

Philosophy is the Most Abstract Theory

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Abstract: This paper will give an accurate definition and the most fundamental characteristics of philosophy, and analysis of people's past misunderstanding of philosophy. The definition of philosophy is the most abstract rational idea or theory. The characteristic of philosophy can be summed up in three words: fake, large, and empty. The building on the drawing is a fake one. The better the fake products are made, the better the real building will be. Matter is true, consciousness is fake. Compared with scientific concepts, philosophical concepts and theories have larger extension, even covering the whole universe and all aspects of things. Philosophy is the most abstract theory, so the concepts of philosophy have the emptiest connotation. The reason why the specific natural and social sciences need the support of philosophy is precisely because philosophy has this kind of characteristics of fake, large and empty. The philosophers study all problems in the hope of finding the root cause of all problems, that is, the Origin. Later, it is found that it is impossible to solve all problems in one way. To solve problems, we can only analyze them on a case-by-case basis. Philosophers are too wise to be wise. In the eyes of ancient Greek philosophers, philosophy should be the most holy, most supreme, most virtuous, wisest, most advanced, most rational, most capable, most complete and most refined knowledge. But the it is proved that this kind of philosophy does not exist at all. But the characteristic of philosophy of being the largest is not an illusion. The division of something into several aspects is neither in terms of spatial relations nor temporal relations, but in terms of different feelings. The large extension of philosophical research is not only reflected in the study of the space and time of whole universe, but also reflected in the study of all aspects of the various dimensions, covering all disciplines. The fourth manifestation of the largeness of philosophy is the depth of microscopic exploration. The fifth is the attention to the complexity and order of the system. The sixth is the understanding of consciousness. The seventh and the most important manifestation is to look at oneself. Philosophy offers the most rational view of the world.

1. Introduction

Philosophy is one of the most controversial disciplines. Speaking of philosophy, some people think it is mysterious, some people think it is boring, some people worship it, some people sneer at it. The definition of philosophy has been disputed for two thousand years. So how should we correctly understand the characteristics and values of philosophy? What is philosophy anyway? This paper will give an accurate definition and the most fundamental characteristics of philosophy, and analysis of people's past misunderstanding of philosophy, really make clear what philosophy is, what value philosophy has.

2. Definition of philosophy

We know that the real, concrete, objective world is very complex, and everything is different. A cup is not same as a table, an abiotic product is not same as a living thing, an animal or plant is not same as a person, and neither leaf is the same. Because they are concrete, and concrete things are infinitely complex. If you need it to be simple, you need abstraction. When you care the weight of something, for example, you don't care about its color, its chemical composition, and other properties, that is, you abstract them all away. All scientific theories are abstract, and philosophy is the most abstract theory.

Definition: Philosophy is the most abstract rational idea or theory.

Philosophy is rational, not mythical. Philosophy may be simple idea or systematic theory.

The ancient Chinese philosopher Gongsun Long said, "A white horse is not a horse." There are many kinds of horses, white, black, red and yellow. A white horse is a concrete thing, while a horse is an abstract concept. That's why a white horse is not a horse.

There used to be a lot of people who said that Henan people are lazy and selfish, this kind of regional discrimination is absurd and stupid. They are talking about Henan people as one kind of people, not one person. In fact, we all like to talk about one kind of people and one kind of things, about abstract concepts. Philosophers are not the only ones who care about abstract concepts. Village grannies, illiterate people, also like to talk about abstract concepts.

The definition of philosophy is very simple. How to understand it? There are two main points. The first is to be fake, large and empty, and the second is being too wise to be wise.

3. Philosophy is fake, large and empty

The characteristic of philosophy can be summed up in three words: "fake, large and empty". Not only philosophy is fake, large and empty, but all science is fake, large and empty. The characters of fake, large and empty are the core characters of human civilization, philosophy is the most fake, largest and most empty.

Generally, the words of fake, large and empty are derogatory. The fake words are lies, the large words are boast and bluff, empty talk is unrealistic, do not solve the problem, which is certainly not what the fake, large and empty philosophy means.

What does the character of fake, large and empty of philosophy mean? Say fake first. Don't think that fake is all bad. If the merchants sell fake goods to deceive people, it is of course an immoral behavior, but some fake goods are good and have positive value. For example, precious metals like gold and silver are real money, whereas all paper money is fake. But paper money works. We can't live without paper money. Fang Qingping, a Crosstalk performer, said, "When a monkey learnt to make fake things, it became a human being." That's a brilliant comment.

An architect draws a building on paper. Is the drawing real? Of course not. The building on paper is a fake one. You can't live on paper. If you spend millions on a house, and the real estate agent only sells you a blueprint, you can't accept. But the process of building can not leave the drawings, although the building on the drawings is fake, but if there is no fake buildings, there will be no real building. The better the architect fakes, the better the real building will be.

The car on the drawing doesn't run, it is stationary. But the better the drawing of the car on drawing, the faster the real car will run. To borrow the words in *Main Road of Han Feizi*: "Virtual is to know the real condition, static is to know the active." [1] Some fake things are good for people and some are bad for people. With these beneficial things, the higher the level of human fake, the more developed human civilization, the happier human life.

All rational thinking is fake. The word fake here mainly refers to the difference between human consciousness and material. Material is true, consciousness is fake. With the process of human civilization, people's consciousness has changed from simply reflecting reality to abstractly and systematically recognizing reality, and then forming theories and scientific and technological systems. In this process, the level of making fake things is constantly improving. All drawings, models and scientific theories are fake stuff. With the development of science and technology, fake things gradually develop from less to more, from simple to complex, from disorder to order, from fragmentation to systematic perfection. This is how human civilization evolved.

Scientific theory is fake, but it seems to be quite true, closer to objective reality. And philosophy is the most fake, because its theories are the furthest from reality, its concepts are largest and emptiest. Matter is real, and real things like fire and water were first taken as the Origin. But later philosophers regarded these theories naive. The Origin must be the most fake and abstract thing, it can not be real objective and concrete things.

Then let's talk about large. I saw a lot of tables and the concept of table came into being. Concepts come from abstractions of multiple things. Objects are true, concepts are fake. The

concept has a certain extension, the extension of the concept of table is thousands of tables. The word table is very small, but it has a very large extension. All abstract scientific concepts have great extensions. The more abstract the concept, the larger the extension. The extension of furniture is larger than that of table because furniture is a more abstract concept than table. Compared with scientific concepts, philosophical concepts and theories have a larger extension, even covering the whole universe and all aspects of things. So philosophy is large and fake.

Then let's talk about empty. We know that the larger the extension of a concept, the less its connotation has. For example, the extension of furniture is larger than that of table, so the connotation of furniture is less than that of table. Tables vary in shape and color, but at least they all have legs and surfaces, which can serve as the connotation of the table concept. But furniture does not necessarily have legs and surfaces, so leg and surface can not serve as the connotation of furniture. Philosophy has the largest extension and therefore the least connotation. The Origin, Noumenon and Being by philosophers must be the emptiest concepts with all concrete attributes abstracted. Aristotle called philosophy as metaphysics, which means to surpass physics. The reason why metaphysics can surpass physics is that it reduces more thoroughly, abstracts more thoroughly and has less connotation than physics.

All theories are abstract theories beyond experience. Philosophy is the most abstract theory, so philosophical concepts have the emptiest connotations. Philosophers always talk about the most abstract concepts such as Origin, Noumenon, existence, transcendence, idea, Tao, matter, consciousness, law, truth and value. It would not be like philosophy if always talking about concrete things. Virtual means empty. "Virtual is to know the real condition." The real world cannot be changed without empty theories.

The process of abstraction is the process of reduction. The process of reduction is the process to gradually decrease connotation and gradually increase extension. For example, all sparrows are birds, all birds are animals, all animals are living things, all living things are systems, all systems are matter, and so on. The more thorough the reduction, the deeper the research. The deeper the research, the more empty the theory. The process of reduction comes to the end and you get to the Origin. The Origin is the fundamental cause, the root cause of all phenomena and problems. This root cause is the most fake, the largest, the emptiest. The deepest understanding of the world is necessarily fake, large and empty.

In short, the content of philosophy is fake, large and empty. The purpose of philosophy is to serve practice, to realize truth, goodness and beauty. The reason why the specific natural and social sciences need the support of philosophy is precisely because philosophy has this character of fake, large and empty.

4. Too wise to be wise

When scientific research is abstract, problems can be analyzed and solved. Science can give people a pair of angel eyes to see the world, can discover the law of the world, can explain the world in simple language, can transform the world with simple methods. Science can make us devise strategies within the command tent and gain a decisive victory a thousand miles away.

But each subject can only solve one aspect of the problems, sociology can not solve problems of astronomy, astronomy can not solve problems of chemistry, chemistry can not solve problems of physics. Philosophers wished to invent a theory that could solve all problems. Science is divided into many disciplines while philosophy is not divided into disciplines.

Philosophers study all problems, hoping to find the root cause of all problems, that is, the Origin, to find the characters common to all things, to find the fundamental law that governs the movement and change of all things, to establish the fundamental axiom that leads to all theorems, to find the fundamental method of solving all problems. This is called pursuing the ultimate. The ultimate is also called Noumenon. The study of the ultimate is ontology, namely metaphysics. Physics studies those concrete, tangible things, metaphysics studies those abstract intangible things.

Therefore, everyone thinks philosophers are the most intelligent and wisest, philosophy is a collection of all wisdom, the sum total of all knowledge and ability to understand and transform the

world. Mencius said, "If we first set up the great, then the small ones do not be missed." [2] However, it later turned out this method doesn't work. It is impossible to solve all problems in one way. We can only analyze them on a case-by-case basis. The philosophers are too wise to be wise.

In the mind of ancient Greek philosophers, as well as in the mind of many people in later generations and today, philosophy should be the most holy, most supreme, most virtuous, wisest, largest, most advanced, most rational, most capable, most complete and most refined knowledge. But it turns out that this kind of philosophy doesn't exist, or was dead thoroughly.

1) The most holy. Philosophy seems to be the most sacred, like God has a supreme position in everyone's heart. Philosophers, it seems, must be masters of all generations. Shulin Zhou (pen name: Wise Man Said) said, "Philosophy is the dazzling gold foil on the crown of knowledge. Philosophy is the solid keel of the ship of culture. Philosophy is the moss of life upon the dead stone. Philosophy is a ray of inspiration across the sky. Philosophy is the oracle upon the summit of wisdom. Philosophy is a ladder to the spirit world." [3] When Nixon met Mao Zedong during his ice-breaking visit to China in 1972, Nixon said bluntly to Mao, "I would like to talk to you about issues of joint confrontation against the Soviet Union." Mao pointed at Zhou Enlai and said, "You can talk about these trifles with him. I want to talk about philosophy with you." Mao seemed to regard the vicissitudes of the world as trivial compared with philosophy. But the truth is that philosophy has long since been dethroned, and sometimes even sent to hell. Philosophy is regarded by many as the most pedantic and useless theory of all.

2) The supreme. Philosophers, it seems, should have supreme earthly authority, like Plato's king of philosophy, or supreme authority of faith, like the Pope. But in fact, most philosophers do not understand politics. Once caught in the whirlpool of politics they would have been difficult to survive. Socrates and Confucius are a case in point. Philosophy is not a religion, and no religious organization can be established. Although Confucius's status was exalted after his death, he was merely a tool for the emperor to consolidate power. The descendants of Confucius had no secular power and could be killed by emperor at any time, just like Kong Rong.

3) Most virtuous. Philosophers, it seems, must be the most moral, the most selfless, ready to die for the cause at any time. In fact, philosophers are ordinary people, not only dependent on food, oil and salt, but also maybe very selfish. Philosophy can no longer blindly propagandize benevolence, justice and morality, and must finally take individualism as one of the ultimate standards of value. [4]

4) Most intelligent. Philosophy means to love wisdom in Greek, and philosophers seem to be the wisest. But philosophers are not the wisest, and philosophy does not make people the wisest. It is better to look at brain teasers to become intelligent. Philosophy can even make people silly, obsessed and being ridiculed. It is impossible for philosophers to solve the mystery of the beginning of the universe or to find the most elementary particles that make up the world. Such aspects can only be relied on physicists, philosophers are amateurs. If a philosopher can do this kind of work, he must not do it as a philosopher, he must do it as a scientist, using the knowledge of physics, and philosophy does not really help him much.

5) The largest. Philosophers try to establish an all-inclusive theoretical system to solve all problems, but the theoretical system of philosophy can not be all-inclusive. Many disciplines have been separated from philosophy, which is nothing more than a general discipline like any other. But the object which philosophy studies is really the largest.

6) Most advanced. Philosophers believe that philosophy can find the source of creation of the universe, such as water, fire, atoms, existence, Tao, etc. But then it turned out that none of these things could create the universe. Philosophy cannot create theories of other disciplines, either, it can only create a world of ideas that seems to exist and also seems not to exist. Philosophy could not provide a basis for other disciplines, Jiaying Chen said, "Modern science rather grew up in the continuous efforts to get rid of and oppose metaphysical principles." [5] For the very beginning, philosophy wants to provide a holistic worldview. However, it has proved that a reasonable worldview can only be found after specific analysis and accumulation of enough specific theories.

7) Most rational. It seems that philosophy can see everything and every method clearly. It is

impossible. Philosophy cannot even be a guide to science. At most philosophy can give science some inspiration, which is not to every subject. Philosophy is not the most rational, science is more rational. Philosophy often lead to non-rational.

8) Most capable. Philosophy seems to be the solution to all problems, the ultimate solution to practice. It seems that philosophy can make you devise strategies within the command tent and gain a decisive victory a thousand miles away. It is impossible. Philosophy is an abstract theory with little concern for practical problems.

9) Most complete. Philosophy seems to be able to establish a unified theory, encompassing all disciplines, but all such efforts have failed. It seems that all disciplines came from philosophy, which is the mother of science, but it is not. Although some disciplines came from philosophy, they were eventually separated. They were originally subordinate to philosophy because they had no proper conception of the division of disciplines.

10) Most refined. Philosophy seems to be very rigorous and profound. As a matter of fact, philosophy is not rigorous at all. It is far worse than science. In philosophical treatises, concepts are used incoherently. Many words are speciosity, some are even like "language from universe", leaving readers in a fog. Some college students majoring in philosophy say, "Whoever speaks incomprehensible is a great philosopher."

There are many abstract theories in every science, but theories are not useful if they are too abstract. Now philosophy has become the head of all studies with no use. So that people ask, "What on earth is philosophy for?" Dongyue Wang said, "The only meaning of philosophy is to make you know what meaningless is." [6]

5. Seven manifestations of the largeness of philosophy

I have just said that philosophy is disillusioned. It was supposed to be the most holy, most supreme, most virtuous, most wise, most advanced, most rational, most capable, most complete and most refined knowledge. These are all illusions. But the largeness of philosophy is not illusion. Although philosophy cannot cover all subjects, the field of its study is the largest.

Jiaying Chen said, "There are so many specialized knowledge and theorems in any field of learning, and this determines that there will be no universal common understanding by analyse mentally." [7] Chen's conclusion is too arbitrary. We often say that it remains essentially the same despite all apparent changes. No matter how many knowledge and theorems there are, we can certainly build some general conclusions. To say the least, even if there really is too much knowledge for us to get their truly universal meaning, we need to manage to do the difficult job and draw some general conclusions. Because human beings need such universal conclusions. Human beings need a holistic world view, and a rational belief based on the holistic world view. So whether the philosopher is willing or able to accomplish such a task, everyone requires that the philosopher must engage in such a task.

Philosophy must always be at the top of the pyramid of knowledge. This is not because philosophy itself is awesome, but because everyone needs it. Therefore, philosophy has always been promoted by people, including the best people in all fields, and philosophy has always been respected as the first among all kinds of learning, whether it is useful or not.

As I said, philosophy is characterized by fake, large and empty. Its concepts and theories extend to the whole universe and to every aspect of things. Universe means the whole space and the whole time. But the largeness of philosophy lies not only in the whole space and whole time, but also in all aspects of things.

The so-called aspect refers to the various properties of things. For example, a cube block has not only six sides, but also many properties such as color, hardness, electrical conductivity, magnetic conductivity, specific gravity, chemical composition and so on. Each attribute belongs to an aspect, or dimension, that is studied by different disciplines. This small block of wood is not big in size, but there are many aspects of the content. Anything concrete is infinitely complex.

How are the various aspects of a particular thing divided? The division of an object into parts is based on spatial relations, and the division of an event into stages is based on temporal relations.

The division of a thing into several aspects is neither based in terms of spatial relations nor temporal relations, but in terms of differences of feeling. For example, we see colors in all kind of objects because of the perception of color. Color is inseparable from the object, you cannot scrape color off a block of wood. You say I can use a scraper to scrape the color off the surface, but there is still color inside, you cannot separate the weight and volume from the color of the block. But in our minds, we can separate the perception of color from the perception of the weight and volume of the block. Then put the color of this wooden block together with the color of other objects for research and analysis. For example, this wooden block is brown, and so is the bookcase in my home. The brown color of all things is the same concept and aspect.

The extension of philosophical research is not only reflected in the study of the whole universe, but also reflected in the study of all aspects of the various dimensions, covering all disciplines. The Origin in philosophy is not only the origin of the universe, but also the generality and source of all aspects. This is where philosophy differs from cosmology and astronomy. You can say the universe came from a Big Bang, but these properties didn't come from the Big Bang. So the beginning of the universe is not the Origin in philosophy.

Things have different properties because they are different in structure. Chemical differences are due to differences in molecular structure, and many physical differences are due to differences in atomic structure. So to find the origin of these properties we need to explore the micro world. Therefore, the fourth manifestation of the largeness of philosophy lies in the depth of microscopic exploration. The smaller the exploration space, the richer the content of philosophy. Relativity and quantum mechanics have greatly influenced the development of modern philosophy.

The fifth manifestation of philosophical largeness is concern with the degree of order and complexity of systems. Although the universe is large, most of it is simple systems. Philosophy focuses on complex systems, and those simple systems account for very little in philosophy and are easy to recognize. Non-living things are simple systems, especially atoms, muons and elementary particles. Plants, animals, people and human society are all complex systems. Philosophy studies all systems from simple to complex. Complex systems are gradually evolved from simple systems, but the change of complexity and order degree is not completely synchronized with time, degeneration often occurs in the process of evolution, and all kinds of complex degree of systems can exist at the same time. So complexity and order is a different dimension from time. Physics only studies simple non-living things, not complex living things and humans, so physics is limited in the dimension of complexity. Biology only studies complex living things, not simple non-living things, so biology is also limited in the dimension of complexity. Philosophy has no limits on this dimension. It studies everything from simple disorder to complex order.

The sixth manifestation of the largeness of philosophy is the understanding of consciousness. The human brain is a black box, consciousness is the function of the brain. The human brain and consciousness are the most complex system. My mind flies to edge of the universe faster than the speed of light. The brain is a black box, but it can be studied by the expression of the black box. The expression of the black box is consciousness, which includes knowledge, emotion and will, etc. All science, art and religion are products of consciousness and objects of philosophical research.

The seventh and the most important expression of the largeness of philosophy is to look at oneself. The study of consciousness is not equal to the study of oneself, it can be the study of other people's consciousness. "Philosophy is reflective." Collingwood said, "The philosophic mind does not simply consider an object. When it thinks about any object, it is always thinking about its own thoughts about that object. Philosophy may therefore also be called thought of the second order, thought of thought." [8]

We often refer to the subjective world and the objective world. What is the relationship between these two worlds? It is not a relationship of separating from each other, but a dialectical unity relationship: the subjective world is a part of the objective world, and the objective world is also a part of the subjective world. [9] So the world studied by scientists is incomplete. Only philosophers can see the whole world. Because scientists only know to see the world, only philosopher know to see himself at the same time when seeing the world, know that there is subjective element in the

understanding of the world. It is not the hardest to know the universe, the hardest part is knowing yourself. So science can never replace philosophy, the core problem of philosophy is the relationship between matter and consciousness. Scientists cannot explain many paradoxes or understand dialectical logic without seeing themselves. Many disciplines of science are based on axioms that can only be explained when we see ourselves with philosophical eyes.

In short, philosophy has the largest scope of research, so it can provide people with the most complete world outlook and the most rational belief, and give people the feeling of suddenly enlightened when they climb up and look far. What's more, it is only philosophy that can provide the ultimate standard of truth and the ultimate standard of value.

After many entrepreneurs and artists have struggled in their own fields for a long time, they often change their world outlook, have some philosophical reflection and obtain or hope to obtain some grand and abstract truths. But most people's reflections are not thorough, rigorous and often contradictory. It is the philosopher's job to reflect most thoroughly, to criticize constantly, to find the most abstract and thorough theory.

6. Conclusion

Philosophy, which deals with the commonality of all things, is the most abstract rational idea or theory. Science is concrete because it is divided into many disciplines. The theories in each branch of science are abstractions of concrete things, but science does not aspire to put them all together and find out what they all have in common. So compared with philosophy, science are concrete theories of concrete problems.

To correctly understand the characteristics and values of philosophy, we should see the failure of philosophy as well as the unique side of philosophy. Philosophy cannot find the root cause of all problems or change the world in the simplest way, but the scope of philosophical research is the largest, and no scientific theory can replace philosophy. People's cognitive ability is limited, and people's energy is limited, exaggerate to say that people are stupid and lazy. Although it has been discovered that it is impossible to change the world in the simplest way, people always want to explain the world in the simplest language. Because philosophy has the largest scope of study, people have always placed great hopes on philosophy, hoping that philosophy can provide a holistic world view, and then produce the most rational belief on the basis of the holistic world view.

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