

there is one general feature of its method which is of fundamental significance. It is that every term which it uses and every proposition which it enunciates has a precise meaning which can be made evident by proper definitions. This general principle of scientific language is much more easily inculcated by example than subject to exact description; but I shall ask leave to add one to several attempts I have made to define it. If I should say that when a statement is made in the language of science the speaker knows what he means, and the hearer either knows it or can be made to know it by proper definitions, and that this community of understanding is frequently not reached in other departments of thought, I might be understood as casting a slur on whole departments of inquiry. Without intending any such slur, I may still say that language and statements are worthy of the name scientific as they approach this standard; and, moreover, that a great deal is said and written which does not fulfill the requirement. The fact that words lose their meaning when removed from the connections in which that meaning has been acquired and put to higher uses, is one which, I think, is rarely recognized. There is nothing in the history of philosophical inquiry more curious than the frequency of interminable disputes on subjects where no agreement can be reached because the opposing parties do not use words in the same sense. That the history of science is not free from this reproach is shown by the fact of the long dispute whether the force of a moving body was proportional to the simple velocity or to its square. Neither of the parties to the dispute thought it worth while to define what they meant by the word "force," and it was at length found that if a definition was agreed upon the seeming difference of opinion would vanish. Perhaps the most striking feature of the case, and one peculiar to a scientific dispute, was that the opposing parties did not differ in their solution of a single mechanical problem. I say this is curious, because the very fact of their agreeing upon every concrete question which could have been presented, ought to have made it clear that some fallacy was lacking in the discussion as to the measure of force. The good effect of a scientific spirit is shown by the fact that this discussion is almost unique in the history of science during the past two centuries, and that scientific men themselves were able to see the fallacy involved, and thus to bring the matter to a conclusion.

If we now turn to the discussions of philosophers, we shall find at