

Meanings for Science

“Advancement in mathematical-natural sciences demands contact with human sciences, to atone for the absolutism of technological-scientific progress and the delusion of a computer mediated history.” (Ernildo Stein)

Science is not impartial. This sentence, without a context, would open the door, but not create a shortcut, to endless speculations regarding the long history of the human attempt to construct logical consensuses. However, this sentence may take an unexpected turn. For instance, to philosophical Hermeneutics absolutely nothing is impartial. No single human being is a *tabula rasa*, no human actions are prejudice-free. Why would scientific research be the recipient of a majestic exemption? Prejudices still exist, more or less tamed. They are always present, since, at the end of the day, they are our ideas. Research surely aims to the discovery of new things, but always in a framework of ongoing debate with past traditions, cultures and experiences.

On the other hand, it is true that science should be clear-headed, and be satisfied in analyzing – in the peaceful environment of studies – the content of the reflections that are produced and published. Yet Medicine historian Henry Sigerist warned that no scientist can be totally free, that is, free to create and free to think unless he/she was assured – as a prior condition – the material conditions to survive. Otherwise, he alerted, he/she will always depend on a particular institution to fund his/her projects and institutions will always impose their particular interests on the purely scientific activities. All in all, this compromise would cut down not only creativity but also the capacity to generate progress of clarifications. Brazilian scientist, César Lattes used to shock his students by advising them to look for rich partners if they hoped for a scientific career in Brasil (or any other non-industrialized country).

This introduction is just to say that the so-called “gray zone of science” has this color only because those who are part of it have not yet understood that the only help possible to support a non-hegemonic research, the only possibility of by-passing the operators that, in a certain way, drive science towards this or that direction, is to make feasible an academic-institutional life, with the massive and decisive support of the State.

This may sound as anti-neoliberal discourse but the issue is deeper than mere political and economic self-definitions. The only and real chance that there is a more reasonable competition within the inequalities that are inherent to the interests prevailing among rival theories is that the less well established, the less well organized, in any case, the weakest, can search resources elsewhere to escape the predatory attitude of the market.

As the private pharmaceutical groups cannot be those elected to collect financial support, the State is the only legitimate political instance to look for.

The State and its development institutions are those who can provide for what is desired in research. Perhaps the new by itself is not what is right for the market. Perhaps the new by itself will not optimize productivity. That is, there is a need to respect the scientist’s or researcher’s motivations.

Gaston Bachelard showed that science and philosophy used to speak the same language. But is this also true of science and money, especially when financial gains enter the equation? Research “ethos”, that is, the answer to questions “what are we researching?” and “for whom are we researching?” should be back in research agenda as an amendment to any modern research statutes.

However, reflections should be directed to another focus. If the State wants, effectively, to offer an opportunity to non-hegemonic techniques and procedures, it should back investments that will make them feasible. It should motivate researchers to develop new and creative models that will inspire research designs that will dialogue with the academia without distorting their particular epistemes. All above, obviously, relate directly to Homeopathy. Without an agreement as depicted above neither Homeopathy nor any other integrative medicine will ever be able to hope for serious research programs, much less enter universities and the academic world, both essential requirements for its scientific legitimation.

Although redundant, it’s necessary to repeat once again that homeopathic research can’t be subjected to standards that distort its foundations. Specially in the case of clinical investigation, as basic research presents a wider area of overlapping with hard sciences. However, these studies make sense only if they increase the progress of science. Otherwise, they run the risk of getting lost in doubtful evidences. The validation statute, so much desired by homeopathy, can perhaps be found in a different language. One that does not belong exclusively with the natural sciences. One that will adopt comprehensive-interpretative procedures, typical of the human sciences.

A current consensus has been achieved: research must be performed, be it homeopathic or not, personal, practical or institutional. And research demands institutional support. But if our century is hermeneutical, to establish a dialogue with life is to make traditions speak again.

This we believe we are doing.

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