

Remarks at the Final Panel of the Interdisciplinary Workshop
"The Changing Metaphysics of Science", jointly organized by
IFK - Internationales Forschungszentrum Kulturwissenschaften, and
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This note represents a write-up of a tape recording. It has not been edited in order to preserve the spontaneity of the contribution.

I would first like to thank you [*Sam Schweber*] to put me on your panel in the last minute. This was the result of some private discussions we had. I want to be very brief. I want to present two things.

Number one, I would like you to present some personal impressions which take into account some input I got from some of my science colleagues here at the Meeting, and secondly I want to give you some of my conclusions.

First to the personal impressions. It was quite interesting for us - and I talk for at least two of us - that we found us here to be suddenly viewed as conservative, while in our fields we are very often attacked as too progressive. This was an interesting experience. I don't know what it means. I just want to tell you that. I also want to tell you that before I came here, a number of my friends told me: Why are you doing that? You are just wasting your time. Okay, so this is just to tell you what kind of laboratory animals you had here. We were not representative for the community. But it was quite cute, I have to say, for us, to be viewed as laboratory animals from time to time. This was the first time in my life that I had the feeling to be a laboratory animal, which is quite an interesting experience, I have to admit, and also it is quite nice - some of the reactions to what we said were quite benevolent, like "Look how cute they are (*laughs from the audience*). They still cling to these old ideas. They didn't learn anything." I just want to remind you what my friends told me when I came here - we are not representative, we are bad laboratory animals.

So, the problem was that the dialog did not happen, or it happened much less than what I would have hoped for. I would like to express my understanding, as a laboratory animal, why it has not happened. I think it did not happen because the scientists who investigated us had preconceived notions, and they immediately put us, too rapidly from my point of view - but maybe they were correct, I don't know - they put us into categories just because we used some catchwords which we were not aware are bad catchwords in this community.

There is also another interesting point which I did not realize until yesterday evening, that there was a difference between the two communities here, the scientists and the "others". I don't know what to call the others, because the others seemed to disagree how to call themselves, they don't like to call themselves social scientists...(voice from the audience [David Hollinger]: "the word is alterity") ...alterity, okay, I hope I remember this until the end of my talk. (laughs from the audience) You see, for you, this was a scientific meeting, it was a meeting in your field, to present your results, and in that, the mechanisms were quite different than they were for us, because for us, it was not a meeting in our field - at least for me, I now have to talk about me, because I did not talk to my friends about this point.

For me, I came here because I hoped to learn something about the most burning questions for me, and these are questions about the most important commodity, what I personally regard as the most important commodity, in my work - and this again shows you what a strange laboratory animal I am - the most important commodity in my field are questions. Where do the questions come from? To which extent do they come from the social context? To which extent do they come from Zeitgeist? To which extent do they not come from Zeitgeist? I wanted to learn something about that because I am an opportunist, I want to find the most interesting questions. About this, I find that I did not learn anything, but maybe it was the wrong expectation.

I had the feeling that some of the discussions here, when they talked about scientists, were sent to the wrong straw-man or straw-woman, to be politically correct, because I could not identify with much of this. I really had problems. I particularly had problems when categorizations came up, when people talked about categories like modern, postmodern, and so on. I could not see myself in any of this. I saw a little bit in this, and this, and so on. So, I would say that, and one of my conclusions is, and this is also something very important in my scientific life, - I mean, as I tried to explicate in my presentation about quantum mechanics - I try to avoid categorizations or preconceived notions whenever possible. I question them as deeply as I can. Like, for example, when we question the notion of reality, then it is unavoidable that in the end, we come down to this (*bang*) - when I bang (*bang*) on the table, this is reality, and that's it, period. Nothing more. And we have to build everything on (*bang, bang*) this experience. Things like that. So, again, I am just giving you more demonstrations on what kind of strange animal I am.

So I feel, to get now a conclusion of what I feel about these topics here, I think our approach as scientists - or my approach - should be, and always will be,

both reductionist and non-reductionist,

both foundational and non-foundational.

I would strenuously oppose any force which would direct me in either way. I would avoid any categorization like this. You know, one of the things I really liked here was - I think it was your [*Paul Forman*] point - was living with ambivalence. This is what we do all the time in our lives. I consider this as a sign of the fact that the stuff we are dealing with is interesting. It is not boring.

Now, just the two last conclusions. I think, the notion of being here in Vienna, one cannot avoid to take parallels. I would take that up, but in a different direction. I would like to say for me what we have to take up is the program of the Vienna Circle. And we really should conclude it. It has not been concluded. Part of the reasons were political reasons, because the Vienna circle has been dispersed all over the world, and I have the feeling that it could not recover from this. Maybe we have the chance to take it up again. And the last appeal - my appeal would be:

Science, as the way I view it, should be as autonomous as possible.

If you talk about the historical context: It has shown us over and over again that any other attempt leads to failure. Thank you. (*applause*)

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