

PHILOSOPHY

ORGANIZED ! SCEPTICISM !! 2019 !!!

17.11.2019

Here is the original 1942 text ("The Normative Structure of Science") with an excerpt the 4th norm as found at panarchy.org/merton/science.html

As we have seen in the preceding chapter, organized skepticism is variously interrelated with the other elements of the scientific ethos. It is both a methodological and an institutional mandate. The temporary suspension of judgment and the detached scrutiny of beliefs in terms of empirical and logical criteria have periodically involved science in conflict with other institutions. Science which asks questions of fact, including potentialities, concerning every aspect of nature and society may come into conflict with other attitudes toward these same data which have been crystallized and often ritualized by other institutions. The scientific investigator does not preserve the cleavage between the sacred and the profane, between that which requires uncritical respect and that which can be objectively analyzed.

As we have noted, this appears to be the source of revolts against the so-called intrusion of science into other spheres. Such resistance on the part of organized religion has become less significant as compared with that of economic and political groups. The opposition may exist quite apart from the introduction of specific scientific discoveries which appear to invalidate particular dogmas of church, economy, or state. It is rather a diffuse, frequently vague, apprehension that skepticism threatens the current distribution of power. Conflict becomes accentuated whenever science extends its research to new areas toward which there are institutionalized attitudes or whenever other institutions extend their control over science. In modern totalitarian society, anti-rationalism and the centralization of institutional control both serve to limit the scope provided for scientific activity.

Note also the footnote as the text was written in 1942 only. By 1948, the political leaders

of Soviet Russia strengthened their emphasis on Russian nationalism and began to insist on the “national” character of science.

The Merton text contains perfect predictions of what is currently going on with the Scientists for Future movement – conflict becomes accentuated whenever science extends its research to new areas invalidating particular dogmas of church, economy, or state. If organized scepticism is an integral part of the scientific method (which I believe) conflicts are preordained.