner the Marxists are not even loyal to this misguided approach, since they ignore many irrefutable scientific facts, and rely, instead, on weak and unproven theories lacking any scientific value whatsoever. And when the fallacy of these theories is proven,

instead of learning a lesson from all the wasted effort and recognizing the futility of their approach, or having recognized it, admitting it, they move on with undaunted courage to grasp at another theory, and through peculiar intellectual acrobatics at which they are so adept, set it forth as further proof of the validity of dialectical materialism.

We shall leave an examination of the fumbling and public deceptions of the Marxists to some future occasion and simply state the fact that the notion of a "scientific philosophy"-in the sense of a philosophy that attempts to solve philosophical problems through the application of the methodology of the experimental sciences with reliance on scientific discoveries alone-is an anomaly unacceptable to any competent thinker. And the adjective "scientific" for philosophy not only does not add anything to its worth, since it ascribes to it a characteristic inappropriate to philosophy, but it simply exposes the bankruptcy of its originators which proves that they were unable to distinguish the boundaries separating science from philosophy and the correct method of tackling philosophical problems. It seems that our Marxist wizards justify this blatant contradiction as an example of "dialectical contradiction," and set it forth as a highly advanced philosophical phenomenon to the credulous devotees of "dialectics."

Another point to be noted here is that just as ascribing the term "scientific" to discussions of philosophical issues is caused either by ignorance, or intentions to deceive the public, to denigrate and condemn them as "unscientific" is also a form of distortion and abuse of the prestige of the word "scientific". And just as being characterized as "scientific" adds nothing to the value of metaphysical investigations, their being labeled as "unscientific" does nothing to bring down their value either. Since, as we mentioned before, being "scientific" means that a subject must lend itself to empirical verification, whereas the quality that purely theoretical problems transcend the realm of sense experience is essential to them, and is not a shortcoming or defect on their part. In other words, just because something is outside the realm of sense experience and cannot be proved through experimental methods, it does not mean that it is worthless or unverifiable. It means, rather, that it should be analyzed with the help of the rational method and by the means of the self-evident axioms -of reason. Moreover, as shall be demonstrated later, scientific problems themselves are in need of metaphysical and rational principles.

Metaphysics

We said earlier that the word "philosophy" has a number of meanings one of which is synonymous with "metaphysics". It should be kept in mind, however, that the word "metaphysics" itself has various meanings-a fact that may give rise to confusion and

misunderstanding.

Derived from the Greek term *meta physika*, [lit., the (works) after the physical (works)], metaphysics is the name given to that part of philosophy which concerns itself with the general principles of existence, and it appears that the ancient philosophers dealt with this subject after the section dealing with the natural sciences (physics) as a matter of didactic convenience. Thus it came to be called "after physics." As we said earlier, when all the other fields of learning separated from philosophy, what was left behind was metaphysics.

Since metaphysics deals with nonmaterial existence, a misunderstanding has arisen that metaphysics deals with supernatural phenomenon, and this misunderstanding has in turn caused spiritual philosophies to be branded as "metaphysical." The fact of the matter is that metaphysical considerations are not limited to theistic philosophies; the materialist schools are in as much need of metaphysics as others. This is the case because anyone who wishes to discuss the general and fundamental principles of existence—principles which do not fall within the exclusive domain of any particular science—must enter the realm of metaphysics, irrespective of the sort of conclusions he might reach. For example, a discussion of the principle of causality is a philosophical and metaphysical one, and although it is considered to be an axiom and used as such by all the experimental sciences, they cannot investigate it through the use of the scientific method and prove its validity. This is so even though their investigations are based upon it, and the formulation of universal scientific laws is possible only because of the law of causation. Even if someone wants to reject the principle of causality or any of its subordinate laws, he would still have to engage in a metaphysical discussion, and as they say, "philosophy can be refuted only through philosophy."

Recently an English philosopher, Robin George Collingwood, has written a treatise on metaphysics in which he has described it as a series of presuppositions which can neither be proved nor disproved. He says that these presuppositions are accepted unconsciously under certain conditions and rejected under a different set of conditions.'

Mr. Collingwood's treatise is a jumble of confused ideas, a product, according to one commentator of his works, of his days of illness. It represents a subjective statement or hypothesis devoid of any philosophical value, and cannot be counted as an inquiry into the nature of metaphysics.

Considering what has been said above, it becomes clear that issues of importance in the First Philosophy are also relevant to the physical sciences, and whatever general issues fall outside the framework of science, would be considered as metaphysical. Moreover, even if the doctrine of dialectical materialism should be proven to be true, it would also be a metaphysical principle;

since dialectical materialism, as its adherents claim, is not limited to any specific sphere or science, but applies to all natural, social, political, historical, or intellectual phenomena. Therefore, there is no opposition between dialectical materialism and metaphysics. There would, however, be opposition between materialism and metaphysics if the latter is taken to signify the 'realm of the supernatural.' Thus the opposition assumed by the Marxist writers

between dialectics and metaphysics is completely groundless and without foundation. The nature of metaphysical problems is such that they have given rise to differing and even contradictory judgements regarding them. And even though man's nature thirsts for answers to them and, as said before, the human character of man's existence depends on correctly solving some of these problems, yet some European thinkers have judged them as insoluble, while others have considered them useless and even meaningless.

It is obvious that a thorough examination of the aforesaid characteristics of its problems and the numerous opinions expressed on the subject of metaphysics, is outside the scope of this work, requiring far more space. I hope to undertake such an attempt in the future, when I shall examine in detail the misunderstandings that have given rise to such judgements, and explain the issues in simple terms. Here, I shall content myself with mentioning the following points:

A. Since man's immediate and ordinary perceptions are acquired through the medium of the senses, shallow thinking people imagine that there is nothing beyond the perceived world, or, more precisely, beyond the range of our sense perceptions. And if, supposedly, such a thing did exist, it cannot be verified. It was this kind of shortsightedness that caused the Children of Israel to say to Moses:

...We shall never believe in you [and affirm your prophethood] until we see God manifestly (with our eyes)(2:55)

The position of those who say that the soul does not exist since we cannot find it through surgery is similar.

In answer to such shortsighted views, it would suffice to say that there are many things in this very physical world that cannot be perceived through the senses, such as electricity, electromagnetic waves, and other things, whose existence is considered certain by the concerned sciences. People who deny the existence of anything beyond the range of our senses must either deny all these realities, or admit that knowledge is not limited to that gained through direct sense perception; and that reason can apprehend the existence of the supersensible through the knowledge of its perceptible effects.

B. Exclusive reliance on sense perception (despite its errors and shortcomings) can justify only abstinence from making any judgements regarding the supersensible world. It certainly cannot

justify any categorical denial of the supersensible world. It follows, then, that the empiricists have no right to deny the existence of a world lying beyond the range of senses. They must adopt an agnostic attitude towards the subject, allowing the probability of its existence, and act in accordance with the denial of such a probability.

C. There is a set of metaphysical principles the validity of which cannot be denied by any reasonable man although they cannot be verified by the senses. The nature of these principles is such that even if someone does try to deny them, he will end up by unconsciously affirming them. For example, the law of contradiction is a metaphysical conception, which cannot be perceived through any of the senses. Not even the individual concepts which constitute it can be apprehended through any of the senses. That is, the idea of contradiction is not 'perceived' by the senses. Despite it, however, no reasonable person can deny the validity of this self-evident principle, and even the claim that it is invalid proves its validity.

If someone says that contradiction is possible, can he, at the same time, believe that it is impossible and that it is possible? And if he is told that his claim, although one hundred per cent correct, is also one hundred per cent wrong, would he accept it? Of course not. It is thus proven that the very claim that this principle is invalid proves its validity.

It is clear that all those who have stated the view that contradiction is possible or necessary, either had some other meaning of "contradiction" in mind, or have not understood the meaning of the concept correctly. Otherwise, the impossibility of contradiction—if its meaning is correctly understood—is far too obvious to be questioned by any reasonable person.

The existence of such principles as mentioned above proves that man possesses a faculty of apprehension other than the senses, a faculty that can apprehend certain realities independently. Thus we cannot say that the content of a particular proposition is unknowable or unverifiable just because it is outside the range of perception.

It follows, therefore, that the solution to metaphysical problems must be found through the rational method; that is, through the application of self-evident axioms, solutions to no empirical problems are found. Moreover, if used correctly, this method can lead to results even more definite than those attained in the empirical sciences. In fact, as already pointed out, the certitude of the results attained by the empirical sciences and their generality depend entirely on metaphysical principles.

Every human being, throughout life, perceives things both inside and outside himself. Mostly these perceptions are attained through natural means, and sometimes through artificial devices. In any case, neither an isolated perception nor all of them could be said to constitute a "science," in the sense of a set of general principles. Perception acquires scientific value only

when it transcends the limits of the particular and the personal and enters the realm of generality. Moreover, these generalities cannot be in the form of simple concepts, but must take the composite form of postulates consisting of a number of concepts possessing a special relationship amongst them.

For example, the seeing of different colours and shapes, the hearing of various sounds, and other sense-data, give man some knowledge about objects existing in his environment; but this knowledge is not what is meant by the word "science." In other words, the particular bits of information thus obtained do not constitute the science of physics or chemistry, or any other science, even though they are more or less connected with scientific issues. Such postulates, for instance, as "the sum of the angles of a triangle is equal to two right angles," "metals expand when exposed to heat," and "the atoms of one element can be changed into those of another element," etc. are scientific statements. As it can be clearly seen, these notions do not represent particular perceptions of any particular individual, and are not subject to any limitation of time or space. That is, just as they are true of the triangles, metals, and atoms of the past and the present, they are also true of the triangles, metals, and atoms of the future. Nor are these truths in any way affected by spatial considerations. This is the characteristic which distinguishes scientific concepts from particular perceptions.

Now we have to see how man can come to possess the faculty of being able to pass judgement equally on past, present, and future. It is obvious that none of the senses has the ability to look into the past and the future in the manner mentioned above, and the sense perceptions, if they be in accordance with reality, can portray only such phenomena as exist at the time of perception, not those which have long ceased to exist or have not yet come into existence.

There is no doubt that these general postulates, which are based on particular perceptions and are abstracted from them, are transformed through a certain intellectual process into general, definite, and necessary laws. This being so, the next question that presents itself is: how and according to what laws does the human mind extend particular perceptions and turn them into general postulates, and that too in a definitive form, invulnerable to skepticism?

In answer we can say that whenever we perceive two phenomena either together or following one another, we realize that there exists a relationship between them called "the causal relationship," and thus foresee that whenever the cause is present the effect would also be present. For example, whenever heat is produced in metals, their expansion would also follow. However, without going into meticulous philosophical considerations, it can be said that what we can perceive through the senses is either the simultaneous existence of two phenomena or

the fact that one of them follows the other. But by what means do we perceive that the existence of one phenomenon depends on that of another? And, secondly, even if we determine that such a dependence does exist in a particular case, how do we know that such a dependence has existed in the past and will exist in the future, in all locations?

Of course, we admit that all scientists do understand the things just mentioned, and it is on the basis of this understanding that they pursue scientific research and seek for the causes of various phenomena and their interrelationships. We should know, however, that this understanding is not the work of sense organs and the perceptual faculties related to them, - but is the work of another inner faculty called "intellect" which is capable of comprehending fixed realities unconditioned by spatial and temporal limitations. One such unchanging reality is the law of causality and its corollaries to which all scientific laws owe their generality and certainty. Moreover, since these perceptions (rational truths) have not been apprehended through the medium of sense and experience and cannot be verified by any of the experimental sciences, they are therefore metaphysical truths.

In conclusion we can say that not only man's knowledge is not limited to perceptions gained through sense and experience, but the laws of the empirical sciences are themselves in need of .non-empirical knowledge and metaphysical principles