

Introduction to Philosophy

Daniel von Wachter
<http://von-wachter.de>

Survey

- n Examples of philosophical questions
- n Views on the method of philosophy
- n Reading philosophical texts
- n Writing philosophical texts
- n Computer tools

Examples of philosophical questions

- n Are there discoverable, non-reducible duties? (non-reducible means: not identical with something else, e.g. "commanded by the law")
- n Are there universals?
- n Is there a God?
- n What is free will? (What kinds of free will can be distinguished? What can be called "free will"?) Do we have free will?
- n Do we have a soul?

Outside of philosophy

- n Discovering laws of nature (physics)
- n Discovering the structure of matter (physics)
- n Discussing what Hegel meant by „Geist“
- n Discovering when Rome was founded

Types of philosophical questions and tasks

- n Existence questions (God, soul, universals)
- n What would be ... (e.g. a free action)
- n Form and define concepts
- n Modal questions, i.e. questions about possibilities (e.g. could one be guilty for something one did not do freely?)
- n Describe a certain object or area of reality

Areas of philosophy

- n "Metaphysics"
 - n Not always distinguished clearly from philosophy
 - n Greek: "After physics"
 - n The books besides Aristotle's book "Metaphysics"
 - n The topics beyond physics

The classical notion of metaphysics

(e.g. Christian von Wolff)

- n Metaphysica generalis

- n ontology

- n Metaphysica specialis

- n theologia rationalis

- n psychologia rationalis

- n cosmologia rationalis

Metaphysics today

- n The problem of universals
- n causation, laws of nature
- n identity
- n free will

Areas of philosophy

- n Metaphysics
- n Ethics
- n Epistemology
- n Philosophy of religion
- n Philosophy of mind
- n Aesthetics
- n Political philosophy
- n Philosophy of science
- n Philosophy of nature

What is philosophy?

- n Defined through object or through method.
 - n What is the object?
 - n What is the method?
- n Bernard Bolzano (1849):
 - n „Philosophy is the science of the objective connection of all those truths which we investigate in order to become wiser and better.“

What is philosophy? (Bolzano)

- n Immanuel Kant: Philosophy is the system of knowledge from pure concepts
- n Herbart: Forming concepts, removing contradictions they contain
- n Krug: The science of the original form of the human mind
- n XY: Solving the mystery of the existence of things and of the destiny of man
- n XY: Striving for knowledge of the universe
- n XY: Striving for knowledge and love of God in knowing and acting

... What is philosophy?

- n XY: The science of the connection of all things with the ultimate fundament of all being
 - n The science of all things as they are in God
 - n The science of all sciences; the original science
- n XY: The doctrine of truth (Wahrheitslehre)
- n XY: The science of that knowledge which comes from the mind of man
 - n The science of the conditions of human knowledge
- n XY: The science of the absolute. The scientific presentation of rational thought.
- n Hegel: The science of reason being aware of all being
- n XY: The thinking of the identity of thinking and being.
- n Schelling: The concept of philosophy is a result of philosophy.

What are the objects of philosophy?

- n One answer: concepts
- n Immanuel Kant (1724-1804): the copernicanian turn
 - n Required (like René Descartes and Christian von Wolff) apodictic certainty in philosophy
 - n We cannot know “things in themselves”
 - n Investigate the “conditions of the possibility” of knowing and thinking
 - n Investigate the “categories” of our thinking, i.e. ways we have to think. ≠ “categories” understood traditionally

... What are the objects of philosophy?

- n The linguistic turn (ca. 1930): metaphysical claims are meaningless. Philosophy can only investigate how we speak.
 - n All necessary claims are analytic, all analytic claims are necessary. Against the phenomenologists' "synthetic necessity" ("synthetic a priori")
 - n Positivism: All knowledge comes through the senses. Philosophy gives us no knowledge about the world, only about ...
 - n Two schools: ordinary language philosophy; ideal language
 - n Reconstructionist positivists (Gustav Bergmann): Metaphysics is possible, but only through investigating language.

... What are the objects of philosophy?

- n Peter Strawson (1959, *Individuals*) is a concept philosopher: "Descriptive metaphysics is content to describe the actual structure of our thought about the world, revisionary metaphysics is concerned to produce a better structure. ... Perhaps no actual metaphysician has ever been, both in intention and effect, wholly the one thing or the other. ... This book is, in part, and in a modest way, an essay in descriptive metaphysics. Only in a modest way – for though some of the themes discussed are sufficiently general, the discussion is undertaken from a certain limited viewpoint and is by no means comprehensive. (p. 9, 11)"

... What are the objects of philosophy?

- n Today in anglosaxon philosophy:
Metaphysical questions are asked, but often addressed by investigating language
 - n The method of ontological commitment
 - n The method of transforming statements
 - n The method of conceptual analysis
(investigation "logical form")
- n We have been led to the question about method.

Good and Evil

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Daniel von Wachter

Info

- n <http://www.jcu.edu/philosophy/gensler/exercise.htm>
- n Have all received the emails?
- n There will be a mid-term exam.

Task until Wednesday

- n Until Wednesday:
Write down the claim of cultural relativism.
 - n Write concisely, i.e. short and precise.
 - n Always read very carefully the tasks. Do exactly what it says. Often you have to answer a question which is easily misunderstood.

Task until Mon. 31. Aug.

- n Give (in writing) one concise argument for cultural relativism and one against it.
 - n Do not write about c.r. but give arguments for and against it.
- n You need to have read: ECI (Ethics: contemporary introduction), 2-20 and ECR (Ethics: contemporary readings), 43-57.
- n Read also: ECR, 1-42.
 - n All these readings are obligatory. Further readings will be given on the website and in class, but look already now in the library and in the internet.

The method of philosophy

- n Independent of all experience? Three views:
 1. Immanentist philosophy: Independent of all experience; the objects are not things in themselves (not about „the world“) but concepts or categories of thinking
 2. Reconstructionist: The objects are things in themselves but the method is linguistic or conceptual
 3. Descriptivists: The objects are things in themselves and the method is not linguistic but insight (a priori) or senses or evidence.

Intuition

- n Is there a kind of experience which is distinct or independent of all sense experience? Empiricists deny this, phenomenologists (e.g. Max Scheler) affirm it.
- n This way of knowing can be called **intuition** or **a priori** (versus a posteriori)
- n We might know through intuition:
 - n moral facts
 - n modal facts (might include describing essences)
 - n mathematical truths
 - n the existence of God (although perception of God generally is not called "a priori")

The aim of philosophy and of this course

- n Give true answers to philosophical questions and defend them.
 - n Say what counts in favour of this answer
 - n Use or criticise arguments of other authors
- n Describe the objects.
- n Do not write about arguments but give arguments

Reading philosophical texts

n See [phil-reading.ppt](#).