

## Introducing Philosophy

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“*Philosophy*” is a word that has grossly been misunderstood, let alone represented. It is too misrepresented to the extent that its very mention evokes many varied reactions from people of all walks of life. Some think it is irrelevant, remote and complex. Others hold that it is “other -worldly”, only for the brilliant or eccentric thinkers spending all their time needlessly splitting hairs as well as demolishing this or that argument while positing their position. These and many other ideas obviously do not rightly shed light on the true nature of Philosophy as a discipline, area of interest or subject. In fact, Philosophy is far much simpler than many suppose because of its all pervasive nature both in life and thoughts. In order to dispel some misconceptions on this matter, we propose to highlight some salient features on this subject offering a workable conclusion for future application. To achieve our objective, we subdivide this subject into multiple sub heads commencing with a short historical narrative and ending with a summary:

### **A short Historical Narrative of Philosophy**

Philosophy has been around for many centuries, from the beginning of time. However with time, it became more organized, used in every day parlance as an aspect of life. With the passage of time, the people begun to limit philosophical discussions to a special select elite group of people. One possible explanation is that some radical thinkers invaded the “art” changing its face and to some extent, its nature thus making it appear more technical, complex and reserved for lofty minded. As a result of this development, the common man assumed that philosophy was for a select group of people with specialized training or for those so inclined towards it. Today, Philosophy is taken to be a special calling, course or aspect of life, when in actual reality, it is part of daily life because people use it to make literary thousands of decisions based on their life view philosophical approach. In the academia, it is taken as a course but more and more, people realize that each discipline has an underlying “philosophy” that drives it. The Christian therefore can and should engage in philosophy or philosophical thinking as it is all-pervasively part of our daily lives.

### **Philosophy Defined**

Philosophy has been defined variously (including: '*the love of Wisdom*' or simply '*wisdom*' or theologically "*the disciplined attempt to articulate and defend*

*a worldview,*" according to John Frame (2015)) but we offer a constructed definition as "*the premise from which a person reasons, makes decisions and perceptions to life consistent with their world view*". From this basic definition, we can see that it is an integral aspect of our lives because it arises from what we believe as the truth, correct and workable framework making our lives logical and sane. Further, this definition suggests that these convictions also guide our decision making framework, which sets the parameters what we regard as right or wrong. In addition, a world view eventually is formed based on what philosophy one holds and seeks to operate from. But we need to say that Philosophy can equally be viewed as consisting of at least three broad basic components: Epistemology (i.e. theory of knowledge and how we know etc.), Ethics (i.e. what is perceived as right or wrong practice, deed. Could be perceived moral or immoral actions etc.) and Metaphysics (i.e. has to do with the nature of things, world around us, reality and how to relate to them etc.) (Poythress 2014). Others add Axiology and Logic to this bouquet. In academic discourses, the basic three branches with a few additional components constitute "*Philosophy*".

From the foregoing, it is abundantly clear that philosophy is an inescapable fact of life. If you imbibe a good philosophy, then expect a good outcome but if it is bad, then expect a terrible faulty outcome by that token.

### **Why Philosophy is Viewed thus Today**

Philosophy is viewed in different light right across the world. From a once favoured aspect of everyday life in ancient times, it has attracted varied perceptions from all quarters of life, both good and bad. One school views philosophy as for a chosen few inclined towards its exploitation and use. Another views it as complex and far removed from reality, at times irrelevant to everyday life. Still another school of thought perceives it a discipline worth avoiding and opposing at every turn because it is not only time wasting but harmfully useless, especially for the Christian. But Philosophy may be said to be neutral until measured against the touch stone of religion, such as Christianity, Islam or any other ideology Philosophy is basically a set of principles from which people judge the world. In short, philosophy is viewed as such because of the perceived usefulness (or lack of it) and relevance to every day life.

### **Why Philosophy Study is Opposed**

As earlier alluded to in the immediate past sub-head, philosophy is perceived in different light from being encouraged, embraced and loved to being hated,

opposed and rejected. But why should one accept while another rejects it? The answer is not simple to arrive at but the root cause could lie in its historical development, much like other terms has attracted some negative clout in some minds, hence the opposition or reservations. Others do not view it as relevant to everyday life but belonging to an elite few delighting engaging in endless verbal squabbles or arguments over nothing really. In short, Philosophy is viewed as a time waster of one's precious scarce quality time. For instance, why should one waste their time studying what *Aristotle* or *Homer* stood for? Why plague ones brain with Kant or some other philosophical thinker from the irretrievable past, if there is so much to learn from the present complex world? For these and other reasons, one is bound to oppose Philosophy or it's pursuit.

### **The Relevance of Philosophy in the Past and the Present**

Philosophy is all pervasive and affects all areas of our lives. Our world view is affected by our philosophical outlook. It therefore sets the framework and premise from which one responds to the world around them. If this be the case, then philosophy must be awfully critical and important to ones constitution. If the philosophical make up is based on disjointed and fragmented philosophical frame work, chances are that it will not be integrated and therefore inconsistent, if not contradictory at several points. It must be well developed and sound at the base if it is to be of meaningful help. In the past, Philosophy was part of everyday life but with the advent of the radicals, it took on a complex and far removed tone from everyday life to the point where it is today regarded as a special discipline meant for a select few. However, things have been changing over time as the aura and mystery surrounding it is removed. The removal of the veil makes things different for the common man.

### **What Others have Said About Philosophy**

Different people have said varying things about philosophy as to its relevance today, especially for Christians. For instance Professor Alvin Plantinga holds that philosophy must be embraced by all Christians today. Though once rejected or treated with suspicion in the past, philosophy has a critical and unique place both in ones' thinking frame and presentation of the gospel. The Christian needs to engage in many projects to argue their case from several fronts and premises advocating for theistic world view. Dr Johnson C Philip summarizes it well when he says "*thus philosophy, rightly seen, is that set of fundamental observations and deductions that helps one to grasp truth about material and non material world. Such information is an essential part of life, and nobody therefore can avoid philosophy*" (What is philosophy).

### **Implications And Lessons Gleaned**

As one reads through Dr Philip's brief paper introducing Philosophy, they cannot not help realize just how critical philosophy is to life and progress. It intrigues one to realize that philosophy adds meaning to life as it opens up the world to one's direction and perception. Right thinking people also discover just how important it is to have a well orb'd and developed philosophy underlying every reaction, perceptions and world view. One ignores this critical matter at their own peril. Philosophy is key to life, everyone has a philosophy of sorts by which they live, move and react to the world around them. It is a world view.

## **Conclusion**

It has abundantly been demonstrated that contrary to popular opinion or what folks propagate today, Philosophy is both relevant and necessary to life. It all pervasively encompasses all premises from which a person operates and reacts to the world. It is by that token far more significant than many realize, a starting point for all decision making. If one's philosophy is not well other, developed, integrated and refined, expect inconsistencies and problems along the way. Philosophy cannot be ignored, whiled away or relegated to the terraces. To do so is to invite trouble, disaster and self destruction. The positive and right thing to do is to embrace it while ensuring its right aspects are internalized.

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