

## Use of philosophy in sciences

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**Abstracts:** Many years of experience point to the general statement that the usefulness and beauty of philosophy lies not so much in the answers that it provides to problems, but in the question which it rationally poses.

**Keywords:** philosophy, problems, answers, questions, poses, rationality and usefulness.

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### I. Introduction

There is a continuous debate about theory and practice and the emphasis is on practical usefulness

#### Purpose Of Article

To demonstrate the use(s) of philosophy.

#### Demonstrating Usefulness Of Philosophy

The usefulness of philosophy needs to be examined in logical manner in this journal article.

#### What Is The Use Of Philosophy?

This question is one about the possibility of the utilization of philosophy. The question supposes a difference between *knowledge and action*, and the attitude related with the question is that philosophy has utility only if it is employable in effecting specific practical operations.

When an academic or scholar doubts the usefulness of philosophy, s/he usually intimates that:

- the study of philosophy does not enable one to get a good job – there is no demand for philosophers in the trades or professions (excluding lectureships at universities); and
- a knowledge of philosophy does not enable one to build an atom bomb, or to increase one's income. However, these naked objections are unsupportable on the following grounds
- philosophy does not mould man for life in the most comprehensive meaning of the word. Philosophy does not train students for some specific occupations as is the case with the special sciences, which cover a very limited field, for example medicine, law, meteorology, physics, psychology, sociology, etc train medical doctors, lawyers, meteorologists, physicists, psychologists, sociologists and so on.
- philosophy is not a subject with specific technical applications for the reason that it does not import knowledge in the same sense as physics, chemistry or economics do. The utility of something is bound up with the task which it has to do. If philosophy has a clear definite task, it automatically follows that it has also a function, where usefulness means measure of the degree to which a clearly defined goals achieved is fulfilled. We are obliged, therefore to consider the task of philosophy.

#### The Scientists' Doubt

Certain scientists doubt the usefulness of philosophy. They contend that all knowledge belongs to a particular special science. Consequently they maintain that there is nothing left for philosophy to study. The most important group for this view is the historical fact that all the sciences originally formed part of philosophy, while they were unscientific. Soon after their objects of study and methods had been unequivocally, clearly, and precisely defined, they developed into independent sciences of specialisations.

Many philosophers are themselves to blame for the existence for the view that nothing has been left over for philosophy to study. Philosophers are to blame principally for not instituting sufficient investigation into precisely what philosophy studies. They have often described philosophy as simply the study of reality, totality, ultimate reality and so on, without paying assiduous attention to the knowability of such objects. The following criticism is a frequent consequence. Either: (a) the pronouncement made by the philosophers are precisely those which we properly expect from the scientist, or (b) the object purportedly studied by philosophy are in fact inaccessible via human means of study.

Should both these objections be valid, then we must immediately grant that philosophy is useless because then either it is a repetition of the special sciences or it is a collection of statements the truth or falsity of which is indeterminable.

### The task of philosophy

Because of the above chief objections, philosophers have attempted to give a more clearly precise distinction of the respective objects studied by philosophy and the special sciences, and also demonstrate the grounds for the statements occurring in philosophy. It is now contended that the special sciences presuppose a certain number of fundamental concepts which these sciences cannot themselves investigate. The scientist's aim is knowledge, but s/he does not investigate these fundamental concepts. The scientist is satisfied if s/he can express statements which s/he can call knowledge statements.

The philosopher then performs the complimentary task of analysing the concept knowledge. There are many other concepts which are fundamental to the special sciences, for instance, "method", "science," "principle" and which can fruitfully be investigated by the philosopher. The philosopher's function is not restricted in scope to the field of the sciences. He is concerned as well as with the analysis of various views as to the nature of human life. Man utters scientific statements and statements about values. He approves some moral acts and attempts to account for why he condemns certain other acts. He appeals to a universally accepted idea of "The Good". Role of the philosopher's task lies within this field: he institutes an investigation in connection with Man's value judgements. He tries, by analysis, to throw light not on that which is called good or bad, but on the meaning of the concepts "good" and "bad" within the context in which they are employed.

### Theory and practice

We must next answer a very important question concerning the distinction between *theory and practice*. If we regard man's practical life as a life of action, may we claim that a man's views about reality influences his life of action? Our answer is definitely positive, for these reasons:

- (a) The interpretation of a given situation and the conceiving of possible courses of action is based upon: knowledge of the situation; knowledge of the implication of the situation; knowledge of the envisaged goals; and knowledge of the channels to attain that goal.
- (b) Our views as to what has value form part of our mental life and influence our setting of goals and consequently our behaviour on the stage of the world.

### Use of philosophy

If our view as stated above is correct, it must be conceded that philosophy is useful in that it can help us to modify our theoretical views. *Bertrand Russell* says that the most vital function of philosophy is the enrichment of the humans spirit; the helping of men to attain greater objectivity in judging matters. In what ways does philosophy contribute to this end?

Answers to the question:

- (a) The philosopher *approaches the world with an open mind* because he is only too conscious of the high degree of uncertainty in his subject. He appreciates that the simplest things lead to problems which have never been solved. Philosophy may not be able with certainty to decree which answers are correct, but it promotes insight into matters because it compels us to envisage all possibility to a problem.
- (b) Philosophy encourages an *attitude of impartiality* because it involves a study of the subjective factors which influence our knowledge.

### Summary

The usefulness of philosophy lies not in the answers which it provides to problems, but in the questions which it poses. This is so because these questions enrich human thought and man himself. They broaden his approach to the world. They give him keener insight into both the world which exists independently of him and the world of which his behaviour is an integral part. Philosophy gives man insight into his spiritual activities and teaches him to assess his conduct with respect to knowledge and values.

## II. Conclusion

In conclusion, philosophy is charged with a failure to reproduce results, Now it must be admitted that, unlike science has produced motor cars, electric light and anaesthesia as well as poison gas, explosive bombs and fast flying aeroplanes from which they may be dropped upon defenseless people, philosophy has no definite concrete results to show. For philosophy has no definite concrete result to show. For philosophy is concerned not so much with producing as with understanding. Philosophy is the manifestation of the rational activity of the human mind. It is a purely theoretical reflection.

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### **Learning Objectives**

To be able to:

- Define and explain the use of philosophy
- Explain the relation between philosophy and sciences
- Describe the connection between theory and practice