

and Why it is Worth Studying

always attainable—of a good philosophy. That being so, concepts apparently the most remote from practical interests may vitally affect others which touch ordinary life far more nearly.

So philosophy need not fear the question—What is its practical value? At the same time a purely pragmatic view of philosophy is one which I by no means approve. Philosophy is not to be valued only for its indirect practical effects but for itself; and the best way of securing these good practical effects is to pursue philosophy for its own sake. In order to find truth we must aim at it disinterestedly. It may be practically useful when found, but premature concern about its practical effects will only handicap us in trying to find out what is really true. Still less can we make its practical effects the criterion of its truth. Beliefs are useful because they are true, not true because they are useful.¹

MAIN DIVISIONS OF PHILOSOPHY

The following are commonly recognized sub-classes of the subject, philosophy.

(1) *Metaphysics*.² This is conceived as the study of the nature of reality in its most general aspects in so far as this can be achieved by us. It deals with such questions as—What is the relation between matter and mind? Which is primary? Are men free? Is the self a substance or only a series of experiences? Is the universe infinite? Does God exist? How far is the universe a unity and how far a diversity? How far, if at all, is it a rational system?

(2) To metaphysics (or speculative philosophy, as it is sometimes called) there has recently been very often opposed '*Critical Philosophy*'. This consists in an analysis and criticism of the concepts of common sense and the sciences. The sciences presuppose certain concepts which are not themselves susceptible of investigation by scientific methods and therefore fall in the province of philosophy. Thus all sciences except mathematics presuppose in some form the conception of natural law, and to examine this is

¹ For my criticism of the 'pragmatist' attitude *vide* below, pp. 56-7, 66-7.

² The term owes its origin to the fact that it was discussed in the work of Aristotle which was put next in order after (*meta*) his work on Physics.

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the business of philosophy and not of any particular science. Similarly, we in our most ordinary and unphilosophical conversation presuppose concepts which fairly bristle with philosophical problems—matter, mind, cause, substance, number. It is an important task of philosophy to analyse these concepts and see what they really mean and how far their application in the common-sense fashion can be justified. The part of critical philosophy which consists in investigating the nature and criterion of truth and the manner in which we can know is called *Epistemology* (theory of knowledge). It deals with such questions as—How are we to define truth? What is the distinction between knowledge and belief? Can we ever know anything with certainty? What are the relative functions of reasoning, intuition, and sense-experience?

The present book will be concerned with these two branches of philosophy as constituting its most fundamental and characteristically philosophical part. Allied to philosophy in the sense in which it is handled in this book, but distinct from it and having a certain independence of their own, are the following branches of study.

ALLIED BRANCHES OF STUDY

(1) Difficult to separate from epistemology but still regarded commonly as a distinct discipline is *Logic*. This is a study of the different kinds of propositions and the relations between them which justify inference. Some parts of it have very considerable affinities to mathematics, others might equally well be classed as belonging to epistemology.

(2) *Ethics* or *Moral Philosophy* deals with values and with the conception of 'ought'. It asks such questions as—What is the chief good? What is the definition of good? Is the rightness of an act dependent solely on its consequences? Are our judgments about what we ought to do objective or subjective? What is the function of punishment? What is the ultimate reason why we ought not to tell lies?

(3) *Political Philosophy* is the application of philosophy (mainly ethics) to questions relating to individuals as organized in a state.

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It considers such questions as—Has the individual rights against the state? Is the state anything over and above the individuals in it? Is democracy the best form of government?

(4) *Aesthetics* is the application of philosophy to the consideration of art and the beautiful. It asks such questions as—Is beauty objective or subjective? What is the function of art? To what sides of our nature do the various kinds of beauty appeal?

(5) The more general term—*Value Theory*—is sometimes used to cover the study of value as such, though this might be put under the heading of ethics or moral philosophy. Certainly we may think of value as a general conception particular species and applications of which are handled by (2), (3) and (4).

ATTEMPT TO EXCLUDE METAPHYSICS OPEN TO OBJECTION THAT WE CANNOT HAVE EVEN CRITICAL PHILOSOPHY WITHOUT METAPHYSICS

Various attempts, some of which will be discussed later, have been made to exclude metaphysics as wholly unjustifiable and to confine philosophy to critical philosophy and the five allied branches of study just mentioned in so far as these can be regarded as an account and critical study of concepts of science and practical life. This view has sometimes been expressed by saying that philosophy consists or rather should consist in the analysis of common-sense propositions. This, if meant as an exclusive account, is clearly going too far. For (1) even if there can be no legitimate positive metaphysics, there will certainly be a branch of study the business of which it is to refute the fallacious arguments that have been at least supposed to lead to metaphysical conclusions, and this branch will obviously be part of philosophy. (2) Unless common-sense propositions are wholly false, to analyse them will be to give a general account of that portion of the real with which they are concerned, i.e. to provide at any rate part of the general account of the real which metaphysics seeks to give. Thus, if minds exist at all—and obviously they exist in some sense—the analysis of common-sense propositions about ourselves, in so far as these common-sense propositions are true—and it is quite in-