
PHILOSOPHY

At the end of this lesson, students are going to learn:

- What is philosophy?
- Which topics or problems philosophers are working on or solving?
- What are the main aims of philosophical studies?
- Who are the famous names in this field?
- What are the main methods used in philosophy?
- What importance philosophy has in our lives?
- What relation philosophy has with language studies?

1. The Definition of Philosophy :

The word "philosophy" comes from the ancient Greek (**Philosophia**), which literally means "love of wisdom". The introduction of the terms "philosopher" and "philosophy" has been ascribed to the Greek thinker **Pythagoras**. Philosophy is divided into many sub-fields. These include epistemology, logic, metaphysics, ethics, aesthetics, etc.

2. Its Main Topics

Philosophy is the study of general and fundamental problems, such as those connected with reality, existence, knowledge, values, reason, mind and language. Philosophy is distinguished from other ways of addressing such problems by its critical, generally systematic approach and its reliance on rational argument.

These are the most common problems raised by philosophy and most philosophers are concerned with:

- **Logic**: What are the foundations and principles of sound reasoning?
- **Science**: What are the foundations of our scientific and technological knowledge?
- **Language**: What does language have to do with human thought?
- **Meaning**: What is the meaning and how do we succeed in representing one thing by another?
- **Ethics**: What are the foundations of the judgments that acts or the men who commit them are good or bad, and in what sense are such judgments true or different from mere matters of taste?
- **Aesthetics**: What makes beautiful things appear beautiful or ugly, and what is the use of having an aesthetical capacity?
- **Self**: Whether there is a self, and if so, what it is and what is its foundation, or, if not, what is the reason for this popular delusion?
- **Death**: Whether death indeed is final, what is the point of fearing something one will never experience, and whether there is anything else than self-contradiction in the belief in life or a judgment after death.

- **Happiness:** What is happiness; how does one find it; and why should one look for it, especially if everyone seems natural to know what feels good and what does not feel good?
- **The good life:** What a human individual should and should not do, believe and desire to lead a good life.

3. Greatest Philosophers in History:

- **Avicenna** (c.980-1037) Persian. Helped bring the works and ideas of Aristotle to Europe. Avicenna was an early Islamic philosopher who wrote extensively on the topics of ethics, metaphysics, and logic.
- **Socrates** (c.469 BC-c.399 BC): Greek. One of the founders of Western Philosophy. He created the Socratic Method which is commonly used for determining the ethics of an issue.
- **Plato** (c.428 BC-c.348 BC) Greek Founder of the Theory of the Tripartite Soul. As one of the founders of Western thought, Plato helped shape ideas about government and societies throughout the centuries.
- **Aristotle** (384 BC-322 BC) Greek Wrote the *Nicomachean Ethics* about practical ethics.
- **Rene Descartes** (1596-1650) French. The Father of Modern Philosophy. Known for his statement, “I think, therefore I am,” Descartes questioned everything from the existence of God to his own existence.
- **John Locke** (1632-1704) English Known as the Father of Liberalism Locke was an influential philosopher whose writings helped spark the American Revolution. Some of his ideas were even implemented in the Declaration of Independence.
- **Jean Jacques Rousseau** (1712-1778) Genevan Wrote *A Discourse on the Arts and Sciences*. He Created *The Social Contract* which was an outline for a form of government.
- **Immanuel Kant** (1724-1804) German. He published *Critique of Pure Reason*. Kant believed that all of our experiences are filtered through our rational minds. As a result, there is a difference between what we believe and how things really are.
- **Karl Marx** (1818-1883) German. He wrote *The Communist Manifesto and Das Kapital*. His ideas and publications helped lay the groundwork for modern-day socialism and communism.
- **Bertrand Russel** (1872-1970) British founder of analytic philosophy. Russell wrote nearly every aspect of philosophy, including language, mathematics and religion.

4. Research Methods in Philosophy

In its most common sense, **philosophical methodology** is the field of inquiry studying the methods used to do philosophy. But the term can also refer to the methods themselves. It may be understood in a wide sense as the general study of principles used for theory selection, or in a narrower sense as the study of ways of conducting one's research and theorizing with the goal of acquiring philosophical knowledge:

- **Methodological skepticism** uses systematic doubt in its search for the first philosophies absolutely certain or unmistakable.
- The **geometrical method** starts with a small set of principles and tries to build a comprehensive philosophical system based on deduction.
- The **phenomenological method** aims to arrive at certain knowledge about the realm of appearances by suspending one's judgments about the external world underlying these appearances.
- **Conceptual analysis** is used to analyze philosophical concepts by determining their fundamental constituents with the goal of clarifying their meaning.
- **Common-sense philosophy** uses commonly accepted beliefs as its starting point for philosophizing.
- **Intuition-based methods** use intuitions, i.e. non-inferential impressions concerning specific cases or general principles, to evaluate whether a philosophical claim is true or false.

5. The Importance of Philosophy:

All human beings orient their lives around ideas about what reality is like, that they believe explain their experiences and ideas about what reality and human beings should be like, that they use to guide their behaviour. Philosophy has had an enormous influence on our everyday lives. By studying philosophy, people can clarify what they believe, and they can be stimulated to think about ultimate questions. The study of philosophy enhances a person's problem-solving capacities.

- It helps us learn how to think. And the more we practice philosophy, the more we have a chance to keep our thinking skills sharp.
- It helps us to analyze concepts, definitions, arguments, and problems.
- It contributes to our capacity to organize ideas and issues, deal with questions of value, and extract what is essential from large quantities of information.

6. Philosophy & Language Studies

Philosophical interest in language is maintained by foundational and conceptual questions in linguistics, quintessentially philosophical problems about the connections between mind, language and the world, and issues about philosophical methodology. It is concerned with four central problems: the nature of meaning, language use, language cognition, and the relationship between language and reality. Topics in that vein include the nature of synonymy, the origins of meaning itself, and how any meaning can ever really be known. The investigation into the manner in which sentences are composed into a meaningful whole out of their meaningful parts; and how or if the meanings of such complexes are derived from the meanings of parts thereof.

Philosophers of language seek to better understand what speakers and listeners do with language in communication, and how it is used socially. Specific interests may include the topics of language learning, language creation and speech acts. They would like to know how language relates to the minds of both the speaker and the interpreter. They investigate also how language and meaning relate to the truth and the world.

Studying philosophy enables students to engage with the world and think critically. Philosophy is important for Education in-class debates and discussions. This can take many forms. During formal debate – such as public forum debate – students may develop, prepare and deliver arguments that they do not hold to be true or which go against their personal intuitions or beliefs. In this case, the focus is on promoting perspective and sympathy with points of view counter to one's own, promoting sensitivity to logical inference and fallacy, and developing the skills of public speaking.