

## THE MAIN FEATURES AND FUNCTIONS OF PHILOSOPHY: THE SUBJECT MATTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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### **Abstract**

Philosophy, as the oldest and most comprehensive form of intellectual inquiry, investigates the fundamental nature of reality, knowledge, and human existence. Its distinctive features lie in its critical, rational, and reflective methods of thinking. This paper explores the essential characteristics and major functions of philosophy, as well as its subject matter, through an analytical and comparative approach. It highlights philosophy's relevance to science, culture, education, and human self-awareness, arguing that philosophy remains a vital discipline in shaping both personal and social understanding.

### **Introduction**

Philosophy, derived from the Greek words *philo* (love) and *sophia* (wisdom), literally means “the love of wisdom.” Since its inception in ancient Greece, philosophy has aimed to answer the most profound and abstract questions about life, existence, and the universe. Philosophical inquiry is distinct from scientific investigation in its method and scope—it seeks meaning and coherence rather than mere empirical explanation.

In contemporary times, the scope of philosophy extends to analyzing the conceptual foundations of science, ethics, politics, and art. Thus, philosophy remains a dynamic intellectual field that continuously redefines its own boundaries in response to new human challenges and discoveries.

The Main Features of Philosophy Philosophy possesses several defining features that distinguish it from other forms of knowledge. These features are primarily methodological and conceptual. Rationality and Logical Thinking Rational thought is the cornerstone of philosophy. Philosophical reasoning relies on

logic to construct valid arguments, avoid contradictions, and clarify concepts. Unlike mythological or religious thinking, philosophy depends on rational discourse to justify claims. Critical and Reflective Nature Philosophy encourages critical reflection on human beliefs, assumptions, and worldviews. It examines the foundations of knowledge, morality, and social order, questioning what others take for granted. This self-reflective nature enables philosophy to act as a “mirror” of human consciousness. Universality Philosophy aspires to universality. Its questions—such as “What is truth?”, “What is good?”, or “What is the meaning of existence?”—are universal, transcending cultural and historical boundaries. Thus, philosophy unites humanity in the search for wisdom. Systematic and Conceptual Thinking Philosophy aims for systematization. Philosophers attempt to create coherent systems of thought that explain reality as a whole. This distinguishes philosophical thinking from casual opinion or fragmented ideas.

Normative Orientation Philosophy not only describes the world but also evaluates it. Ethical, political, and aesthetic philosophies are normative—they prescribe how humans ought to act, not merely how they do act. This normative aspect makes philosophy essential to moral and civic life. The Main Functions of Philosophy Philosophy performs several important intellectual and social functions. These functions demonstrate its enduring relevance to human development. The Worldview Function Philosophy provides a comprehensive worldview—a coherent understanding of reality and human existence. Through philosophical reflection, individuals and societies develop orientations toward life, nature, and society. The Methodological Function Philosophy provides methods of reasoning and criteria of knowledge that guide scientific inquiry. Logic, epistemology, and methodology originated from philosophy and continue to inform all sciences. The Critical Function Philosophy’s critical function involves analyzing and questioning accepted ideas, ideologies, and social norms. It challenges dogmatism

and promotes intellectual freedom and tolerance. 3.4. The Humanistic Function Philosophy cultivates human values, dignity, and self-understanding. By examining ethical and existential issues, philosophy contributes to the moral and spiritual growth of individuals. The Integrative Function

Philosophy unites diverse forms of knowledge into a coherent system. It connects scientific, ethical, and cultural perspectives into a unified human understanding of the world. The Subject Matter of Philosophy The subject matter of philosophy has evolved over centuries, but it traditionally includes the study of being, knowledge, values, and meaning. **Ontology: The Study of Being** Ontology investigates the nature of reality and existence. It asks fundamental questions such as: What does it mean to exist? What is the relationship between mind and matter? Philosophical ontology provides the basis for metaphysics and cosmology.

**Epistemology: The Study of Knowledge** Epistemology explores the sources, structure, and limits of knowledge. It examines how humans acquire, justify, and apply knowledge. The classical debate between rationalism and empiricism remains central to epistemology today. **Axiology: The Study of Values** Axiology encompasses ethics and aesthetics, exploring the nature of moral and aesthetic values. It addresses questions of good and evil, beauty and ugliness, and justice and injustice. **Logic: The Study of Correct Reasoning** Logic is the foundation of rational thinking. It studies the principles of valid inference, argumentation, and demonstration. Logical systems, from Aristotle's syllogism to modern symbolic logic, underpin all rational disciplines. **Social and Political Philosophy** This branch examines the nature of society, justice, and political authority. It addresses issues such as freedom, equality, and human rights—questions that remain central to modern civilization. **Philosophy of Science and Technology** In the modern world, philosophy examines the conceptual foundations and ethical implications of science and technology. It

ensures that scientific progress aligns with human values and ecological sustainability.

The Contemporary Relevance of Philosophy In an era dominated by rapid technological and social change, philosophy's role is more vital than ever. It provides ethical frameworks for artificial intelligence, environmental stewardship, and global cooperation. Moreover, philosophical education fosters critical thinking, empathy, and intercultural understanding—skills essential for solving global problems such as inequality, climate change, and digital ethics. Philosophy thus remains not only a theoretical pursuit but a practical guide to living wisely in a complex and interconnected world.

### **Conclusion**

Philosophy, as both a discipline and a way of life, cultivates rationality, critical thinking, and humanistic values. Its core features—rationality, reflection, universality, and normativity—make it indispensable to intellectual and moral development. The subject matter of philosophy encompasses being, knowledge, and value, providing a foundation for all forms of human inquiry. Far from being an abstract pursuit, philosophy continues to perform vital social and cultural functions, shaping humanity's understanding of itself and its world.

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