Philosophy is dead!

I was enthusiastically waiting for the release of the new book titled “The Grand Design”, a book coauthored by the venerated Steven Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow. To my amazement, on the first page of the new book the authors make a shocking statement about the state of philosophy: “Traditionally these are questions for philosophy. But philosophy is dead”. Philosophy has not kept up with modern development is science, particularly physics.” I assumed that philosophy was alive and well, what happened?

Lets “deconstruct” the second sentence to expose any potential alternate meaning. If we replace the word philosophy with its classical vocabulary meaning, "love of wisdom", the sentence becomes: *“Love of wisdom has not kept up with modern development in science, particularly physics*.” Bizarre, in this way it look as if that the scientific way of physics has abandoned the proper logical development path. That is an old known state of affairs, and we must regretfully agree that both, the philosophy and scientific history are packed with instances of countless erroneous theories. We can reasonably affirm that this unfortunate situation continues at present time.

During time, the development of philosophy was carried on parallel with other scientific discoveries or progress of other numerous fields of knowledge. Philosophy tends to analyze some general event and attempts to find a simplified explanation to describe it, to narrow it down, to clarify its meaning; in reverse of pure mathematics which commonly begins with a definition or axiom. It is then obvious that the methods and requirements of philosophy are not similar to those of some other scientific methods, and here is where the divide may possibly originate. It is now generally agreed that it is not possible any longer, due to the enormous amount of the collected scientific data and the complexity of the subject, for the common humans to follow and understand the thought processes of modern theoretical scientific development. For example, only the highly trained individuals can account for the ongoing development of the scientific discoveries that bases their continuation on sophisticated mathematics, physics, or technological advances. More and more the attention to detail and worry is essential not to abandon the rational/scientific path for the mysterious and synthetic way of unsound thinking.

Sound thinking would imply that we hold our opinion if we don’t grasp enough insight regarding the subject examined; any expressed opinion about the subject would be a waste. We must note here that even a generally accepted opinion can be mistaken; also that definitely an abstract syllogism does not guarantee a unique conclusion. Various assumptions are imaginary and arbitrary deceptions, rooted in the abstraction ability of our mind. Scientific knowledge, in special, ought not be based on theory alone, even if later the assumptions are to be proven accurate. We tend to look for formulas and observation that support our assumptions, and neglect or sometimes even discard, valid observations that seem, at first, to contradict our vague understanding. We ought to have confidence only in what is completely known and it is not possible to be doubted, and all scientific knowledge is required to conform to the precise methods of mathematics or it is a consequence of undeniable empirical observations.

As Thomas Kuhn warned us in his work: *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,* from thime to time the scientific thought is prone to the necesity of the emergence of a new scientific paradigm. These new paradigma shifts to new approaches to proper understanding that scientists would never have considered valid earlier. When scientists attempt to enlarge the central paradigm by merely applying "puzzle-solving" methods and forward theories that “fit” the observed data points, then we likely approach the trashold that will generate the surge towars a new paradigm. The discussed book clearly is a profund statement regarding the state of our part of the universe, and the realization that physical laws alone could justify the emergence of our galactic system. Because our galactic object that originated from the iniatial “big-bang” is currently expanding (that imply a border condition) and also had a origination location we can call center, it does not fit the philoshopical definition of an infinite object. In my understanding, an infinite object can not have a center or boundaries, even if the details of the expanding border are unknown. We have applied the mathematical abstraction view of infinity to physical objects, with the omisison to observe that abstractions are outside the field of the real time or actual physical space. We found out that our galactic “object” does not fit the language meaning of the word “universe”. We could find a new name for it, something like “big stellar”, and can leave the concept of the universe intact.

There is no harm in the will to understanding if it is recognized that knowledge and the entire truth are beyond the human natural abilities to establish. Is there any knowledge in the world, which is so perfect that no reasonable man could ever doubt it? In my view, the statement that the philosophy is somehow dead is regrettable, and must be looked at as an imprudent attempt to “murder” it. We people have changed; we now do not visit a barbershop to have our teeth extracted, we don’t pray for the rain to come, and are in need of some external, and well-defined expertise to provide support for our lives.

The philosophy has progressed immensely in the last century; it is futile to attempt to minimize the contribution to understanding of philosophers such as Ludwig Wittgenstein or Jack Derrida.

Yoji Gondor - gondork@yahoo.com