

## In what senses can philosophy be said to be objective?

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**Abstracts:** According to empirico-rationalists scientists (S. B. M. Marume: 1983, 1988 and 2015), no knowledge can be of usefulness unless it is objectively acquired. The scientists and the philosopher try as much as possible to eliminate preconceived ideas, prejudices and proclivities, and allow the facts to speak for themselves. They fully appreciate that in the process on knowledge there is, on the one hand, the receptiveness of the senses which convey to us the empirical data from the world around us (empiricism) and , on the other hand, thee human reason and human capacity for thought (rationalism). These two methodological systems process and interrelate the material gained through the senses, systematically transforming it into systems of knowledge.

**Key words:** empirico-rationalists, scientist, objectively acquired, process, elimination of preconceived ideas.

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### I. Introduction

The contention is made that no knowledge can be of usefulness unless it is objectively acquired.

### II. Purpose of Article

To examine closely fundamental questions in order to gain proper and systematic insights into and on understanding of the methodological problem of objectivity.

#### Can Philosophy Be Said To Be Objective?

We now examine this fundamental questions deeply and systematically.

#### Fundamental Contention

No knowledge can be of usefulness unless it is objectively obtained. The scientist and the philosopher try as much as possible to eliminate preconceived ideas, prejudices, and allow the fact to speak for themselves. They fully realize that in the process of knowledge there is on the one hand the receptiveness of the senses which convey to us the empirical data from the world around us (empiricism) and on the other hand the human reason and capacity for thought (rationalism).

Fundamental question

The questions are as follows:

- Does science aim at objectivity?
- How is objectivity attained in science?
- Does philosophy also aim at objectivity?
- If so in what sense then can we say that philosophy is objective?

These are some of the fundamental questions which need close analysis and discussions, so that we may gain a proper and systematic sight into and an understanding of the methodological problem of objectivity.

#### Prominent Personalities Associated With The Subject

The following prominent personalities closely associated with this important subject include:

- Francis Bacon
- Sir Isaac Newton
- Auguste Comte
- Edmund Husserl

### **3.1.2 The influence of natural sciences on objectivity.**

- (a) Francis Bacon 1561 – 1626: is today remembered for his emphasis on experience as a basis of all knowledge. He condemned all prejudices and preconceived ideas and maintained that man can obtain dependable knowledge only paying assiduous attention to nature, facts, observation and experimentation. Human knowledge is presented as a reflection of objective reality. Thus emphasis was upon empiricism.
- (b) Sir Isaac Newton (1642 - 1727) and Edmund Husserl (1859 - 1939) also emphasized the role of observation and experimentation in sciences.

### **3.1.3 Objectivity in the social sciences**

Auguste Comte (1798 - 1857): deliberately formulated the positivistic trends in terms of a definitive system called positivism. In positivism Auguste Comte saw the epilogue of intellectual evolution of humanity and he formulated his famous law of the three stages in thought:

- (a) the theological stage, in which the intervention of the supernatural and divine beings served as a source of knowledge and as an explanation of phenomena
- (b) the metaphysical stage, where abstract rational elements, as for instance essence, form and cause, are established as explanatory principles, and
- (c) the positive stage, where facts are understood in their empirical certainty and phenomenal relations.

To present a positive theoretical picture of the intellectual cosmos Auguste Comte arranged a general hierarchy of the science, classifying them according to their degree of increasing complexity. He arranged them in this order: mathematics, astronomy, physics, biology and, lastly, sociology, which he regarded as the most complicated of all sciences.

For Comte the advent of the natural sciences was therefore the climax of humanity's intellectual development and sociology was above them all. In his opinion science should serve as the foundation not only for the reformation of the community, but also for a new humanistic religion. Led by a scientific priesthood, the sociologist, humanity should be carried to new heights of prosperity and happiness. This concept of a new and scientific era of human thought was widely accepted by the scientists in the second half of the nineteenth century.

### **3.1.4 Differences Between Natural And Social Sciences**

The natural sciences are more exact than the social sciences. This leads to simple laws which enable the natural scientist to make reliable predictions. These laws arrange themselves into a hierarchy. Control can be achieved much more easily in the natural science. Fourthly the mathematical concepts of the natural scientific facts are a sign of exactness.

An example of a social science is psychology. Psychology encounters certain problems. In the first place the psychologist has to consider not only their possible refusal to co-operate but also people's motives in human behaviour.

The ethical code of the psychological scientist makes it difficult for him to exercise control to the same extent as the natural scientist. These normative, regulative, ethical codes limit the psychologist's behaviour in the use of people as tests subjects. Nor can generalisations from animals studies be applied to man without radical modifications. They psychological investigator is sometimes inclined to humanize his information. This lowers its reliability and objectivity.

### **3.2 How is objectivity attained in philosophy?**

This is one of the great bones of contention in modern philosophy because some philosophers intentionally seek for subjectivity and look upon objectivity as the ideal product of the cold reason, whose proper place of abode is the natural sciences. Is philosophy then subjective? The answer is that it is much more difficult to detect prejudices and even more difficult to eradicate them. This shoes not mane that a personal viewpoint must precipitately be relinquished. In philosophy, however, objectivity means the most possible rational justification of a particular viewpoint of theory.

What is more indispensable is the fact that philosophy strives for objectivity in its quest for insight. A clear insight into matters is possible only if we take those matters into consideration. It is of course true that the philosopher may have soft spot for some particular branch of philosophy; and that he may pose his problems from some special stand – point; and that he may philosophize with a basis towards some pet social science. Such failings make it hard to achieve the ideal of objectivity, but this does not necessitate that the idea is unachievable.

**3.3 Philosophy is rational attempt by man to pose, and to determine the validity of , both problems and solutions pertaining to a world-view and a view of life**

By rational attempt we mean this that the philosopher appeals to the rationality of man. From this definition of philosophy, it will be clear that philosophy can employ the experimental method as do the sciences. When we do experiment in sciences, we usually make use of scientific apparatus. The purpose in using scientific apparatus is to minimize employment of the human perceptual mechanism.

Philosophical problems are not solved by the experimental investigations because philosophy does not study empirical phenomena. Philosophy is the manifestation of the rational activity of the human mind. Philosophy is always a purely theoretical reflection, even when it is dealing with a practical region of reality. Philosophy poses problems in relation with the manner in which we talk about objects.

In philosophy, objectivity can only mean, therefore, the most rational possible justification of a particular viewpoint or theory. Objectivity is attainable in one or both of the two ways:

- (a) By playing down the role of the observer as far as possible, that is to say, by substituting experiment for the perceptual structure of the human being.
- (b) By allowing a particular state of affairs to speak for itself; by taking the facts into consideration; by establishing the facts and then formulating theories strictly in the light of the problems which emerge from the facts. In the light of these arguments it is assessable that philosophy is objective.

(c)

**3.4 Basis of knowledge**

Two basic sources are identified and briefly stated as follows:

**(a) Empiricism**

Critical empiricism maintains that only our knowledge of the world is founded on observation: it accepts that there are also statements which are accepted as knowledge by virtue of their logical form. One of the most important premises in science is the supposition that observation forms the basis of all knowledge. This is extreme or radical empiricism. Radical empiricism is therefore unacceptable.

**(b) Rationalism**

On the other hand, we have rationalism. The fundamental thesis of rationalism is that the true being is not catered for by the evidence of the senses, but by pure thought, of which logic is an example. There are two interpretations of the rationalistic view that is *radical rationalism* and *critical rationalism*.

*Radical rationalism* says that only pure reason can understand the true being and world process. It is thus rejected.

*In critical rationalism* a rational idea is regarded as an hypothesis which has to be tested by observation. There is therefore a mutual interdependence between critical empiricism and critical rationalism, giving birth to empirico-rationalism (Marume: 1988).

### III. Conclusion

In conclusion philosophy can be objective by playing down the role of the observer and rationally allowing facts to speak for themselves. In the light of these arguments it is assessable that philosophy is objective.

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### **Learning Objectives**

To be able to:

1. Define the term philosophy
2. Relate influence of natural sciences on objectivity
3. Explain objectivity in social sciences.
4. State differences between natural and social sciences
5. Describe how objectivity is attained in philosophy
6. Explain the basis of knowledgeable