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## Moritz Schlick, “The Future of Philosophy”

Moritz Schlick (1882–1936) was a leading Logical Positivist philosopher and one of the founders of the Vienna Circle, a group of philosophers and scientists who put forward a project of reshaping philosophy according to the positivist ideal. The group, which included the philosophers Rudolf Carnap, Otto Neurath and Herbert Feigl, the mathematicians Kurt Gödel and Hans Hanh, and the physicist Philipp Frank, met in Vienna from 1922 to 1938. Schlick was a prolific writer and enthusiastic lecturer. His lecture reprinted here was given in Stockton, California, in 1931 and first published in *College of the Pacific Publications in Philosophy* I, Stockton, CA, 1932, pp. 45–62.

The study of the history of philosophy is perhaps the most fascinating pursuit for anyone who is eager to understand the civilization and culture of the human race, for all of the different elements of human nature that help to build up the culture of a certain epoch or a nation mirror themselves in one way or another in the philosophy of that epoch or of that nation.

The history of philosophy can be studied from two distinct points of view. The first point of view is that of the historian; the second one is that of the philosopher. They will each approach the study of the history of philosophy with different feelings. The historian will be excited to the greatest enthusiasm by the great works of the thinkers of all times, by the spectacle of the immense mental energy and imagination, zeal and unselfishness which they have devoted to their creations, and the historian will derive the highest enjoyment from all of these achievements. The philosopher, of course, when he studies the history of philosophy will also be delighted, and he cannot help being inspired by the wonderful display of genius throughout all the ages. But he will not be able to rejoice at the sight that philosophy presents

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to him with exactly the same feelings as the historian. He will not be able to enjoy the thoughts of ancient and modern times without being disturbed by feelings of an entirely different nature.

The philosopher cannot be satisfied to ask, as the historian would ask of all the systems of thought—are they beautiful, are they brilliant, are they historically important? and so on. The only question which will interest him is the question, “What truth is there in these systems?” And the moment he asks it he will be discouraged when he looks at the history of philosophy because, as you all know, there is so much contradiction between the various systems—so much quarreling and strife between the different opinions that have been advanced in different periods by different philosophers belonging to different nations—that it seems at first quite impossible to believe that there is anything like a steady advance in the history of philosophy as there seems to be in other pursuits of the human mind, for example, science or technique.

The question which we are going to ask tonight is “Will this chaos that has existed so far continue to exist in the future?” Will philosophers go on contradicting each other, ridiculing each other’s opinions, or will there finally be some kind of universal agreement, a unity of philosophical belief in the world?

All of the great philosophers believed that with their own systems a new epoch of thinking had begun, that they, at last, had discovered the final truth. If they had not believed this they could hardly have accomplished anything. This was true of Descartes, for instance, when he introduced the method which made him “the father of modern philosophy” as he is usually called; of Spinoza when he tried to introduce the mathematical method into philosophy; or even of Kant when he said in the preface to his greatest work that from now on philosophy might begin to work as securely as only science had worked thus far. They all believed that they had been able to bring the chaos to an end and start something entirely new which would at last bring about a rise in the worth of philosophical opinions. But the historian cannot usually share such a belief; it may even seem ridiculous to him.

We want to ask the question, “What will be the future of philosophy?” entirely from the point of view of the philosopher. However, to answer the question we shall have to use the method of the historian because we shall not be able to say what the future of philosophy will be except in so far as our conclusions are derived from our knowledge of its past and its present.

The first effect of a historical consideration of philosophical opinions is that we feel sure we cannot have any confidence in any one system. If this is so—if we cannot be Cartesians, Spinozists, Kantians, and so forth—it seems that the only alternative is that we become skeptics, and we become inclined

to believe that there can be no true system of philosophy because if there were any such system it seems that at least it must have been suspected and would have shown itself in some way. However, when we examine the history of philosophy honestly, it seems as if there were no traces of any discovery that might lead to unanimous philosophical opinion.

This skeptical inference, in fact, has been drawn by a good many historians, and even some philosophers have come to the conclusion that there is no such thing as philosophical advancement, and that philosophy itself is nothing but the history of philosophy. This view was advocated by more than one philosopher in the beginning of the century and it has been called "historicism." That philosophy consists only of its own history is a strange view to take, but it has been advocated and defended with apparently striking arguments. However, we shall not find ourselves compelled to take such a skeptical view.

We have thus far considered two possible alternatives that one may believe in. First, that the ultimate truth is really presented in some one system of philosophy and secondly, that there is no philosophy at all, but only a history of thought. I do not tonight propose to choose either of these two alternatives; but I should like to propose a third view which is neither skeptical nor based on the belief that there can be any system of philosophy as a system of ultimate truths. I intend to take an entirely different view of philosophy and it is, of course, my opinion that this view of philosophy will some time in the future be adopted by everybody. In fact, it would seem strange to me if philosophy, that noblest of intellectual pursuits, the tremendous human achievement that has so often been called the "queen of all sciences" were nothing at all but one great deception. Therefore it seems likely that a third view can be found by careful analysis and I believe that the view which I am going to advance here will do full justice to all the skeptical arguments against the possibility of a philosophical system and yet will not deprive philosophy of any of its nobility and grandeur.

Of course, the mere fact that thus far the great systems of philosophy have not been successful and have not been able to gain general acknowledgment is no sufficient reason why there should not be some philosophical system discovered in the future that would universally be regarded as the ultimate solution of the great problems. This might indeed be expected to happen if philosophy were a "science." For in science we continually find that unexpected satisfactory solutions for great problems are found, and when it is not possible to see clearly in any particular point on a scientific question we do not despair. We believe that future scientists will be more fortunate and discover what we have failed to discover. In this respect, however, the great difference between science and philosophy reveals itself. Science shows a gradual development. There is not the slightest doubt that science has

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advanced and continues to advance, although some people speak skeptically about science. It cannot be seriously doubted for an instant that we know very much more about nature, for example, than people living in former centuries knew. There is unquestionably some kind of advance shown in science, but if we are perfectly honest, a similar kind of advance cannot be discovered in philosophy.

The same great issues are discussed nowadays that were discussed in the time of Plato. When for a time it seemed as though a certain question were definitely settled, soon the same question comes up again and has to be discussed and reconsidered. It was characteristic of the work of the philosopher that he always had to begin at the beginning again. He never takes anything for granted. He feels that every solution to any philosophical problem is not certain or sure enough, and he feels that he must begin all over again in settling the problem. There is, then, this difference between science and philosophy which makes us very skeptical about any future advance of philosophy. Still we might believe that times may change, and that we might possibly find the true philosophical system. But this hope is in vain, for we can find reasons why philosophy has failed, and must fail, to produce lasting scientific results as science has done. If these reasons are good then we shall be justified in not trusting in any system of philosophy, and in believing that no such system will come forward in the future.

Let me say at once that these reasons do not lie in the difficulty of the problems with which philosophy deals; neither are they to be found in the weakness and incapacity of human understanding. If they lay there, it could easily be conceived that human understanding and reason might develop, that if we are not intelligent enough now our successors might be intelligent enough to develop a system. No, the real reason is to be found in a curious misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the nature of philosophy; it lies in the failure to distinguish between the scientific attitude and the philosophical attitude. It lies in the idea that the nature of philosophy and science are more or less the same, that they both consist of systems of true propositions about the world. In reality philosophy is never a system of propositions and therefore quite different from science. The proper understanding of the relationship between philosophy on one side and of the sciences on the other side is, I think, the best way of gaining insight into the nature of philosophy. We will therefore start with an investigation of this relationship and its historical development. This will furnish us the necessary facts in order to predict the future of philosophy. The future, of course, is always a matter of historical conjecture, because it can be calculated only from past and present experiences. So we ask now: what has the nature of philosophy been conceived to be in comparison with that of the sciences, and how has it developed in the course of history?

In its beginnings, as you perhaps know, philosophy was considered to be simply another name for the “search for truth”—it was identical with science. Men who pursued the truth for its own sake were called philosophers, and there was no distinction made between men of science and philosophers.

A little change was brought about in this situation by Socrates. Socrates, one might say, despised science. He did not believe in all the speculations about astronomy and about the structure of the universe in which the early philosophers indulged. He believed one could never gain any certain knowledge about these matters and he restricted his investigations to the nature of human character. He was not a man of science, he had no faith in it, and yet we all acknowledge him to be one of the greatest philosophers who ever lived. It is not Socrates, however, who created the antagonism that we find to exist later on between science and philosophy. In fact, his successors combined very well the study of human nature with the science of the stars and of the universe.

Philosophy remained united with the various sciences until gradually the latter branched off from philosophy. In this way, perhaps, mathematics, astronomy, mechanics and medicine became independent one after the other and a difference between philosophy and science was created. Nevertheless some kind of unity or identity of the two persisted, we might say, almost to modern times, i.e., until the nineteenth century. I believe we can say truthfully that there are certain sciences—I am thinking particularly of physics—which were not completely separated from philosophy until the nineteenth century. Even now some university chairs for theoretical physics are officially labelled chairs of “natural philosophy.”

It was in the nineteenth century also that the real antagonism began, with a certain feeling of unfriendliness developing on the part of the philosopher toward the scientist and the scientist toward the philosopher. This feeling arose when philosophy claimed to possess a nobler and better method of discovering truth than the scientific method of observation and experiment. In Germany at the beginning of the nineteenth century Schelling, Fichte, and Hegel believed that there was some kind of royal path leading to truth which was reserved for the philosopher, whereas the scientist walked the pathway of the vulgar and very tedious experimental method, which required so much merely mechanical technique. They thought that they could attain the same truth that the scientist was trying to find but could discover it in a much easier way by taking a short cut that was reserved for the very highest minds, only for the philosophical genius. About this, however, I will not speak because it may be regarded, I think, as having been superseded.

There is another view, however, which tried to distinguish between science

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and philosophy by saying that philosophy dealt with the most general truths that could be known about the world and that science dealt with the more particular truths. It is this last view of the nature of philosophy that I must discuss shortly tonight as it will help us to understand what will follow.

This opinion that philosophy is the science that deals with those most general truths which do not belong to the field of any special science is the most common view that you find in nearly all of the text books; it has been adopted by the majority of philosophical writers in our present day. It is generally believed that as, for example, chemistry concerns itself with the true propositions about the different chemical compounds and physics with the truth about physical behavior, so philosophy deals with the most general questions concerning the nature of matter. Similarly, as history investigates the various chains of single happenings which determine the fate of the human race, so philosophy (as “philosophy of history”) is supposed to discover the general principles which govern all those happenings.

In this way, philosophy, conceived as the science dealing with the most general truths, is believed to give us what might be called a universal picture of the world, a general world-view in which all the different truths of the special sciences find their places and are unified into one great picture—a goal which the special sciences themselves are thought incapable of reaching as they are not general enough and are concerned only with particular features and parts of the great whole.

This so-called “synoptic view” of philosophy, holding as it does that philosophy is also a science, only one of a more general character than the special sciences, has, it seems to me, led to terrible confusion. On the one hand it has given to the philosopher the character of the scientist. He sits in his library, he consults innumerable books, he works at his desk and studies various opinions of many philosophers as a historian would compare his different sources, or as a scientist would do while engaged in some particular pursuit in any special domain of knowledge; he has all the bearing of a scientist and really believes that he is using in some way the scientific method, only doing so on a more general scale. He regards philosophy as a more distinguished and much nobler science than the others, but not as essentially different from them.

On the other hand, with this picture of the philosopher in mind we find a very great contrast when we look at the results that have been really achieved by philosophical work carried on in this manner. There is all the outward appearance of the scientist in the philosopher’s mode of work but there is no similarity of results. Scientific results go on developing, combining themselves with other achievements, and receiving general acknowledgment, but there is no such thing to be discovered in the work of the philosopher.

What are we to think of the situation? It has led to very curious and rather ridiculous results. When we open a text book on philosophy or when we view one of the large works of a present-day philosopher we often find an immense amount of energy devoted to the task of finding out what philosophy is. We do not find this in any of the other sciences. Physicists or historians do not have to spend pages to find out what physics or history are. Even those who agree that philosophy in some way is the system of the most general truths explain this generality in rather different ways. I will not go into detail with respect to these varying definitions. Let me just mention that some say that philosophy is the “science of values” because they believe that the most general issues to which all questions finally lead have to do with value in some way or another. Others say that it is epistemology, i.e. the theory of knowledge, because the theory of knowledge is supposed to deal with the most general principles on which all particular truths rest. One of the consequences usually drawn by the adherents of the view we are discussing is that philosophy is either partly or entirely metaphysics. And metaphysics is supposed to be some kind of a structure built over and partly resting on the structure of science but towering into lofty heights which are far beyond the reach of all the sciences and of experience.

We see from all this that even those who adopt the definition of philosophy as the most general science cannot agree about its essential nature. This is certainly a little ridiculous and some future historian a few hundred or a thousand years from now will think it very curious that discussion about the nature of philosophy was taken so seriously in our days. There must be something wrong when a discussion leads to such confusion. There are also very definite positive reasons why “generality” cannot be used as the characteristic that distinguishes philosophy from the “special” sciences, but I will not dwell upon them, but try to reach a positive conclusion in some shorter way.

When I spoke of Socrates a little while ago I pointed out that his thoughts were, in a certain sense, opposed to the natural sciences; his philosophy, therefore, was certainly not identical with the sciences, and it was not the “most general” one of them. It was rather a sort of Wisdom of Life. But the important feature which we should observe in Socrates, in order to understand his particular attitude as well as the nature of philosophy, is that this wisdom that dealt with human nature and human behavior consists essentially of a special *method*, different from the method of science and, therefore, not leading to any “scientific” results.

All of you have probably read some of Plato’s Dialogues, wherein he pictures Socrates as giving and receiving questions and answers. If you observe what was really done—or what Socrates tried to do—you discover that he usually did not arrive at certain definite truths which would appear

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at the end of the dialogue but the whole investigation was carried on for the primary purpose of making clear what was meant when certain questions were asked or when certain words were used. In one of the Platonic Dialogues, for instance, Socrates asks “What is Justice?”; he receives various answers to his question, and in turn he asks what was meant by these answers, why a particular word was used in this way or that way, and it usually turns out that his disciple or opponent is not at all clear about his own opinion. In short, Socrates’ philosophy consists of what we may call “The Pursuit of Meaning.” He tried to clarify thought by analyzing the meaning of our expressions and the real sense of our propositions.

Here then we find a definitive contrast between this philosophic method, which has for its object the discovery of *meaning*, and the method of the sciences, which have for their object the discovery of *truth*. In fact, before I go any farther, let me state shortly and clearly that I believe Science should be defined as the “*pursuit of truth*” and Philosophy as the “*pursuit of meaning*.” Socrates has set the example of the true philosophic method for all times. But I shall have to explain this method from the modern point of view.

When we make a statement about anything we do this by pronouncing a sentence and the sentence stands for the proposition. This proposition is either true or false, but before we can know or decide whether it is true or false we must know what this proposition says. We must know the meaning of the proposition first. After we know its sense we may be able to find out whether it is true or not. These two things, of course, are inseparably connected. I cannot find out the truth without knowing the meaning, and if I know the meaning of the proposition I shall at least know the beginning of some path that will lead to the discovery of the truth or falsity of the proposition even if I am unable to find it at present. It is my opinion that the future of philosophy hinges on this distinction between the discovery of sense and the discovery of truth.

How do we decide what the sense of a proposition is, or what we mean by a sentence which is spoken, written, or printed? We try to present to ourselves the significance of the different words that we have learned to use, and then endeavor to find sense in the proposition. Sometimes we can do so and sometimes we cannot; the latter case happens, unfortunately, most frequently with propositions which are supposed to be “philosophical.”—But how can we be quite sure that we really know and understand what we mean when we make an assertion? What is the ultimate criterion of its sense? The answer is this: We know the meaning of a proposition when we are able to indicate exactly the circumstances under which it would be true (or, what amounts to the same, the circumstances which would make it false). The description of these circumstances is absolutely the only way in which the meaning of a sentence can be made clear. After it has been made

clear we can proceed to look for the actual circumstances in the world and decide whether they make our proposition true or false. There is no vital difference between the ways we decide about truth and falsity in science and in everyday life. Science develops in the same ways in which does knowledge in daily life. The method of verification is essentially the same; only the facts by which scientific statements are verified are usually more difficult to observe.

It seems evident that a scientist or a philosopher when he propounds a proposition must of necessity know what he is talking about before he proceeds to find out its truth. But it is very remarkable that oftentimes it has happened in the history of human thought that thinkers have tried to find out whether a certain proposition was true or false before being clear about the meaning of it, before really knowing what it was they were desirous of finding out. This has been the case sometimes even in scientific investigations, instances of which I will quote shortly. And it has, I am almost tempted to say, nearly always been the case in traditional philosophy. As I have stated, the scientist has two tasks. He must find out the truth of a proposition and he must also find out the meaning of it, or it must be found out for him, but usually he is able to find it for himself. In so far as the scientist does find out the hidden meaning of the propositions which he uses in his science he is a philosopher. All of the great scientists have given wonderful examples of this philosophical method. They have discovered the real significance of words which were used quite commonly in the beginning of science but of which nobody had ever given a perfectly clear and definite account. When Newton discovered the concept of *mass* he was at that time really a philosopher. The greatest example of this type of discovery in modern times is Einstein's analysis of the meaning of the word "simultaneity" as it is used in physics. Continually, something is happening "at the same time" in New York and San Francisco, and although people always thought they knew perfectly well what was meant by such a statement, Einstein was the first one who made it really clear and did away with certain unjustified assumptions concerning time that had been made without anyone being aware of it. This was a real philosophical achievement—the discovery of meaning by a logical clarification of a proposition. I could give more instances, but perhaps these two will be sufficient. We see that meaning and truth are linked together by the process of verification; but the first is found by mere reflection about possible circumstances in the world, while the second is decided by really discovering the existence or nonexistence of those circumstances. The reflection in the first case is the philosophic method of which Socrates' dialectical proceeding has afforded us the simplest example.

From what I have said so far it might seem that philosophy would simply

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have to be defined as the science of meaning, as, for example, astronomy is the science of the heavenly bodies, or zoology the science of animals, and that philosophy would be a science just as other sciences, only its subject would be different, namely, “Meaning.” This is the point of view taken in a very excellent book, *The Practice of Philosophy*, by Susan K. Langer. The author has seen quite clearly that philosophy has to do with the pursuit of meaning, but she believes the pursuit of meaning can lead to a science, to “a set of true propositions”—for that is the correct interpretation of the term “science.” Physics is nothing but a system of truths about physical bodies. Astronomy is a set of true propositions about the heavenly bodies, etc.

But philosophy is not a science in this sense. There can be no science of meaning, because there cannot be any set of true propositions about meaning. The reason for this is that in order to arrive at the meaning of a sentence or of a proposition we must go beyond propositions. For we cannot hope to explain the meaning of a proposition merely by presenting another proposition. When I ask somebody, “What is the meaning of this or that?,” he must answer by a sentence that would try to describe the meaning. But he cannot ultimately succeed in this, for his answering sentence would be but another proposition and I would be perfectly justified in asking “What do you mean by *this*?” We would perhaps go on defining what he meant by using different words, and repeat his thought over and over again by using new sentences. I could always go on asking “But what does this new proposition mean?” You see, there would never be any end to this kind of inquiry, the meaning could never be clarified, if there were no other way of arriving at it than by a series of propositions.

An example will make the above clear, and I believe you will all understand it immediately. Whenever you come across a difficult word for which you desire to find the meaning you look it up in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. The definition of the word is given in various terms. If you don’t happen to know them you look up these terms. However, this procedure can’t go on indefinitely. Finally you will arrive at very simple terms for which you will not find any explanation in the encyclopedia. What are these terms? They are the terms which cannot be defined any more. You will admit that there are such terms. If I say, e.g., that the lamp shade is yellow, you might ask me to describe what I mean by yellow—and I could not do it. I should have to show you some color and say that this is yellow, but I should be perfectly unable to explain it to you by means of any sentences or words. If you had never seen yellow and I were not in a position to show you any yellow color it would be absolutely impossible for me to make clear what I meant when I uttered the word. And the blind man, of course, will never be able to understand what the word stands for.

All of our definitions must end by some demonstration, by some activity.

There may be certain words at the meaning of which one may arrive by certain mental activities just as I can arrive at the signification of a word which denotes color by showing the color itself. It is impossible to define a color—it has to be shown. Reflection of some kind is necessary so that we may understand the use of certain words. We have to reflect, perhaps, about the way in which we learn these words, and there are also many ways of reflection which make it clear to us what we mean by various propositions. Think, for example, of the term “simultaneity” of events occurring in different places. To find what is really meant by the term we have to go into an analysis of the proposition and discover how the simultaneity of events occurring in different places is really determined, as was done by Einstein; we have to point to certain actual experiments and observations. This should lead to the realization that philosophical activities can never be replaced and expressed by a set of propositions. The discovery of the meaning of any proposition must ultimately be achieved by some act, some immediate procedure, for instance, as the showing of yellow; it cannot be given in a proposition. Philosophy, the “pursuit of meaning,” therefore cannot possibly consist of propositions; it cannot be a science. The pursuit of meaning consequently is nothing but a sort of mental activity.

Our conclusion is that philosophy was misunderstood when it was thought that philosophical results could be expressed in propositions, and that there could be a system of philosophy consisting of a system of propositions which would represent the answers to “philosophical” questions. There are no specific “philosophical” truths which would contain the solution of specific “philosophical” problems, but philosophy has the task of finding the meaning of *all* problems and their solutions. It must be defined as *the activity of finding meaning*.

Philosophy is an activity, not a science, but this activity, of course, is at work in every single science continually, because before the sciences can discover the truth or falsity of a proposition they have to get at the meaning first. And sometimes in the course of their work they are surprised to find, by the contradictory results at which they arrive, that they have been using words without a perfectly clear meaning, and then they will have to turn to the philosophical activity of clarification, and they cannot go on with the pursuit of truth before the pursuit of meaning has been successful. In this way philosophy is an extremely important factor within science and it very well deserves to bear the name of “The Queen of Sciences.”

The Queen of Sciences is not itself a science. It is an activity which is needed by all scientists and pervades all their other activities. But all real problems are scientific questions, there are no others.

And what was the matter with those great questions that have been

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looked upon—or rather looked up to—as specific “philosophical problems” for so many centuries? Here we must distinguish two cases. In the first place, there are a great many questions which look like questions because they are formed according to a certain grammatical order but which nevertheless are not real questions, since it can easily be shown that the words, as they are put together, do not make logical sense.

If I should ask, for instance: “Is blue more identical than music?,” you would see immediately that there is no meaning in this sentence, although it does not violate the rules of English grammar. The sentence is not a question at all, but just a series of words. Now, a careful analysis shows that this is the case with most so-called philosophical problems. They look like questions and it is very difficult to recognize them as nonsensical, but logical analysis proves them none the less to be merely some kind of confusion of words. After this has been found out the question itself disappears and we are perfectly peaceful in our philosophical minds; we know that there can be no answers because there were no questions, the problems do not exist any longer.

In the second place, there are some “philosophical” problems which prove to be real questions. But of these it can always be shown by proper analysis that they are capable of being solved by the methods of science, although we may not be able to apply these methods at present for merely technical reasons. We can at least say what would have to be done in order to answer the question even if we cannot actually do it with the means at our disposal. In other words: problems of this kind have no special “philosophical” character, but are simply scientific questions. They are always answerable in principle, if not in practice, and the answer can be given only by scientific investigation.

Thus the fate of all “philosophical problems” is this: Some of them will disappear by being shown to be mistakes and misunderstandings of our language and the others will be found to be ordinary scientific questions in disguise. These remarks, I think, determine the whole future of philosophy.

Several great philosophers have recognized the essence of philosophical thinking with comparative clarity, although they have given no elaborate expression to it. Kant, e.g., used to say in his lectures that philosophy cannot be taught. However, if it were a science such as geology or astronomy, why then should it not be taught? It would then, in fact, be quite possible to teach it. Kant therefore had some kind of a suspicion that it was not a science when he stated “The only thing I can teach is philosophizing.” By using the verb and rejecting the noun in this connection Kant indicated clearly, though almost involuntarily, the peculiar character of philosophy as an activity, thereby to a certain extent contradicting his books, in which he tries to build up philosophy after the manner of a scientific system.

A similar instance of the same insight is afforded by Leibniz. When he founded the Prussian Academy of Science in Berlin and sketched out the plans for its constitution, he assigned a place in it to all the sciences, but Philosophy was not one of them. Leibniz found no place for philosophy in the system of the sciences because he was evidently aware that it is not a pursuit of a particular kind of truth, but an activity that must pervade *every* search for truth.

The view which I am advocating has at the present time been most clearly expressed by Ludwig Wittgenstein; he states his point in these sentences:<sup>1</sup> "The object of philosophy is the logical clarification of thoughts. Philosophy is not a theory but an activity. The result of philosophy is not a number of 'philosophical propositions,' but to make propositions clear." This is exactly the view which I have been trying to explain here.

We can now understand historically why philosophy could be regarded as a very general science: it was misunderstood in this way because the "meaning" of propositions might seem to be something very "general," since in some way it forms the foundation of all discourse. We can also understand historically why in ancient times philosophy was identical with science: this was because at that time all the concepts which are used in the description of the world were extremely vague. The task of science was determined by the fact that there were no clear concepts. They had to be clarified by slow development, the chief endeavor of scientific investigation had to be directed towards this clarification, i.e., it had to be philosophical, no distinction could be made between science and philosophy.

At the present time we also find facts which prove the truth of our statements. In our days certain specific fields of study such as ethics and aesthetics are called "philosophical" and are supposed to form part of philosophy. However, philosophy, being an activity, is a unit which cannot be divided into parts or independent disciplines. Why, then, are these pursuits called philosophy? Because they are only at the beginnings of the scientific stage; and I think this is true to a certain extent also of psychology. Ethics and esthetics certainly do not yet possess sufficiently clear concepts, most of their work is still devoted to clarifying them, and therefore it may justly be called philosophical. But in the future they will, of course, become part of the great system of the sciences.

It is my hope that the philosophers of the future will see that it is impossible for them to adopt, even in outward appearance, the methods of the scientists. Most books on philosophy seem to be, I must confess, ridiculous when judged from the most elevated point of view. They have all the appearance of being extremely scientific books because they seem to use the scientific language. However, the finding of meaning cannot be done in the same way as the finding of truth. This difference will come out much more clearly

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in the future. There is a good deal of truth in the way in which Schopenhauer (although his own thinking seems to me to be very imperfect indeed) describes the contrast between the real philosopher and the academic scholar who regards philosophy as a subject of scientific pursuit. Schopenhauer had a very clear instinct when he spoke disparagingly of the “professorial philosophy of the professors of philosophy.” His opinion was that one should not try to teach philosophy at all but only the history of philosophy and logic; and a good deal may be said in favor of this view.

I hope I have not been misunderstood as though I were advocating an actual separation of scientific and philosophical work. On the contrary, in most cases future philosophers will have to be scientists because it will be necessary for them to have a certain subject matter on which to work—and they will find cases of confused or vague meaning particularly in the foundations of the sciences. But, of course, clarification of meaning will be needed very badly also in a great many questions with which we are concerned in our ordinary human life. Some thinkers, and perhaps some of the strongest minds among them, may be especially gifted in this practical field. In such instances, the philosopher may not have to be a scientist—but in all cases he will have to be a man of deep understanding. In short, he will have to be a wise man.

I am convinced that our view of the nature of philosophy will be generally adopted in the future; and the consequence will be that it will no longer be attempted to teach philosophy as a system. We shall teach the special sciences and their history in the true philosophical spirit of searching for clarity and, by doing this, we shall develop the philosophical mind of future generations. This is all we can do, but it will be a great step in the mental progress of our race.

### Note

- 1 *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, London 1922, 4. 112.