

PHILOSOPHY 115
PHILOSOPHY OF THE HUMAN PERSON
HANDOUT #1

WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY?

Philosophy as a Way of Life

Philosophy consists in keeping the *daimon* within a man from violence and unharmed, superior to pains and pleasures, doing nothing without a purpose, nor yet falsely and with hypocrisy, not feeling the need of another man's doing or not doing anything; and besides accepting all that happens, and all that is allotted, as coming from thence, wherever it is, from whence he himself came; and finally, waiting for death with a cheerful mind.

—Marcus Aurelius (121-180 AD)

There are nowadays professors of philosophy, but not philosophers. Yet it is admirable to profess because it was once admirable to live. To be a philosopher is not merely to have subtle thoughts, nor even to found a school, but so to love wisdom as to live in accordance with its dictates, a life of simplicity, independence, magnanimity, and trust. It is to solve some of the problems of life, not only theoretically, but practically.

—Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862)

Observe, this is the beginning of philosophy, a perception of the disagreement of men with one another, and an inquiry into the cause of the disagreement, and a condemnation and distrust of that which only 'seems' and a certain investigation of that which 'seems' whether it 'seems' rightly, and a discovery of some rule, as we have discovered a balance in the determination of weights, and a carpenter's rule in the case of straight and crooked things. This is the beginning of philosophy.

—Epictetus (50-130 AD)

Philosophy as Method of Analysis

The object of philosophy is the logical clarification of thoughts. Philosophy is not a theory, but an activity. A philosophical work consists essentially of elucidations. The result of philosophy is not a number of philosophical propositions, but to make propositions clear.

—Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951)

I believe science should be defined as 'the pursuit of truth,' and philosophy as 'the pursuit of meaning.' It is my opinion that the future of philosophy hinges critically on this distinction between the discovery of sense and the discovery of truth.

—Moritz Schlick (1883-1936)

The analytic conception of philosophy developed very naturally into a “therapeutic” conception of it. The philosopher’s job, it was said, is to cure us of muddles or headaches generated by language: either by everyday language or by the technical language of science. But it would appear that nobody could suffer from headaches of that particular sort unless he were already a philosopher...And so we witness the curious spectacle of the professional philosopher deliberately and methodically causing the headaches which he is subsequently going to cure. The student spends the first year of his philosophy course catching the disease, and then spends the second year being cured of it. A strange sort of therapy! But unless things were done that way, the therapist would have no patients.

—H. H. Price, *Clarity is not Enough*

Philosophy as a Body of Knowledge

Two Chinese traveling in Europe went to the theater for the first time. One of them did nothing but study the machinery, and he succeeded in finding out how it worked. The other tried to get at the meaning of the piece in spite of his ignorance of the language. Here you have the astronomer and the philosopher.

—Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860)

The object of philosophy is to take over the results of the various sciences, add to them the results of religion and the ethical experiences of mankind and then reflect upon the whole, hoping to be able to reach some general conclusions as to the nature of the universe and as to our position and prospects in it.

—C. D. Broad (1887-1971)

Philosophy is not one among the sciences, with its own little scheme of abstraction which it works away at perfecting and improving. It is the survey of the sciences, with the special object of their harmony and of their completion.

—Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947)

As the sciences have settled area after area of his original domain, the philosopher has pushed on to the outer edge of things. The physical frontier, we are told, has ceased to exist—so far, at any rate, as America is concerned. There is no more free land. But the passing of the intellectual frontier is not in sight. There is plenty of free land beyond the areas which religion and the sciences have fenced and cultivated, and brought under the rule of law and order. The philosopher lives on this frontier and makes crude charts of the region which lies beyond. In the nature of the case, the mass of mankind must remain in the settled communities, while the pioneers must be few and sparsely distributed. But it has always been true in America that some flavor of the frontier spirit has pervaded even the settled communities—some love of freedom, some boldness of action, some primitive sense of fair play. So it is not unreasonable to suggest that the great body of normal, sane, practical, respectable people with whom philosophy is not a vocation, will, especially if they be American and have the blood of frontiersmen in their veins, nevertheless find the essential spirit of philosophy congenial. The will, perhaps, wish to make occasional excursions for themselves; but in any case, they will respect those qualities of mind that prompt other men to plunge into the deep waters and roam the trackless forests of the great intellectual adventure.

—Ralph Barton Perry (1876-1957)