

Physiognomy with Philosophy Perspective

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Abstract

Physiognomy is a Greek term composed of, which are “physis” means nature and “gnomon” means judgement, knowledge. Physiognomy is the ancient science of determining someone’s character on the basis of their bodily features. Physiognomy, which has thousands of years of knowledge and experience, has been used since ancient societies such as China, Hind, Greek.

Throughout history, every philosopher is based on his views on materialistic or idealistic philosophy. While the idealist philosophers put forward ideas according to metaphysics (the mental dimension of being), the materialist philosophers have had opposing ideas. Therefore, a metaphysical subject, physiognomy, is accepted by idealist philosophers, but rejected by materialist philosophers.

Keywords: physiognomy, philosophy, Greek, metaphysics.

Introduction

Physiognomy is a Greek term composed of, which are “physis” means nature and “gnomon” means judgement, knowledge. Physiognomy is the ancient science of determining someone’s character on the basis of their bodily features. Physiognomy, which has thousands of years of knowledge and experience, has been used since ancient societies such as China, Hind, Greek.

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Philosophers' Views on Physiognomy

Physiognomy has become an extremely popular branch of science in Ancient Greece. Greek philosophers were interested in this science and tried to teach others. In the 5th century B.C., a philosopher named Zopyra in Athens described the facial features of Socrates as stupid, rude, pleasurable and drunk. This definition may be considered as the first philosophical evaluation of physiognomy. Socrates' students wanted to refuse these negative evaluations about their teachers. But Socrates said "I have a tendency towards all these evils. But with virtue, I managed to correct my mistakes and eliminate my tendencies."

The Greek philosopher Plato (427 -347 BC) were also interested in physiognomy. It is said that Plato, who lived on top of a mountain, had put a painter at the head of the road leading up the hill, and had drawn a picture of those who wanted to see him. Plato, according to these pictures, would decide whether the people were suitable for the interview.

Plato wrote his body characteristics and submitted to one of his students and sent to the philosophers of India who had gone too far in physiognomy. The Indian philosophers looked at the body characteristics of Plato and concluded that he was a very bad person. The student, who saw that none of these bad features rejected in Plato, thought that the Indian philosophers were wrong. Plato, on the other hand, said that the Indian philosophers were not mistaken, that they were in bad habits, but he was correcting the bad habits by his methods of moral discipline.

Aristotle (B.C. 384-322) focused on the relationship between physiognomy and character traits. Aristotle mentions this in the First Analytical section of the book, *Organon*:

"If, of course, influences are also believed to cause a change in the body and soul (no doubt, the learning of music produces a change in the soul, but here, of course, the implications for us are not mentioned: those that are natural movements are more like, for example, passions and wishes.) it is possible to rule according to body appearance. So if this first condition is accepted and if it is accepted that a single sign corresponds to a single effect, and finally we can place a sign and sign for each kind of animal, we can rule according to their appearance." (Aristotle, 1966, pp. 190-191)

Aristotle states that some facial expressions of animals may indicate specific characters after saying that character traits can be determined according to human physiognomy. For example,

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the lion is a brave and noble animal. This feature is understood from the body and face structure. If these signs are found in a person, that person will have the same character traits.

It can be argued that Aristotle's book named *Physiognomonica* is about physiognomy. However it is doubtful that this book belongs to Aristotle. This work was probably written by Aristotle's students. The first part of this book, which consists of two parts, examines the body and character traits of a human. In the second part, body and character structures of animals were examined.

Aristotle says that three basic methods have been tested in physiognomy. First method: There is a special form of animal for each species, and a special mental character fits the body. If a human body resembles a genus, its soul is similar. Second method: Based on the appearance and character differences, they differentiated between various human races (eg Egyptian, Thracian, and Scythian) and identified the signs of their characters from these races. The third method: Anger, fear, passion, enthusiasm and all other strong emotions are considered so as to point to certain characteristics. All these methods are possible and others can be. The choice of signs can be made in different ways. The last method mentioned is lacking in many respects (Aristotle 1985: 1237 [805a1-20-32]).

The Greek physician Hippocrates (460-370 BC) was one of those who knew physiognomy. Hippocrates benefited from physiognomy in the diagnosis and treatment of diseases. Hippocrates divided the human into two as fat and weak and he developed the four elemental theory of Empedocles. According to this theory, four elements (water, fire, air, soil) are combined with four physical conditions (humid-cold, damp-hot, dry-cold, dry-hot) to affect the fluids (blood, yellow bile, sputum, black bile) in the body. If one of these fluids is more than the others, the human being becomes warm-blooded, pessimistic, angry or calm. When foods such as meat and eggs are consumed, blood (moist-hot) is increased and laziness, drowsiness, stretching, stretching, skin redness and acne are observed. When dry foods are consumed too much, black bile (dry-cold) causes pessimism and fearful dreams. According to this theory, which Galen also contributes, patients are diagnosed and treated according to their physiological characteristics.

Philosophical Assessment of Physiognomy

In fact, physiognomy and philosophy are closely related to the history of philosophy. Because the stages of philosophy have determined the fate of the physiognomy. It is accepted that Greek philosophy began with Thales (624-546 BC). Thales' investigation of the source or the truth of existence led to the emergence of philosophical thought. Thales and the philosophers of that period are called the philosophies of nature. Because they have sought the source of existence in nature, that is, in something concrete. Parmenides (515-450 BC), on the other hand, attributed the origin of being to an abstract body concept. Since Parmenides saw the source of existence in the concept of an abstract body, he initiated metaphysics. Some philosophers searched for the origin of existence in a concrete thing, others in an abstract source.

These abstract and concrete source ideas, as a result, accept a metaphysical approach because they acknowledge that they are the source of existence. In contrast, the materialist philosophers acknowledged that it is not a source of existence, but this being was merely the realm of appearance. In the following periods, philosophy continued to develop mainly from these two main branches, that is, from the idealist (metaphysical) and materialist branches.

Throughout history, every philosopher is based on his views on either materialistic or idealistic philosophy. While the idealist philosophers put forward ideas according to metaphysics (the mental dimension of being), the materialist philosophers have had opposing ideas. Therefore, a metaphysical subject, physiognomy, is accepted by idealist philosophers, but rejected by materialist philosophers.

As seen in the examples above, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle accept knowledge based on physiognomy. In physiology, the methods of induction and analogy are used. Modern philosophy and science mainly use these methods.

The Sophists only accept the subjective knowledge perceived by their senses. According to them, the information is subjective, depends on the person. In other words, there is no fixed information and the source of information. Therefore, it is unthinkable for the Sophists to accept information based on physiognomy.

Peripathic philosophers (combining the views of Plato and Aristotle) attach importance to the knowledge based on physiognomy. Peripathic Islamic philosophers have also accepted

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physiognomy as a source of information and have written works on physiognomy. Ibn Sina is one of these philosophers.

Physiognomy has taken its share from serious criticisms brought to classical philosophy since modernization in Europe. The materialist and positivist philosophers rejected physiognomy, since they considered only senses and experimental information.

Conclusion

The method of reasoning in physiognomy is induction. Today, other disciplines use induction successfully. If enough samples are examined, the accuracy of the information obtained by induction is almost complete. However, exact true information, such as deductive, can only be achieved by the full induction method. The applicability of the full induction method is extremely limited. Because, it is often impossible to examine all the examples of research subject. In spite of this deficiency, induction continues to be an indispensable method for sciences. Therefore, if the information obtained by induction in physiognomy is obtained by taking a sufficient number of samples, the accuracy value is high.

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