

Philosophy of the Human Person

Lecture #13

Introduction to Philosophy

1. Branches of Philosophy

Logic—the art directive of the acts of reason themselves

This is necessary preparation for doing philosophy, as it teaches the method of reasoning

Substantive Philosophy has two parts

Speculative (or Theoretical) Philosophy

This part of philosophy tells us something about being (or, the way the world is). Its branches include studies of particular kinds of being

of physical being—the philosophy of nature

of human being—philosophical anthropology

of divine being—philosophical theology

Practical Philosophy

This part of philosophy tells us something about goodness (or, the way we should act). Its branches include

Ethics—the second required course at UST

Political Philosophy

2. Three Conceptions of Philosophy

“Philosophy”—“the love of wisdom”—can be understood in different ways.

Handout #1 shows three ways

(i) Philosophy as a Way of Life

here, philosophy looks more like religion (though not like theology)

“a view of the world as a whole and the individual’s place in it”¹

especially prominent in periods under heavy classical (or weak Christian) influence

¹ One of William Alston’s religion-making characteristics (“Religion,” *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* 7:141); cf. also John Finnis’ definition of religion (*Natural Law & Nature Rights*).

philosophy *is* grounded in an attitude of wonder, a disposition to ask questions [cf. Epictetus]

those who cannot feel this will never really understand philosophy
wonder could be...

constructive — “how could this view be defended?”

sceptical— “is this view even right?”

where “this view” could be...

conventional wisdom

the ideas of an unconventional teacher

the teachings of the Church

but Christian revelation changes things too much

centrality of theology for Christian intellectual thought

what becomes of philosophy?—two solutions

St Justin Martyr’s—philosophy names a way of life, but
includes appeal to revelation

St Thomas Aquinas’—philosophy does not include revelation
perhaps an important activity or discipline
not a way of life

(ii) Philosophy as Logical or Conceptual Analysis

what do we mean by ...?

e.g., will, mind, freedom, causality, thought, perception

this is important, but it can be taken too far [cf. Price]

(iii) Philosophy as a Body of Knowledge

philosophy as “the love of *wisdom*”

wisdom as knowledge of the most important things

especially about God & man (the soul, ethics)

philosophy as one branch of human knowledge

historically, philosophy as intellectual activity in general

contemporary division of the sciences (on basis of method)

based on revelation— theology

(NB: theology can also be defined in terms of *content*

this requires distinction between natural (philosophical)
& sacred theology)

based on natural reason alone

independent of experience— mathematics

based on experience

common experience— philosophy

special experience— the sciences

implications of the division for this course

philosophy & theology—here, a respect for revelation, but no
reliance on it to furnish premises
philosophy & the sciences—attention to the results of special
investigative techniques, but not use of them
philosophy as
the point of contact between diverse disciplines
relevance of theology to cosmology & *vice versa*
synthesis of various disciplines [cf. Broad, Whitehead]
residual discipline
William James’ pessimism—philosophy as “a collective name
for questions which have not yet been answered to the
satisfaction of all who have asked them”
contrast Perry’s optimism

II. Method

The philosophical method includes two activities
The induction of principles
The construction of arguments
It is not theological, i.e., based on revelation (Scripture, Tradition, or the
magisterium, the teaching authority of the Church)
Nor is it scientific (in the new sense of the word), i.e., grounded in
experimental inquiry or special observational techniques
But it can offer “a systematic body of knowledge”

III. Philosophy & The Student

There are two distinct “levels” of understanding in philosophy
First is the doxographical, or “opinion-describing” level—
knowing what various authors said, and
knowing why they said it
Second is the epistemocentric—
evaluating the arguments, and
developing arguments oneself
Two things are important to remember in doing philosophy
First, the truth of a claim does not mean
(a) that any particular argument for it is sound
(b) that there is any *known* philosophical defense of it
(c) that any philosophical defense of it can be made at all

Second, the falsity of a conclusion does mean that there is something wrong with the argument; it is important to figure out what the problem is (e.g., which of the premises are false)