



PHILOSOPHY 9/11: What Could a Professor Contribute?

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As a philosopher of science, it has seldom crossed my mind that the combination of “philosophy” with “science” could strike others as anomalous or even contradictory. Since I have taken up investigating the events of 9/11, it may be appropriate to explain what a philosopher of science might be able to contribute to the study of 9/11.

As an undergraduate at Princeton, I scanned through the catalogue for the course descriptions that interested me the most. They turned out to be courses in the methods and theories of different disciplines. By the end of my first semester, I saw that, as scientific knowledge was growing at an exponential rate, it would be impossible to master everything there was to know in any specific discipline, but if I studied how such knowledge was acquired, I might be able to better understand those disciplines themselves.

Philosophy offered more courses in methods and theories than did any other subject. That is not surprising when you consider that chemistry, biology, and even psychology were branches of philosophy at earlier stages in its history. Subjects like physics and astronomy, for example, were domains of what used to be called “natural philosophy.” Even Isaac Newton’s greatest work bore the title (in Latin), *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*. As their methods and procedures gradually became better understood, those disciplines began to stand alone.

This fits the function of philosophy, which is to come to grips with unresolved conceptual and theoretical problems. Some of these concern the nature of logic, of language, of knowledge and of mind. My own inclination was to study the nature of knowledge and key distinctions between truth, belief and knowledge. To understand the nature of science, I studied the philosophy of science. Although I did not realize it at the time, Princeton was then ranked #1 in the world in mathematics, physics and philosophy, and the faculty member with whom I wrote my undergraduate thesis on the logical structure of explanations of human behavior, Carl G. Hempel, was the leading figure in the philosophy of science. Such were our opportunities!

I took a commission as a Lieutenant in the Marine Corps at graduation in 1962, and then resigned as a Captain in 1966 in order to resume my studies. I earned a Ph.D. in the history and the philosophy of science in 1970 at Indiana University. There I continued to study the characteristics of scientific reasoning, scientific theories, scientific explanations, laws of nature and related issues. My first book, *Scientific Knowledge: Causation, Explanation, and Corroboration* (1981), elaborated a theory about science based on my own analysis of the nature of laws of nature.

During 35 years of teaching courses in logic, critical thinking and scientific reasoning, I would publish many other books on science, with special interest in the conceptual and theoretical foundations of emerging disciplines. These included *AI: Its Scope and Limits* (1990), *Philosophy and Cognitive Science* (1991; 2nd edition 1996), *Philosophy of Science* (1993), and eventually *Computers and Cognition* (2001) and *The Evolution of Intelligence* (2005).

Perhaps the most distinctive aspect of my career is that I have not confined my attention to traditional subjects, but have promoted the application of scientific methods to the investigation of deaths of political figures, such as President John F. Kennedy and Senator Paul Wellstone. I organized a research

group of the best qualified persons to ever investigate the death of JFK in 1992, which would lead to the publication of three collections of studies: *Assassination Science* (1998), *Murder in Dealey Plaza* (2000), and *The Great Zapruder Film Hoax* (2003). And I created and continue to edit an online journal at www.AssassinationResearch.com. The purpose of our efforts was to take rumor and speculation out of the case and place its study on an objective and scientific foundation. When Senator Paul Wellstone died in a plane crash in 2002, I pursued that case and co-authored a book, *American Assassination* (2004), and later an article, "The NTSB Failed Wellstone" (2005), which is archived on my public issues website, www.AssassinationScience.com.

I was a Johnny-come-lately to the study of 9/11, but since founding Scholars for Truth in 2005, I have been giving it my best shot. I created and continue to manage our website at www.911Scholars.org, and have recently published our first book, *The 9/11 Conspiracy* (2007), with contributions from 11 experts. I organized our first conference on "The Science and the Politics of 9/11" for August 3-5, 2007 in Madison, Wisconsin, to confront the controversial issues in 9/11 research, including whether unconventional methods of demolition could have been involved in bringing about the destruction of the WTC.

Some believe we should avoid controversy at all cost. But if that were our objective, we should not have embraced 9/11 research in the first place. What we are doing is *already* controversial. If we wanted to avoid controversy, we would never have reached the point in our research where we find ourselves today. The reason Hannity & Colmes and O'Reilly can attack us and make any headway at all is that criticizing the official account of 9/11 is *inherently* objectionable to most of their audience. That most people think something is wrong does not make it wrong, of course. That is a popular fallacy.

There is an important logical difference between refuting a false account and discovering the true one. We have been able to refute the "official account" in spades. So among the problems that remain before us is the question of how it was actually done. If it turns out that only unconventional methods are able to account for the depth and breadth of devastation at the WTC, this points in the direction of the military-industrial complex, since – apart from Israel – it is the sole likely source of those means.

I used to think that the very idea that no planes hit the Twin Towers was at least faintly absurd, and I said so in print. As I have become more curious about the possibility of altered video, however, I have come to the realization that video fakery and real planes are logically compatible, since video fakery could have been used to conceal features of the [real] planes or aspects of their causal interaction with the buildings. (Take a look at the online video *September Clues* for some of what has persuaded me to include this subject in the Scholars conference on "What's Controversial, What's Not.")

We can't figure out what actually happened if we are unwilling to confront controversy, because that is unavoidable in a case of this kind. If we want to reveal truths, we have to actively search for them. But that does not mean that we must neglect to expose falsehoods. In order to make progress with the public, we have to emphasize what we can already prove to be false about *The 9/11 Commission Report* (2005). Here the philosophy of science can make further contributions about concepts and theories.

Logic can tell us when something is true or false from its meaning alone. Distinctions are drawn between analytic and synthetic sentences, where sentences are "analytic" when their truth follows from the meaning or grammar of the sentence itself. "2+2=4" and "Freshmen are students," for example, cannot be false, given the axioms of arithmetic or the meaning of those words in English. Sentences are "synthetic" when their truth depends on the way things are rather than meaning or grammar alone. "There are four chairs" and "Some freshmen are rich" could be true or false. These sentences are not analytic.

Given a grammar and a vocabulary, analytic sentences cannot be refuted. Since "conspiracy" in English describes a crime in which two or more persons collaborate, the hypothesis that 19 Islamic fundamentalists hijacked four commercial airliners and outfoxed the most sophisticated air defense

system in the world qualifies as a “conspiracy theory” as long as 19 is greater than two. Thus I would offer that we, as critics who have decisively disproven the official account and are searching for a better explanation, might be more accurately characterized as “conspiracy realists.”

Proceeding further, logic shows us at least two kinds of synthetic sentences: those that concern particular conditions and those that concern general laws. Now we can respond to the claim that the Twin Towers were brought down by the combination of airplane impacts and jet fuel fires in two ways:

(1) Since the melting point of steel is 2800F and the highest temperature possible with a jet fuel or hydrocarbon fire is 1800F, the WTC steel would not have melted even if those fires had burned forever. There’s a 1000-degree shortfall between the alleged cause and effect, so this possibility cannot even exist as a matter of law.

(2) Since Underwriters Laboratories certified the WTC steel for several hours at 2000F without its displaying any adverse side effects, if the WTC fires burned as reported at lower temperatures for lesser times, then there is no basis for inferring that the steel even weakened. In fact, the fires burned for less than an hour in the South Tower, and about 90 minutes in the North Tower. NIST examined 236 samples of steel and found only three that were exposed to temperatures above 500F, and none above 1200F. Neither laws nor specific conditions justify the official account. NIST’s own evidence thus refutes its own conclusions.

Similarly, science tells us that the destruction times involved are impossible unless there was no resistance at all between the upper floors and the ground for the three WTC towers (including Building 7). For 110-story buildings to “collapse” in 10 seconds violates laws of physics and engineering; for them to “disappear” in that time does not. For a 47-story building to come down in 6.5 seconds requires a complete absence of resistance from the top down. Don’t be taken in by word games: “Controlled demolition” only means *demolition under control*.

Laws of nature, unlike laws of society, cannot be violated and cannot be changed. If the “official account” of the WTC implies violations of laws of engineering physics, or of laws of aerodynamics at the Pentagon, then that account cannot possibly be true. And do not be afraid of theories. We are theorizing all the time. Even the simplest description of a glass of clear liquid as “water” entails infinite consequences: It quenches thirst, nourishes plants and extinguishes fires. But what if the clear liquid were alcohol instead?

In dealing with the grim reality of 9/11, we are attempting to come to grips with heretofore unresolved conceptual and theoretical problems and render them intelligible. *We want to make sense of them*. If we confine ourselves to alternatives we find comforting, we are no more likely to resolve these problems than critics of Galileo who denied that the Earth moves. Our challenge is intellectual, scientific and philosophical. If we are to succeed, we must follow logic and evidence where they lead.



James H. Fetzer earned his Ph.D. in the history and philosophy of science. A former Marine Corps officer, he has published 28 books, including, most recently, THE 9/11 CONSPIRACY: THE SCAMMING OF AMERICA, with contributions from 11 experts. In 2005, he founded Scholars for 9/11 Truth.