

MODULE TWO
METHODS OF PHILOSOPHY

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Philosophy is an activity with different Methods, approaches, modes or styles some of which include: Speculative, Prescriptive, Analytic and Historical.

SPECULATIVE PHILOSOPHY

Speculative philosophy is a way of thinking systematically about everything that exists. It tries to understand how all the different things that have been discovered together form some sort of meaningful totality. Speculative philosophy is therefore a search for order and wholesomeness applied not to particular items or experience. It is an attempt to find coherence in the whole realm of thoughts and experience.

The term “speculative” derives from the Latin words *specto*, *speculatio*, and *speculator*. *Speculum* means mirror and the notions of reflection, reflective consciousness and relatedness figure prominently in certain speculative philosophies, especially German Idealism. Literally, the Latin root means to “look at”, “behold”, “observe”, “explore”, “investigate”, or “contemplate”. Its original philosophical source, however, is to be found in classical Greek philosophy. Terms like *theoria*, *idein* and *voein*, all etymologically connected with “seeing” and “vision,” are prevalent in Pre-Socratic philosophy as well as the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. The positive significance, philosophically, of meditating on or thinking about the universe or a subject, stands in contrast to the casual use of the term as some form of gambling, idle thinking, or conjecture without any hard evidence or rigorous logical analysis. “Speculative” in ordinary language is

often used pejoratively, but in always a future sense, to denote socially suspect economic activities such as real estate speculation or speculative bubbles in the stock markets. Even in economics there are debates about good and bad speculation.

Speculative philosophy is generally understood as a systematic and comprehensive account of human existence and the universe that encompasses both the natural sciences of the organic and inorganic world as well as the human sciences of cognition, social life, and the domains of art, religion, and philosophy. In the history of ideas and culture speculative philosophy denotes a broad range of philosophical approaches and traditions that normally cluster around metaphysics and systematic treatments of existence, consciousness and free will. Contemporary philosophy has explicitly rejected the systematic nature of speculative philosophy even though some of its practitioners have not objected to being loosely described as speculative philosophers. On the other hand, a narrow conception of speculative philosophy as simply non-empirical theorizing is disputed by other philosophers. In a sense all philosophy is speculative, as it deals with universal ideas. The specific verification or refutation of those ideas is always problematic. Speculative thought sometimes views empirical validity as either of secondary importance or irrelevant altogether. At other times, it seeks to clarify the exact nature of how something like an idea or the nature of experience is to be verified or validated

Speculative Philosophy was described by (Kneller, 1971) as the attempt to search for coherence in the whole circle of thought and experience. This means, it is an effort made to see how things related are formed in a meaningful whole. Speculative philosophy aims at bringing things together in thoughts so as to find their broadest relationship in a cosmic setting. e.g what are the reasons or rationale for the creation of the world or man. It is also a way of giving comprehensive and rational account of the nature and reality of man's mission in the world and

also how to deal with issues related to the existence of God, the relationship between body and the mind and the purpose of the universe.

Speculative philosophy, at least for the analytic tradition, refers mainly to German idealism related to the ideas of Hegel, Schelling, and Bradley. Such thinkers are concerned with offering a systematic approach to reality. They seek to unify all the different kinds of knowledge we have into one system. Because they emphasize unity and completeness, speculative philosophers tend to use terms that do not fit with our simple experience of the world: "Absolute", "Spirit", "Being," etc. While speculative philosophers commonly refer to "universal" concepts, it is typical of analytic philosophers to cast doubt on such notions.

Generally speaking, speculative philosophy is only rarely given a precise definition. Like many sub-currents in philosophy it has widely divergent sets of associations - scientific, literary or religious. Some of these are linked with particular philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Proclus, Aquinas, Kant or Hegel, while others are attached to historical periods, for example, Greek cosmological speculation, or identified with certain types of intellectual history, like the universal histories of civilization one finds in Bossuet or Toynbee. Speculative philosophy is, on the one hand, an extremely vague term that can denote almost any thought orientation.

Speculative philosophy is a form of theorizing that goes beyond verifiable observation; specifically, a philosophical approach informed by the impulse to construct a grand narrative of a worldview that encompasses the whole of reality. In its aggressive use of the systematic principle, geared to a unification of human experience, speculative philosophy aspires to a comprehensive understanding and explanation of the structural interrelations of the culture spheres of science, morality, art, and religion.

During the thousands of years of mankind history, man has lived with his trials and burdens, his doubts and questions, including enigma of death. he has also speculated about the wonders and mysteries like origin of, creation and evolution of the universe. on the other hand, he has tried to find rational answers to these questions and mysteries. The answers we get from these reflections or speculations are simply the sum total of what we have thought or experienced. In speculative philosophy, we seek to infer from some personal thinking, experiences and the observable features of things in order to source further meaning and clear your minds off confusion. However, such inferences or speculations must follow sound reasoning.

PREScriptive PHILOSOPHY

Prescriptive philosophy seeks to establish standards for assessing values, judging conduct and appraising art. It examines what we mean by good or bad, right and wrong, beautiful and ugly. It asks whether these qualities are in things themselves or whether they are projections of our minds.

To the experimental psychologists the varieties of human conduct are orally either good or bad. They are simply forms of behaviour to be studied empirically. But to the educator and the prescriptive philosopher some forms of behaviour are worthwhile and others are not. The prescriptive philosopher seeks to discover and to recommend principles for describing what actions and qualities are most worthwhile and why they should be so.

Prescriptive philosophy is the kind of philosophy that looks to explain how the world is. It is typical of the grand metaphysical systems of Continental philosophy—it rejects sensory evidence and instead seeks to use pure reason to say how the world *must* logically be. *Descriptive* philosophy looks to describe exactly what we sense. It makes sense of our sensory data, and

creates a system that accounts for what seems to be the case. It is deeply involved in science and sensory data.

ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY

Analytic philosophy focuses on words and meaning. The analytic philosopher examines such notions as “causes”, “mind”, “academic freedom”, “quality of opportunity”, etc. in order to assess the different contexts, he shows how inconsistencies may arise when meanings appropriate in certain contexts are imported into others. The analytic philosopher tends to be sceptical, cautious and disinclined to build system of thought.

Analytic philosophy is a movement that begins with Frege, Russell, and Quine, and places heavy emphasis on logic, language, and aligns itself with the empirical sciences. Analytic philosophers such as Russell tend to reject "speculative" philosophy (sometimes called metaphysics) because they do not find any justification for some of the concepts it uses (essence, substance, Being, subject, self). Instead, analytic philosophy inquiries into the meanings of the concepts we use and try to avoid using vague terms that do not fit into their logical, linguistic, and empirical methods.

Also analytic philosophy is focusing its direction towards meaning of philosophy. It evaluates concepts and notions, e.g. causes, equality of opportunity, academic freedom etc. so as to expose the various meanings they bear in different context. In the usage of analytical approach using words without context words can lose their meanings. That meaning of words is determined by the context in which they are used. A person may utter a word or state a concept but another who is the listener, may get confused as he or she may not know the context of the usage. it is therefore, the duty of the analytical philosopher to closely scrutinize these words or concepts and determine what they mean, by exposing the inconsistencies that are inherent in them.

HISTORICAL PHILOSOPHY

Historical Philosophy here, we trace the development of ideas over time. it is considered necessary that we go back to these ideas and see how they can be of help to the problems of our time. A thorough philosophical study must be take into consideration what has already been discussed in that area in the past. But unlike in mere historical account, the major emphasis is to examine the logical relationship of ideas over the years.