

Editorial

Man's search for knowledge throughout history may be seen as his need to make sense of the world around him, to maintain a universal homeostasis and ultimately comprehend the existence of his very self in relation to this universe. Answers to questions to 'how' and 'why' were attempted with various flavors and flare, with stories of angry deities flashing thunders from the skies to sibling rivalries between them, eventually formed popular mythologies and fables. Be it euhemeristic, allegorical or what not for its motivation, it is tempting to think mythologies were the essential framework then for later 'explanations' of everyday events. As endeavors tended towards a more systematic approach, arguably, science emerged naturally and provided man with answers which are founded on the basis of empiricism and testability rather than mere speculation on unproven grounds. Science in this sense is indeed a most tempting candidate for a framework to understand the universe to the rational persons as it not only makes statements about the universe but also lays itself bare to open criticism and skepticism. Science does not demand blind faith rather conviction became the essence of acceptance of knowledge as opposed to preprogrammed beliefs.

While science became a major proponent to the question of 'how' the universe works, arguably, it did not however promise itself as a candidate to answer questions on 'why'. Such questions simply fall outside the magisteria of science, and eventually became unpopular. Beliefs founded in a religious context has come to be seen as anything but convincing and at one time even gave way to a scenario where ethics, moralities and the like derived from the religious magisteria were seen to be irrelevant. It is perhaps not at all surprising that this has lead to a complete separation to extremes, a bipolar where on one hand we see a form of science practiced which undermines all truths save its discoveries while religious schools saw science as an opponent to its offices.

One may obviously question the philosophy of science, on the absence of 'why' and interestingly enough, Casti and Karlqvist traced this to the shift of the scientific paradigm from Aristotle's theory of causal categories where a 'final cause' exists to Newton's explanatory scheme which discards such a 'cause'. It is important to note here that we are not arguing against Newton's scheme, rather the issue that is taken on is really its limitation resulting in a mechanical framework of the universe. In all fairness, this does not at all mean Newton was in any way an atheist believing the universe a random bubble; quite the contrary he was very much a believer of a supreme Creator. His take on theology was eventually evolved into the popular Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence, a theological debate between his supporter Clarke and Leibniz. Theological debates were not really foreign in fact to the scientific intellect, even in the Islamic civilization, for example, the works of the likes of Ibn Rushd and Ghazali to only name a few. Perhaps it should come as a surprise why, despite the positions of these old masters, to some extent, theological discussions are frowned upon by some scientific as well as some religious circles.

Going back to the issue of the final cause of Aristotle's philosophy, a deeper question perhaps would be if such a final cause is in fact rationally acceptable as part of the philosophy of science and thus begs at the arguments of the demarcation between what is scientific and what's not. The logical positivists take a convenient stand in these matters while Popper argued for the 'falsifiable' nature of science. Whatever the case one prefers, in general, there is no hard agreement amongst all philosophers of science and in fact many scientists preferred to sideline the issue completely and science marches on to put a man on the moon. Perhaps to quite an extent, this is certainly understandable as questions on 'how' are in abundance while the methodologies for resolutions are quite available and may very well be more universally robust against rational critics.

It is perhaps these ambiguities and imperfections in the epistemology of our understanding of this universe and ourselves that this journal seeks to address; an invitation to a meeting of minds yearning for a niche if one wills, at reviving ancient old needs for such epistemology and ontology.

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