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Nature of Philosophy

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Abstract:

The aim of this paper is to examine the nature, scope and importance of philosophy in the light of its relation to other disciplines. This work pays its focus on the various fundamental problems of philosophy, relating to Ethics, Metaphysics, Epistemology Logic, and its association with scientific realism. It will also highlight the various facets of these problems and the role of philosophers to point out the various issues relating to human issues. It is widely agreed that philosophy as a multi-dimensional subject that shows affinity to others branches of philosophy like, Philosophy of Science, Humanities, Physics and Mathematics, but this paper also seeks, a philosophical nature towards the universal problems of nature. It evaluates the contribution and sacrifices of the great sages of philosophers to promote the clarity and progress in the field of philosophy.

Keywords: wisdom, intelligence, induction, deduction, existence, sensations, aphorism

- Plato: “He who has a taste for every sort of knowledge and is curious to learn is a philosopher”

1. Introduction

All subjects written and unwritten pertaining to some object for analysis. Philosophy is one such subject pertaining to wisdom. Wisdom is different from intelligence, Cunningness, wit, cleverness and being crafty. It is the noblest feature differentiating a man from the animal kingdom. It is this specialty of head and heart that makes a man the crown of creation or the deputy of God on earth as well as the order or decree of the first cause. Being wise does not mean selfish, being wise means simply realizing once own position in true perspective. A thief may success in pocketing money from someone’s house maybe he is intelligent but not wise, because he spoiled his life in this world, hereafter he ought to have exchange iron for gold pebbles for jewels and dust for secreting materials. Wisdom is acquired through learning, knowledge, and abstraction.¹Wisdom makes a man self-conscious, self-loving and necessitous. Living by principle is one thing and living by choice is another thing, Philosophers prefer the first and does not care for the second. Philosophers realize the urgency of life therefore rejects improving or acting upon tomorrow, because they don’t believe in today or tomorrow as it may come or may not come, this statement is the matter of induction and it had wavered Bertrand Russell and Wittgenstein. Philosophers change their world for their loving philosophy, is like a conversion from Plato, Socrates and Aristotle and the galaxy of other philosophers and thinkers.

Prof. Teneja has beautifully explained the concept of philosophy as that branch of education which evaluates man from animals to the dignity of a human being. Such as subject which Upanishads knows as “Tat Tvam Asi” (thou art that),in western philosophy “Know thyself” and Islamic philosophy “Mard-e-Mumin”. Wisdom comes in moments and foolishness is eternal says ‘Hudson’. Wisdom alerts a man that you are flirting on the tide of time, which neither cares for your will nor your wish. Philosophy believes in permanent consciousness and sustained attention. Total analysis of self is the project of philosophy. Philosophers try to bring to light what is hidden and make possible to know it. Philosophy is a knowledge that is sought, reflected, and understood through discussion, questioning and debates. Everything which is said and accepted must lie open to question and criticism and Socrates started with this aphorism in order to define things. Philosophy is the fundamental study of the knowledge about world. Unlike traditional philosophy, modern philosophy is more comprehensive in order to discuss the fundamental problems, such as, existence, essence, causation, mind, knowledge, value and so on. In this direction, said Nietzsche, “there are no facts but only interpretations”. Thus, philosophy is the interpretation of the things philosophically.

2. Essence of Philosophy

Philosophy is a multi-disciplinary subject; its methodology is logical, analytical, dialectical and empirical. Nevertheless, it’s one of the fundamental branch (metaphysics)studies ultimate reality i.e. nature of God that does not mean that those who study metaphysics would become atheist. Every science or ideology has its own language and two sides, one is optimistic side and another is pessimistic side, depends upon the perceiver which side one want to choose. It is a matter of fact that every religion has its own metaphysics and in Islamic theology its metaphysics had been discussed and demonstrated by prophets and theologians up to certain limitations.

Philosophy has a broad domain which is the foundation of all other subjects, as every subject is its offshoot i.e. Psychology (mental philosophy), Sociology (empirical positivism), political science, mathematics, physics and biology. Although physics and mathematics had been discussed and rationalized parallel to philosophy from time to time.

Philosophy has produced great scientists in the form of mathematicians like, (Pythagoras, Euclid, Plato, Descartes, Bertrand Russell), Physicists such as, (Descartes, Carnap, Kant, Al-Ghazali) and Biologists like (Aristotle and Ibn-Sina), in Linguists, (Wittgenstein and Noam Chomsky), same is the case in poetry like (Iqbal and Tagore). Quantification logic, Fuzzy logic, logical operators and truth tables utilized in the system of science and technology is the blessing of Aristotle and Gottlob Frege. These two philosophers have laid the paradigm for the betterment of science and technology. This shows that philosophy is closely a pure science, as it has given sacrifice for the promotion of science in ancient period like, Anaxagoras went into exile from Athens, Plato and Aristotle were exiled and Socrates the master was forced to drink Hemlock. Zeno of Elea was tortured by Nearchus, tyrant of Elea.² While in modern period Bruno was burnt alive, Spinoza was both exiled and warned not to publish or disclose his work as their scientific theories goes against the Bible.³ Most of the scientific problems had their root in philosophy. The concept of relativity, causation, space, time, existence, induction, deduction, probability, numbers, are once treated as grand problems of the philosophy.⁴

Now the question is does philosophy gave answers to these problems? Yes! Of course, philosophers analyzed these mysteries into conceptual and logical propositions so that every wisdom lover would understand and clarify it. No theories are universally true for all cases and provides certain and clear knowledge about things. Theories are like boats sailing in water while some boats sink quickly others take time and some are modified to sail further. This analogy is being applied to philosophy as it explains most of the grand problems of the world for the extension of the knowledge for scientists and provide a structure and hypothetical approach to develop these theories. This is the reason; the great institutes of the world Oxford, Cambridge and Harvard are still investigating, exploring and evaluating the problems of philosophy with relation to Mathematics, Physics and Biology. Scientists are conscious of its role in reconstructing and recomposing life and desire to see young community sound in reasoning and understanding. As the subject, it believes in permanent consciousness and sustained attention. Philosophy opens our eyes to the realities of life and everything in it. In modern world, there is dare need of philosophy to save the world from the ignorance, illusions delusions, confusions and contradictions of the man.

According to Moore, philosophizing is the activity of analysis.⁵ The nature of philosophy is philosophical. In order to understand the nature of philosophy as philosophical, we will have to explain the philosophical problems, philosophical attitudes and philosophical activities etc. Philosophical problems are the general problems of different philosophical sciences. Philosophical attitude is reflective and curious guided by experience and reasoning. Philosophical methods include induction, deduction, analysis, synthesis and dialectical method. Philosophical activity starts from wonder and curiosity. This activity may be individual as well as social, alone as well as in group. The real nature of philosophy is intellectual and purely logical. Philosophy is a way to study and understand the world around us, though without going into religious topics (usually) and that world includes both the external physical world and the internal mental world.⁶

Thus, the nature of philosophy is totally based on thinking ability and thoughts of human mind and also the actual nature of philosophy is to present the total world-view of its problems. As everyone knows that the term philosophy is derived from two Greek words Philo and Sophia which literally mean "the love of wisdom" when the ancient Greek thinkers referred to wisdom, they usually meant the knowledge of fundamental principles and laws, an awareness of that which was basic and unchanging as opposed to those things that are transitory and changing. The term philosophy and philosopher was coined by Pythagoras. Philosophy as we know is the study of wisdom (knowledge of ultimate causes, explanations and principles of things) and one who loves this wisdom is called philosopher. Philosopher knows every problem from its root and interprets it through rational basis. Philosophy has estimated high profile in the world. Philosophy, the mother of all science is the foundation and the touchstone of every subject whether physics, mathematics, technology or other science like humanities.

Rationalism is a modern school of thought which gives us the full description of philosophy based on mathematical truths. One thing I will highlight here is that the vagueness and ambiguity in studying and teaching philosophy is because it is related with mathematics and physics. The problems of physics (theory of relativity, Big bang, Expansion of universe, mechanics, properties of waves and light, Heinsberg's uncertainty principle) and Mathematical problems (set theory, induction, deduction, Boolean algebra, Analytical Geometry, Axioms of Mathematics) can be effortlessly represented and cleared in the field of philosophical wisdom. Scholars in Oxford and Cambridge chose philosophy among science subjects like mathematics and physics. Remember! Philosopher's like Pythagoras, Plato, Descartes, Leibnitz, Bertrand Russell, A. N. Whitehead, Rudolf Carnap, are all great mathematicians and Philosophers like Aristotle, Democritus, Einstein, Thomas Kuhn, Newton, Kant, and Copernicus Stephen Hocking are great physicists. Philosophy not only paved the way for the development of the scientific technology but it has played an important role in giving world most notable thinkers in the form of theologians, scientists, Doctors, politicians, sociologists, and psychologists.⁷

Above all, philosophy strengthens one's reasoning power, common sense and knowledge about abstract things like God, world, soul, mind, and the concrete things such as Matter, Earth, Substance, Sensations, Existence, Understanding and Experience. It is wrong to say, that Philosophy is not boring subject but it is an interesting domain which teaches us how to live life worthily. In common parlance, we say that Everyone is a philosopher as the Hylomorphist, Aristotle pronounced but in my sense only some people who are creative thinkers, having power of analysis of truths, having ability to make abstract of theories are able to be competent for the title of philosopher. Most of the people are credulous in case of Philosophy they are of the opinion that philosophy misguides believers from their beliefs and also have misconception about most of the theories i.e. Idealism, Rationalism, Intuitionism, Pragmatism and Existentialism. Think for a while Descartes; the founder of western rationalism and Modern Metaphysics was the mathematician, their approach is mathematical, thus in order to understand Rationalism, thinker ought to need mathematical approach. Same is the case

with other theories like Idealism, Pragmatism, and Existentialism, their approach is totally different in the world of philosophy from the context in which these theories are explained in subjective realm.

Philosophy had proved and will prove its field, the best in the form of Metaphysics (Science of beyond Matter), Philosophy of language, Philosophy of Mind, Philosophy of Science, Cosmology and Technology, Epistemology (Science of Understanding), Axiology [Science of Worth: reduced values into Truth, Goodness and Beauty which indeed are studied in their most advanced branches I.e. Logic Aesthetics and Ethics although logic, Aesthetics and Ethics got developed at its apex in modern Philosophy and reformed its definitions as into Logic (science of inference), Aesthetics (Science of Art or beauty), Ethics (Science of Moral Behavior). Thus, it is well said that “one who understands philosophy can reason everything and one who lacks can reason nothing”.

3. Four Branches of Philosophy

3.1. Epistemology

Epistemology is the science of knowledge. Epistemology is derived from the Greek two terms ‘Episteme’ and ‘Logy’ which means ‘knowledge’ and ‘science or study’. Philosophy is the search of knowledge. This search is critical. Hence, the first problem which arises before a philosopher is about the nature of knowledge and its limitations. Therefore, Epistemology is the most fundamental branch of philosophy. It philosophically discusses the falsehood, validity of knowledge, limits of knowledge and nature of knowledge, knower and known. Epistemology or the theory of knowledge is concerned with how we know what we do, what justifies us in believing what we do, and what standards of evidence we should use in seeking truths about the world and human experience. Epistemological problems and theories are often interconnected with problems and theories in the philosophy of mind. The topics in the philosophy of mind are crucial for epistemology, for instance the phenomenology of perception, the nature of belief, the role of imagery in memory and introspection, the variety of mental properties figuring in self- knowledge, the nature of inference, and the structure of a person’s system of beliefs. Epistemology is the philosophical discipline that studies the evaluative dimensions of cognition, their metaphysical basis, and the language we use to ascribe cognitive states. The epistemological field includes the theories like skepticism, knowledge, justification, understanding, epistemic values, conceptualism, perception, inference, theories of truth and falsehood and the main epistemologies in western philosophy are; rationalism, empiricism, criticism and intuitionism. The word epistemology was coined by “James Ferrier” in his work “institutes of Metaphysics”.⁸

3.2. Metaphysics

This is the study of Existence, reality or essence. Metaphysics is the one of the four branches of philosophy alongside, ethics, logic and epistemology. It is an ancient subject but one that continues to arising curiosity. For some, it is associated with the mystical or religious. For others, it is known through the metaphysical poets who talk of love and spirituality. Metaphysics is regarded as the queen of all sciences. There are two approaches related to metaphysics, one is that it is used as the spiritual, mystical or in abstract form, another is that which designates what lies beyond the physical, or what is separate from the sensible and the perceptible material world. In addition to the physical world that surrounds and stifles us but in which we live, there is what Nietzsche derisively called a metaphysical backcountry, a world inhabited, it would seem, by nonphysical beings such as God, angels, souls, and thinking beings. In this sense metaphysics is synonymous with the concepts of “transcendental”, “theological” and “supernatural” worlds. The term metaphysics was coined by “Adronicus of Rhodes who gave this name to unclassified works of Aristotle who called it “first philosophy”.⁹

3.3. Ethics

Ethics discusses the criteria of right and good. Ethics is derived from the Greek word “Ethos” which means customs, character, usages or habits. Ethics is also called Moral philosophy derived from the Latin word “Mores” means customs, habits or character. Ethics literally means the science of customs, ways of behavior character or the science of human behavior. Ethics is the science of highest good (science of morality). Ethics is the area of philosophy which investigates the principles governing human actions in terms of their goodness, badness, rightness, and wrongness, duties and obligations. It is concerned with discovering the principles that should govern human conduct and with the investigation of normative issues involving value judgment. Moral theory has the same relation to ethical decision making that the study of grammar has the ability to study language. A person can speak a language without ever having studied its grammar, and a person can also make ethical decisions without ever having studied moral theory. But just as our ability to function in a language is often aided by a study of grammar, so does an inquiry into theoretical concerns aid us in clarifying our ethical choices. Ethics is concerned with judgments of value and studies what ought to be. Ethics is the science of highest good. Morality and ethics are used synonymously although there is little difference between these two while morality is the right or wrong (or otherwise) of an action, a way of life or a decision and Ethics is the study of such standards as we use or propose to judge such things. Thus, abortion may be moral or immoral according to code we employ but ethics tells us why we call it so and how we made up our minds. As a result, ethics is sometimes called moral philosophy; we use it to criticize, defend, promote, justify and suggest moral concepts and to answer questions of morality. Ethics is a normative science. The fact, that ethics is concerned with an end or ideal or standard serves at once to distinguish it from most of the other sciences. It is a science which that lays down rules, laws or axioms or more strictly, that seeks to define a standard or ideal with reference to which rules or laws may be formulated. It is the business of normative science to define an ideal, not to lay down rules for its attainment. For example, Aesthetics is a normative science; concerned with the standard of beauty; but it is no part of its business to inquire how beauty is produced. So, with ethics, it discusses the ideal of goodness or rightness and is not directly concerned with the means by which this ideal may be realized. Ethics

discusses man's habits and customs, or in other words, their characters, the principles on which they habitually act, and considers what is that constitutes the rightness or wrongness of these principles, the good or evil of these habits.¹⁰

3.4. Logic

Logic studies truth. The subject matter of logic includes the methods of judgment, types of proposition, hypothesis, definition, comparison, classification, division and fundamental laws of thought etc. Logic is the art of reasoning or art of thinking. Logic has sometimes been defined as the science of laws of thought. This is infact, wrong. Thinking is one of the processes of studied by psychologists. If theories refer to any process that occurs in peoples' mind, not all thought is an object of study for the logician. Thus, one may think of a number between one and ten without doing any reasoning about it. One may also remember, imagine, free-associate, or perform any of a number of mental processes. All reasoning is thinking, all thinking is not reasoning. The laws that describe the movements of the mind are psychological laws rather than logical principles. Logic has been called the science of reasoning. This is better, but reasoning is a kind of thinking in which inference takes place and conclusions are drawn from premises. This process is extremely complex, characterized by a combination of trial and error, occasionally illuminated by flashes of insight. Logicians are not concerned with the ways in which the mind arrives at its conclusions in the process of reasoning; they are concerned only with the correctness of the completed process: does the conclusion reached follow by necessity from the premises? The study of the methods and principles used to distinguish correct from incorrect reasoning is the central issue with which logic deals.¹¹

4. Conclusion

Philosophy is the fundamental subject which studies philosophical problems like Existence, Essence, Knowledge, mind-body, language and ultimate reality. In philosophy, it is necessary that one should deal with problems having only philosophical origin otherwise there are many other disciplines that have their own philosophy but that philosophy is different from the mainstream philosophy because that particular philosophy of particular subject rests on their subjective methodology. Philosophy has its own methodology which coup up with its problems and nature. Philosophy gave us the origin of problems. It deals with the basic assumptions of the world of atomic propositions. Philosophy is to philosophize things to reach to its ultimate reality and goal. It leads its development in the arenas of mathematics, physics and in humanities. The progress of philosophy is the progress of science.

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