Philosophy of science is a relatively new branch of philosophy, coming into prominence only in the twentieth century. Philosophy can be understood as a “second order” reflection on other “first order” disciplines; so, for example, corresponding to “first order” investigations of history or art or law by historians, art critics, or legal experts, there are branches of philosophy known as philosophy of history, philosophy of art, and philosophy of law—not investigating history or art or law per se, but reflecting on the ways in which the specialists talk and write about history, art, and law. Similarly, the philosophy of science is a philosophical reflection on the nature of science, raising such general and fundamental questions as What is a law of nature? What is science? or How are scientific theories proved or confirmed?—philosophical questions which scientists themselves have not been trained to answer.

The main questions in the philosophy of science are therefore not part of science because they are about science. Philosophy of science is therefore not a science but a branch of philosophy closely related to other branches of philosophy such as epistemology, logic, linguistic philosophy, and metaphysics.

Suggested Further Reading


