

LOGIC AND CRITICAL THINKING

COURSE CODE: PHIL 1011

Course Instructor Minda W.

College of Social Science and Humanities
Arba Minch University
October, 2019

Chapter one

Introducing philosophy

CONTENTS

- ❖ MEANING AND NATURE OF PHILOSOPHY
- ❖ BASIC FEATURES OF PHILOSOPHY
- ❖ CORE BRANCHES OF PHILOSOPHY
- ❖ IMPORTANCES OF LEARNING PHILOSOPHY

Chapter Objectives:

- ***Dear learners,*** after the successful completion of this chapter, you will be able to:
 - Understand the meaning, nature and features of philosophy;
 - Recognize the major fields of philosophy; and
 - Understand why it is so important to learn logic and philosophy.

Meaning and Nature of philosophy

- Its difficult to giving a clear-cut definition to philosophy, because philosophy has no a specific subject matter to primarily deal with.

- **Etymologically**, the word —*philosophy* comes from two Greek words:
philo and —*sophia*, which mean —*love* and *wisdom*, respectively. Thus, the literal definition of philosophy is “*love of wisdom*”.
- Greek thinker Pythagoras was the first to use the word *philosopher* to call a person who clearly shows a marked eager wish to learn clearly (curiosity) in the things he experiences.

- **Raising the following questions showing a curiosity**
 - Does God exists?**
 - What is reality?**
 - What is the ultimate source of Being?**
 - What is knowledge?**
 - How do we come to know?**
 - What is value?**
- **Philosophy** is a rational and critical enterprise that tries to formulate and answer fundamental questions through an intensive application of reason- an application that draws on analysis, comparison, and evaluation.

Cont.

- It involves reason, rational criticism, examination, and analysis.
- ***philosophy is an activity***; it is not something that can be easily mastered or learned in schools.
- What makes someone a great philosopher is not the produced philosophy, but his/her outstanding ability to philosophize.
- ***To understand philosophy***;
Read different thoughts of philosophers,
Consciously see its salient features by yourself,
Participate in it, and
Do it.

Basic Features of Philosophy

8

- ❖ **Philosophy is a set of views or beliefs about life and the universe, which are often held uncritically (**having**)**
When a person says my philosophy is, he or she is referring to an informal personal attitude to whatever topic is being discussed.
- ❖ **Philosophy is a process of reflecting on and criticizing our most deeply held conceptions and beliefs (**doing**)**
“having and doing are interdependent**”.**
- **The accumulation of knowledge does not by itself lead to understanding, because it does not necessarily teach the mind to make a *critical evaluation***

- ❖ **Philosophy is a rational attempt to look at the world as a whole.** Philosophy seeks to combine the conclusions of the various sciences and human experience into some kind of consistent worldview.
- ❖ **Philosophy is the logical analysis of language and the clarification of the meaning of words and concepts.**
- ❖ **Philosophy is a group of perennial problems that interest people and for which philosophers always have sought answers. - mere questions are not philosophical, rather fact. What is life? Why am I here? Do things operate by chance or through sheer mechanism? Is my life controlled by outside forces ?**

- The attempt to seek answers to those lead to rise of theories and systems of thought;- idealism, realism, pragmatism, analytic philosophy, existentialism, phenomenology.
- **NB** Philosophy is better seen as asking the right questions rather than providing the correct answers. “*Philosophy is the study of questions*”.
- Van Cleve Morris has noted that ‘the crux of the matter is *asking the right questions*’.

Core Branches of philosophy

11

❖ **Branches of philosophy are:-**

Metaphysics

Is the most important fields of philosophy that deal with the studies of ultimate reality or existence.

Metaphysicians seek an irreducible foundation of reality

It deal with issues of reality, God, freedom, soul/immortality, the mind-body problem, form and substance relationship, cause and effect relationship, and other related issues.

- **The term *metaphysics*** is derived from the Greek words “*meta*” means (beyond, upon or —after) and *physika*, means (physics). Literally, it refers those things after the physics.

Questions that Metaphysics primarily deals with are:-

- 1, Are human actions free, or predetermined by a supernatural force?*
- 2, Does God exist, and if so, can we prove it?*
- 3, What is reality?*

□ **Metaphysical questions may be divided into four subsets or aspects:-**

A. *Cosmological Aspect:* is the study of theories about the origin, nature, and development of the universe.

B. *Theological Aspect:* is the religious theory that deals with conceptions of and about God.

Is there a God? is there one or more than one?

What are the attributes of God? If God is both all good and all powerful, why does evil exist?

C. *Anthropological Aspect:*

What is humanity's moral status? Are people born good, evil, or morally neutral? Do they have free will, or are their thoughts and actions determined by their environment, inheritance, or a divine being?

D. *Ontological Aspect:*

□ is the study of the nature of existence, or what it means for anything to exist.

Epistemology

14

- **Is the field of philosophy that studies about the nature, scope, validity, meaning, and possibility of knowledge.**
- **It deals with issues of knowledge, opinion, truth, falsity, reason, experience, and faith.**
- ***What is knowledge?***
- ***What does it mean to know?***
- ***What is the source of knowledge? Experience? Reason? Or both?***
- ***How can we be sure that what we perceive through our senses is correct?***
- ***What makes knowledge different from belief or opinion?***
- ***What is the relationship and difference between faith and reason?***

Cont.

- ❖ **Skepticism** in its narrow sense is the position claiming that people cannot acquire reliable knowledge and that any search for truth is in vain.
- Gorgias, the Greek Sophist who asserted that nothing exists, and that if it did, we could not know it.
- A full-blown skepticism would make intelligent action impossible.
- ❖ **Agnosticism** is a profession of ignorance in reference to the existence or nonexistence of God.

- Sources of human knowledge are:-
- **Empiricism** (knowledge obtained through the senses *and* through experiences)
- **Rationalism** (source of human knowledge is reason. The view that reasoning, thought, or logic is the central factor in knowledge).
- **Intuition** *knowledge feeling*/immediate feeling of certainty.
- **Revelation** revealed knowledge has been of prime importance in the field of religion.
- **Authority:** authoritative knowledge is

Axiology

17

- **Axiology** is the study or theory of value.
- The term Axiology stems from two Greek words- **Axios**, meaning value, worth, and **logos**, meaning reason/ theory/ symbol / science/study of.
- **Axiology** is the philosophical study of value, which originally meant the worth of something.

Philosophical **questions of Axiology**

- ❖ *What is a value?*
- *Where do values come from?*
- ❖ *How do we justify our values?*
- ❖ *Who benefits from values?*

- **Axiology deals with the above and related issues of value in three areas, namely**

Ethics/Moral philosophy

Normative-ethics (study and determine precisely the moral rules, principles and standards by which human beings might evaluate and judge the moral values of their conducts, actions and decisions. ***Consequentialism or Teleological Ethics, Deontological Ethics, and Virtue Ethics***)

Meta ethics (deals with investigation of the meaning of ethical terms. What is *good or bad and right or wrong*)

Applied Ethics (explain, justify, apply moral rules, principles, standards, and positions to specific moral problems, such as capital punishment, euthanasia, abortion etc.)

Aesthetics (theory of beauty)

It deals with beauty, art, enjoyment, sensory/emotional values, perception, and matters of taste and sentiment.

- *What is art?*
- *What is beauty?*
- *What is the relation between art and beauty?*
- *What is the connection between art, beauty, and truth?*

Social/political philosophy

20

- ❖ It studies about of the value judgments operating in a civil society, be it social or political.
- ❖ **It raises questions like:**
 - *What form of government is best?*
 - *What economic system is best?*
 - *What is justice/injustice?*
 - *What is society?*
 - *Does society exist? If it does, how does it come to existence?*

Logic

21

- ***Logic*** is the study or theory of principles of right reasoning.
- It deals with formulating the right principles of reasoning; and developing scientific methods of evaluating the validity and soundness of arguments.
- It raises the ff questions:

What is an argument; What does it mean to argue?
What makes an argument valid or invalid
What is a sound argument? Etc.

Importance of Learning philosophy

- provides students with the tools they need to critically examine their own lives as well as the world in which they live.

“The unexamined life is not worth living.”

- *Intellectual and Behavioral Independence*
- *Reflective Self-Awareness*
- *Flexibility, Tolerance, and Open-Mindedness*
- *Conceptualized and well-thought-out value systems in morality, art, politics, and etc.*
- *Creative and Critical Thinking*
- helps us to deal with *the uncertainty of living*

END OF CHAPTER ONE

