

NORMS

Take the norm "Scientists ought to start by recording and reporting on their sense-data, or immediate experiences, and their theories should consist only of the simplest organizations of such descriptions of the immediately given". Taken into account the role of scientific constructs (concepts, hypotheses, theories, all of them far beyond percepts), it is found that nobody pays heed to that "norm" save a few dreamy philosophers. Yet, they might contend that that is the way scientists ought to work even if they do not so work at present. The reply is simply this. A servile closeness to what is immediately given (which, by the way, is an illusion) would stop scientific progress; now, we cherish scientific progress above philosophical tenets; hence, we reject the proposed norm. The rejection is made not only because the norm fails to conform to a successful pattern, but also because the foreseeable consequences of respecting the norm would conflict with a desideratum - scientific progress - which is by far more valuable than the highly controvertible desideratum of sticking to a given philosophy no matter what the results of such a fidelity may be.

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