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What is Philosophy?

Even before the concept of Philosophy was founded, the question of why and how has been raised by people since the earliest days. The Oxford dictionary defines philosophy as the study of the nature and meaning of the universe and of human life (Simpson, J.). But what does that really mean? There is no definition that adequately captures the depth and complexity of philosophy. In its most basic form, Philosophy is the study of knowledge, or "thinking about thinking". The need to address doubts about what we know, how we know these things, and what criteria we might use to judge those things are fulfilled by asking philosophical questions. These questions provide critical information about the nature of our knowledge, judgements, and reasons, as well as our standards for certainty, belief, and evidence. The individual freedom of critical thoughts is what make philosophy unique and compressive. Philosophy is a fundamental tool that provides the best training of living; through the concepts of making sense of the world and examining the disciplines of living.

According to Luc Ferry, in his book *A Brief History of Thought: A Philosophical Guide to Living,* the first objective of philosophy is that of theory, which is an attempt to make sense of the world we live in (Ferry, Luc). Philosophy improves one's ability to see the world through the eyes of different people and cultures, as well as improves one's ability to see the connections between the ideas of meaning and human experience. Defining the nature of knowledge and comprehending its methods is what philosophy attempts to uncover. Philosophy aims to bring together scientific knowledge with knowledge from other fields of study to arrive at a consistent and coherent worldview. Philosophers do not seek to focus on a single aspect of human experience or knowledge, but rather consider the wholeness of life (Ferry, Luc).

Philosophy examines the disciplines of living through a reflective state. Important views and concepts such as science, religion, art, and even politics are examined by philosophy. The up struct of such ideas appear in many types of forms, however, it is the questions raised by philosophy that focuses on the meaning and relationships shared with other ideas. Human beings are creatures that are aware of their capabilities and know that time on earth is limited. This causes them to think and reflect on what comes next and what is the purpose of their short life. Luc Ferry describes this idea perfectly as he states, “He knows that he will die, and that his near ones, those he loves, will also die. Consequently, he cannot prevent himself from thinking about his state of affairs (Ferry, Luc). The state of thinking leads people into the questions regarding the principles of living. According to the Oxford dictionary, ethics are moral principles that control or influence a person's behavior (Simpson, J. A). Ethics examines the meanings of moral ideas like right behavior, obligation, and justice, and develops principles to guide moral decisions. Philosophy uncovers what our moral responsibilities are towards ourselves and each other’s.

Philosophy is centered around asking questions. Asking philosophical questions tends to lead to more further questions. There isn't a limit to what philosophy can be, and it's something that can constantly be changing. At the closing of his book, Luc Ferry writes, “You must understand that philosophy is an art not of questions but rather of answers” (Ferry, Luc). It is only for yourself to judge the answers to the questions you seek. Sometimes there isn’t any clear answer available, which lead even more questions. The study of philosophy is frequently motivated not by the answers or arguments themselves, but by whether the arguments are logical, and the answers are correct. Philosophical thinking is characterized by critical thinking, which is the reasonable and deliberate examination of things to generate judgment. Philosophy is generally a reflection-based discipline that does not rely on experimentation. The methods used to reflect and ask may be like those utilized in those of the natural sciences.

Philosophy is ultimately about developing the art of thought and the search for wisdom. Philosophy strives by being open to deep questioning, and in that questioning comes deep learning. Through learning and understanding, an individual may seek out different and contrasting points of view. This leads people to create their own world view, filled with their own beliefs and opinions. The interesting thing about philosophy is that everybody has their own ideals and answers to questions. The beauty of coming together as a society of thinkers, to debate and discuss, is what philosophy is all about.

The goal of Philosophy is to use critical thinking to choose one’s belief and answers. Philosophy encourages people to become thinkers and to bring thought into the world around them. Without answers to important philosophical questions there wouldn’t be knowledge and reason. Philosophy is all about fueling one’s curiosity while combating forces in the universe that want to put a stop to asking questions. Curiosity helps lead to the advancement of knowledge, and always questions the nature of the beliefs we hold dear. Life would be exceedingly boring without philosophy because no questions about the world would be asked. People's thoughts and ideas would be dull, and everyone would be forced to be the same and have no distinct questions or answers.

Works Cited

Ferry, Luc. *A Brief History of Thought : A Philosophical Guide to Living*. 1st U.S. ed., Harper Perennial, 2011.

Simpson, J. A, et al. *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. / ed., Clarendon Press, 1989.