

## On the relationship between medicine and philosophy in the context of health, life, and the biological organization of the human being

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Philosophy and medicine have been interconnected for centuries, forming an inseparable causal framework that seeks to explain the nature of the human being. Since antiquity, thinkers such as Hippocrates and Aristotle have reflected on fundamental questions concerning life and death, as well as the relationship between body and soul, understood in the context of the human person as a substantial entity. Accordingly, medicine, as an empirical science, has long served humanity by contributing to the protection of health and life. Its foundations lie in scientific inquiry, which began with direct observation of living organisms and gradually evolved into clinical and experimental research. The historical interplay between medicine and philosophy reveals a dynamic mutual influence – both as a driving force of scientific development and as a source of epistemic errors arising from reductionist approaches to the explanation of life processes, including human development. In the 17th century, William Harvey, through his studies on blood circulation, demonstrated that the heart functions as a pump. This mechanistic explanation of the organism as a biological system composed of distinct parts with specific roles represented a scientific breakthrough, yet it also revealed the limitations of such a perspective. While it provided clarity regarding some organic processes, it failed to account for the complexity of life's dynamic nature, which became the subject of further philosophical and scientific debate. A telling example is the 18th-century dispute between embryologist Caspar Friedrich Wolff and physician-physiologist Albrecht von Haller regarding causality in the organization of life. Haller advocated the flawed philosophical concept of preformation, whereas Wolff defended a theoretically and empirically grounded theory of epigenesis. In the 19th century, a similar tension resurfaced in the debate between Wilhelm Roux's mechanistic approach and Hans Driesch's vitalism. Despite their respective shortcomings, both perspectives contributed to the emergence of Ludwig von Bertalanffy's organismalism, later developed into general systems theory. This framework conceives the organism as an irreducible whole composed of complex interactions among its constituent parts. Historical examples show that medicine has always been embedded in diverse research contexts – both empirical and philosophical. The convergence of these domains has led not only to epistemological errors but also to necessary revisions of foundational assumptions and, ultimately, to scientific advancement. Philosophy has played a critical role in correcting medical misconceptions, although when understood as pure metaphysics, it has at times misled science through faulty assumptions. The historical tendency to reduce organisms to simple functional mechanisms – stripped of broader explanatory contexts – often resulted in false conclusions. Thus, a proper understanding of the human being as a complex biological, psychological, and social entity requires the collaborative engagement of philosophy, medicine, and other fields, including technology. Philosophy has not only accompanied major debates in developmental biology and medicine, but it continues to be essential in resolving boundary disputes and ethical dilemmas arising from rapid medical and technological progress. Advances in technology allow for deeper exploration of human nature – not only in its biological and psychological aspects, but also in its social and cultural dimensions – thereby revealing the ontological complexity, dignity, and freedom of the human person. Only by embracing this multidimensionality can medicine remain a complete science, and philosophy retain its relevance in uncovering the foundations of life and the essence of humanity.

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