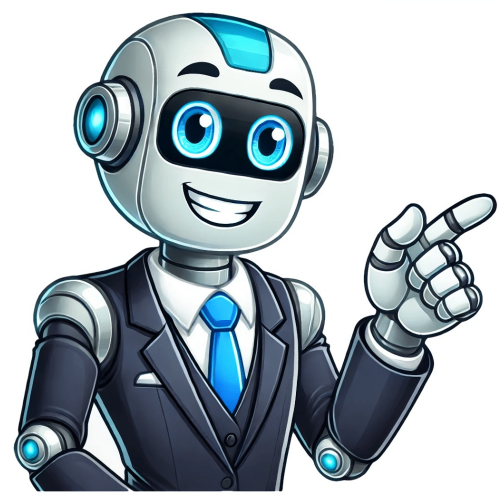


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philosophy is anything better than innocent but useless trifling, hailsplitting distinctions, and controversies on matters concerning which knowledge is impossible. This view of philosophy appears to result, partly from a wrong conception of the ends of life, partly from a wrong conception of the kind of goods which philosophy strives to achieve. Physical science, through the medium of inventions, is useful to innumerable people who are wholly ignorant of it; thus the study of physical science is to be recommended, not only or primarily, because of the effect on the student, but rather because of the effect on mankind in general. This utility does not belong to philosophy. If the study of philosophy has any value at all for others than students of philosophy, it must be only indirectly, through its effects upon the lives of those who study it. It is in these effects, therefore, if anywhere, that the value of philosophy must be primarily sought. But further, if we are not to fail in our endeavor to determine the value of philosophy, we must first free our minds from the prejudices of what are wrongly called practical people. The practical person, as the word is often used, is one who recognizes only material needs, who realizes that people must have food for the body, but is oblivious of the necessity of providing food for the mind. If all people were well off, if poverty and disease had been removed to their lowest possible point, there would still remain much to be done to provide a valuable society; and even in the existing world the goods of the mind are at least as important as the goods of the body. It is exclusively among the goods of the mind that the value of philosophy is to be found; and only those who are not indifferent to these goods can possibly appreciate the value of philosophy. Like every other pursuit, philosophy requires certain conditions of success, and it cannot be maintained that philosophy has had any very great measure of success in its attempts to provide definite answers to its questions. If you ask a mathematician, a mineralogist, a historian, or any other person of learning, what definite body of truths has been ascertained by his science, his answer will last as long as you are willing to listen. But if you put the same question to a philosopher, he will, if he is candid, have to confess that his study has not achieved positive results such as have been achieved by other sciences. It is true that this is partly accounted for by the fact that, as soon as definite knowledge concerning any subject becomes possible, this subject ceases to be called philosophy, and becomes a separate science. The whole study of the heavens, which now belongs to astronomy, was once included in philosophy; Newton's great work was called the mathematical principles of natural philosophy. Similarly, the study of the human mind, which was, until very lately, a part of philosophy, has now been separated from philosophy and has become the science of psychology. Thus, to a great extent, the uncertainty of philosophy is more apparent than real: those questions which are already capable of definite answers are placed in the sciences, while those only to which, at present, no definite answer can be given, remain to form the residue which is called philosophy. This is, however, only a part of the truth concerning the uncertainty of philosophy. There are many questions among them those that are of the profoundest interest to our spiritual lifewhich, so far as we can see, must remain insoluble to the human intellect unless its powers become of quite a different order from what they are now. Has the universe any unity of plan or purpose, or is it a fortuitous concourse of atoms? Is consciousness a permanent part of the universe, giving hope of indefinite growth in wisdom, or is it a transitory accident on a small planet on which life must ultimately become impossible? Are good and evil of importance to the universe or only to man? These and other questions which it would seem that it would be wise to attempt to solve, remain open and unanswerable to us at present. To continue to speculate upon such questions, to make us aware of their importance, to examine all the approaches to them, and to keep alive that speculative interest in the universe which is apt to be killed by confining ourselves to definitely ascertainable knowledge! The value of philosophy lies in this, in fact, to be sought largely in its very uncertainty. The person who has no tincture of philosophy goes through life imprisoned in the prejudices derived from common sense, from the habitual beliefs of his age or his nation, and from convictions which have grown up in his mind without the cooperation or consent of his deliberate reason. To such a person the world tends to become definite, finite, obvious; common objects raise no questions, and unfamiliar possibilities are contemptuously rejected. As soon as we begin to philosophize, on the contrary, we find, as we saw in our opening chapters, that even the most everyday things lead to problems to which only very incomplete answers can be given. Philosophy, though unable to tell us with certainty what is the true answer to the doubts which it raises, is able to suggest many possibilities which enlarge our thoughts and free them from the tyranny of custom. Thus, while diminishing our feeling of certainty as to what things are, it greatly increases our knowledge as to what they may be; it removes the somewhat arrogant dogmatism of those who have never traveled into the region of liberating doubt, and it keeps alive our sense of wonder by showing familiar things in an unfamiliar aspect. Apart from its utility in showing unsuspected possibilities, philosophy has a value perhaps its chief value through the greatness of the objects which it contemplates, and the freedom from narrow and personal aims resulting from this contemplation. The life of the instinctive person is shut up within the circle of his private interests: family and friends may be included, but the outer world is not regarded except as it may help or hinder what comes within the circle of instinctive wishes. In such a life there is something feverish and confined, in comparison with which the philosophical life is calm and free. The private world of instinctive interests is a small one, set in the midst of a great and powerful world which must, sooner or later, lay our private world in ruins. Unless we can so enlarge our interests as to include the whole outer world, we remain like a garrison in a beleaguered city, fighting bravely against the enemy, but with little prospect of ultimate success. Such a life is full of hostility and fear, and it is difficult to see how it could ever attain to peace. The person who enters the realm of philosophical contemplation does not, in its widest survey, divide the universe into two hostile campsfriends and foes, helpful and hostile, good and badbut views the whole impartially. Philosophic contemplation, when it is unalloyed, does not aim at proving that the rest of the universe is akin to humanity. All acquisition of knowledge is an enlargement of the Self, but this enlargement is best attained when it is not directly sought. It is obtained when the desire for knowledge is alone operative, by a study which does not wish in advance that its objects should have this or that character, but adapts the Self to the characters which it finds in its objects. This enlargement of Self is not obtained when, taking the Self as it is, we try to show that the world is so similar to this Self that knowledge of it is possible without any admission of what seems alien. The desire to prove this is a form of self-assertion, and like all self-assertion, it is an obstacle to the growth of Self which it desires, and of which the Self knows that it is capable. Self-assertion, in philosophic speculation as elsewhere, views the world as a means to its own ends; thus it makes the world of less account than Self, and the Self sets bounds to the greatness of its goods. In contemplation, on the contrary, we start from the not-Self, and through its greatness the boundaries of Self are enlarged; through the infinity of the universe the mind which contemplates it achieves some share in infinity. For this reason greatness of soul is not fostered by those philosophies which assimilate the universe to Humanity. Knowledge is a form of union of Self and not-Self; like all union, it is impaired by dominion, and therefore by any attempt to force the universe into conformity with what we find in ourselves. There is a widespread philosophical tendency towards the view which tells us that humanity is the measure of all things, that truth is person-made, that space and time and the world of universals are properties of the mind, and that, if there be anything not created by the mind, it is unknowable and of no concern to us. Those who hold this view have lost touch with reality. They have taken too literally the words "the measure of all things," and they have made themselves incapable of understanding the difference between the measure of the individual and the measure of the universal. The person who understands the nature of knowledge sees that the domestic circle for fear his world might not be law. The true philosophic contemplation, on the contrary, finds its satisfaction in every enlargement of the not-Self, in everything that magnifies the objects contemplated, and thereby the subject contemplated. Everything, in contemplation, that is personal or private, everything that depends upon habit, self-interest, or desire, distorts the object, and hence impairs the union which the intellect seeks. By thus making a barrier between subject and object, such personal and private things become a prison to the intellect. The free intellect will see as God might see, without a here and now, without hopes and fears, without the trammels of customary beliefs and traditional prejudices, calmly, dispassionately, in the sole and exclusive desire of knowledgeknowledge as impersonal, as purely contemplative, as it is possible for humanity to attain. Hence also the free intellect will value more the abstract and universal knowledge into which the accidents of private history do not enter, than the knowledge brought by the senses, and dependent, as such knowledge must be, upon an exclusive and personal point of view and a body whose sense-organs distort as much as they reveal. The mind which has become accustomed to the freedom and impartiality of philosophic contemplation will preserve something of the same freedom and impartiality in the world of action and emotion. It will view its purposes and desires as parts of the whole, with the absence of insistence that results from seeing them as infinitesimal fragments in a world of which all the rest is unaffected by any one persons deeds. The impartiality which, in contemplation, is the unalloyed desire for truth, is the very same quality of mind which, in action, is justice, and in emotion is the universal love which can give to all, and not only to those who are judged useful or admirable. Thus, in contemplation enlarges not only the objects of our thought, but also opens doors of our actions and our affections: it makes us citizens of the universe, not only of one walled city at war with the rest of the world. A citizenship of the universe consists necessarily in freedom, and his liberation from the thrall of narrow hopes and fears. Thus, to secure such an extension of the range of philosophy is itself an end desired, not for the sake of the definite answers which it gives, but rather for the sake of the questions thrown up by its investigation, which increase and diminish the scope of our assurance, which close the door against speculation; but above all because, through the greatness of the universe which philosophy contemplates, the mind also is rendered greater, and becomes capable of that union with the universe which constitutes its highest good. The text was taken from the following work Bertrand Russell, The Problems of Philosophy (Urbana, IL: Project Gutenberg, 2004), use of this work is governed by the Public Domain Media Attributions There is no easy answer to the question "What is the subject matter of philosophy?" Indeed, this is itself a philosophical question. However, broadly speaking, the principal aim of philosophy is to better understand ourselves, our world, and our place in it. While philosophy differs from the empirical and social sciences in important respects this does not mean that philosophical questions are disconnected from everyday life. What we think about the nature of knowledge and of persons, for example, will have ramifications for how we act and how we treat others. One way to characterize philosophy is by the sorts of questions it seeks to answer and the ways in which it seeks to answer them. As an academic discipline, philosophy admits of several subdivisions, each of which is itself characterized in terms of the questions addressed. Of course there is substantial overlap between areas, but here is a rough guide. Epistemology is the inquiry into the nature of knowledge. Philosophers ask: What is knowledge? How is it possible to have knowledge of various subject matters, e.g., the external world, other minds? How are our beliefs justified? Can we know anything with certainty? Metaphysics is concerned with the fundamental nature of our world. Typical questions in this field are: What are persons? What are free actions? What are concepts? What is matter? How do we individuate things? What kinds of things exist? What is the nature of time? Ethics is the investigation into the nature of moral judgement and moral reasoning. We want to know what actions are right actions. What ends are worth striving for? Are there moral truths? What is the basis of morality? The Greek philosopher Aristotle distinguished three main branches of metaphysics: ontology, epistemology, and ethics. Ontology is the study of being and existence. Questions in this area deal with the nature of reality and the relationship between the mental and the physical. Ethics deals with the nature of morality and the good life. Various "Philosophies of..." The Philosophy of Science, for instance, is concerned with the nature of the scientific method and the structure of scientific explanations. The Philosophy of Language is concerned with issues like meaning, truth and reference as well as with the explanation of human linguistic understanding. The Philosophy of Mind asks, among other things, whether the mind is the brain and whether reasons can be causes. The Philosophy of Religion investigates the meaning and justification of religious statements, and the Philosophy of Mathematics is concerned with whether numbers or sets are objects and with the nature of mathematical proof. All these questions have a distinguished history, dating (in the Western world) from approximately the beginning of the sixth century BCE. The study of philosophy, then, crucially involves the study of history of philosophy from the Ancient period throughout the medieval and Modern periods, to what can be loosely described as the Contemporary period. So, for example, the question "What is knowledge?" has exercised thinkers from Plato to Aquinas, from Locke to Russell. And from Aristotle to Maimonides, from Hume to Moore, philosophers have been trying to articulate the nature of the good and the right. In examining how individuals of different times and cultures have thought about problems much like those that concern us, and in studying the sometimes rather special problems that were of concern to them, students of philosophy at the latter end of the twentieth century can discover their place in intellectual history. Philosophy is also a particular way, or ways, of thinking. It emphasizes clarity in expression (both written and verbal expression) and rigor in argument. Philosophical questions are intriguing and hard questions and so philosophical method stresses thoroughness and intellectual generosity - the willingness and ability to grasp another's arguments and respond to them. And, philosophy is as much a manner of writing and speaking as it is a matter of thinking per se. To this end, the department requires of all Majors, Honours, and Joint Honours students beginning our program that they take a three credit course entitled "Philosophical Fundamentals." This class is a seminar devoted to the close study of several texts (these differ from year to year). The main aim of the course is to equip students with the distinctive philosophical skills that are required for advanced philosophical discussion. Students interested in pursuing graduate work in philosophy need to complete the major with distinction. Our curriculum includes courses in logic, philosophy of language, philosophy of mind, philosophy of science, philosophy of religion, philosophy of action, and philosophy of education. We also maintains and encourages ties with other fields, e.g., Psychology, Linguistics, History, Political Science, Mathematics, Physics, Biology. Philosophical reflection on the nature of explanation, for example, often offers a new perspective on the study of psychology or physics. Hence many students will find that certain classes in philosophy are directly relevant to another area of study. The McGill Department of Philosophy has a continuing commitment to providing an intensive yet broad-based philosophical education. The interests and view of members of the Department are wide ranging both in subject matter and historical era and are supplemented by Associated faculty from English, Jewish Studies, Religious Studies, and Psychiatry. These interests are reflected in the wide range of courses which we offer.

PHILOSOPHY-BUS-068 (philosophia):

1. Definition and Scope (1) Intuitive Philosophy Is Universal (2) Speculative Philosophy Belongs Mainly to Western Thought
2. Greek Philosophy
3. Philosophy in Old Testament and Judaism (1) Of Nature (2) Of History (3) Post-exilic (4) Alexandrian
4. Philosophy in the New Testament (1) The Teaching of Jesus Christ (2) Apostolic Teaching (3) Attitude of New Testament Writers toward Philosophy LITERATURE

1. Definition and Scope: Only found in Colossians 2:8; literally, the love and pursuit of wisdom and knowledge. In its technical sense, the term is now used for the conscious endeavor of thought, by speculative process, to interpret the whole of human experience, as a consistent and systematic unity, which would be the ultimate truth of all that may be known. The term is also used, in a wider sense, of all interpretations of experience, or parts of experience, however obtained, whether by revelation, intuition or unconscious speculation. No hard-and-fast line can be drawn between the two kinds of philosophy. Some of the ruling conceptions of speculation, such as God, spirit, order, causation, true and false, good and evil, were not discovered by reason, but given in experience. (1) Intuitive Philosophy is Universal. The human mind has always been engaged in intuitive philosophy, since it is by nature curious to inquire after the laws of things, and to seek for the cause of events. Speculation began again only to indicate as to the ultimate source of the intuited facts, and to establish the validity of the intuitions. Since the dawn of modern civilization, the higher religions, the mind reflected over these ideas, and elaborated them into systems of thought that bear some resemblance to the speculative theories of western thought. In China, both Confucianism and Taoism developed theories of human life and destiny that bear some resemblance to Stoicism. The religions of Assyria and Babylonia enshrined in their legends theories of the world and of man and his institutions. In India, men's belief in the Nature-gods gradually developed into pantheistic Brahmanism, which reduced the multiplicity of experience into one ultimate being, Brahma. But the desire for moral salvation and the sense of pain and evil produced a reaction, and led to the pessimistic and nihilistic philosophy of Buddhism. In Persia, the moral consciousness awoke earlier, and the attempt to systematize the multiplicity of polytheism issued in the dualistic philosophy of later Zoroastrianism. The whole realm of being was divided into two kingdoms, created and ruled by two lords: Ahura Mazda, the creator of light and life, law, order

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photos.com/Getty Images Immanuel Kant met the challenge posed by Hume by saying that reason is a real world. Its underlying nature cannot be known. It appears to be the appearances of everything (what he called phenomena) can be perceived. Humans, however, impose a form of reality on the world by the way they organize their thoughts about it. They thus impose an order on the world through categories created by the mind. From Plato to Kant and beyond, there are some of the ways that the complex issue of epistemology has been addressed. When the conclusions of nuclear physicists are taken into account especially their studies on atomic particulate problem of the reality of the material world and how much can be known about it is compounded. Logic is the study of reasoning. It deals with arguments or statements of reasoning in which certain statements, called premises, are put forth to support another statement, the conclusion. A logician analyzes the premises to see how they relate to one another and to determine if they lead to the conclusion. An argument can be deductive or inductive. In a deductive argument, the premises are intended to provide definitive support for the conclusion. A common type of deductive argument is the syllogism, a form discussed by Aristotle in his Prior Analytics. A syllogism consists of two premises and a conclusion, as in: Every Greek is human; no human is immortal; therefore, no Greek is immortal. This argument is said to be valid because the conclusion must be true if the premises are true. In contrast, the syllogism Some animal is a dog; some dog is white; therefore, every animal is white is invalid because the premises are true but the conclusion is false. A deductive argument is valid only if the premises are true and the conclusion follows necessarily from them. Inductive arguments, on the other hand, are based on probability. They are based on the observation of a limited number of cases and the conclusion is drawn that the conclusion is probably true. For example, from the fact that one hears the sound of piano music, one may infer that someone is playing a piano. But although this conclusion may be likely, it is not certain, since the sounds could have been produced by an electronic synthesizer. Thus, it is possible in an inductive argument for the premises to be true while the conclusion is false. The branch of philosophy known as ethics is concerned with human behavior, morality, and responsibilities of people to each other and to society. Because ethics plays such a large part in the way people live, it has always been a subject of great interest. Some thinkers have asserted that there are definite, knowable standards for human behavior. Others deny this and say that decisions should be based mostly on the situation in which one finds oneself. They are relativists who say ethical decisions are related to specific circumstances. This branch of philosophy is very close to religion. A large part of the Bible, for instance, is made up of wisdom literature, which is chiefly ethics and a religious foundation. On the basis of ethics, Aristotle developed his Politics. He moved from explaining how individuals could have a good life to how a good society should be built. Can Balcigios/Shutterstock.comThe field of aesthetics deals with the nature of beauty, the arts, and taste (or appreciation). The term aesthetics is derived from the Greek word meaning sense perception. The basic question for aesthetics is: How do humans judge what is beautiful? Is it a reasoned assessment, or is it merely an emotional preference? Furthermore, do aesthetic judgments have any relationship to moral or scientific judgments? In conclusion then, aesthetics seeks to lay foundations for criticism in the arts, or tries to show that such foundations are impossible. Approaches to philosophy other than dividing it into five areas may be taken. It is possible to divide philosophy into two types: speculative and practical. Speculative is from the Latin verb meaning to look at. Basically it means to ponder a subject and arrive at conclusions. Metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics are speculative. Practical philosophy is concerned with the actions of individuals or of society. It seeks to present a workable approach to conduct and mutual obligations. It also seeks to answer the questions, What is happiness? and What is a good life? Ethics is practical philosophy. It is reasonable to assume that politics and economics fall into the same category. It is possible to form idealistic theories about both, but they are so closely identified with human behavior that their practical nature is always in the foreground. What really works becomes more significant than what someone says should work. There is still another way to look at the work of philosophers. Some have been system builders. They have sought to analyze everything and fit all their ideas into one comprehensive way of understanding the world. They want answers to every question. Examples of such thinkers include Thomas Aquinas, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, and Karl Marx. They created essentially closed systems of thought. Other philosophers have taken the opposite approach, analyzing every separate piece of evidence and trying to explain it on its own terms. This was the direction taken by Aristotle, David Hume, and Bertrand Russell, among others. Western philosophy has ancient, medieval, and modern eras. The ancient era includes the work of Greek and Roman thinkers, some of whom were influenced by ideas developed much earlier in Egypt and Mesopotamia. During the ancient era Greek philosophy was the most creative. The Romans derived most of their thought from it and built upon it, but they did not add much that was new. The period of Greek philosophy falls into three parts: the pre-Socratics; the work of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle; and the schools that followed these three giants. Medieval philosophy, which includes the work of Plato and Aristotle, was most heavily influenced by Christianity. It began about the 4th century and ended in the 14th. Augustinism, the dominant medieval philosophy, was most respected. Modern philosophy began in the most recent period, which was dominated by Christianity. This fact, coupled with a great interest in scientific investigation, aided the rise of philosophy into the modern era. The 17th century was the age of enlightenment, the foundation for the modern era. The rise of humanism and the enlightenment movement led to the rise of modern philosophy. The 18th century was the age of enlightenment, the foundation for the modern era. 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Philosophy is a field of study that attempts to answer questions that cannot be answered by providing some fact, but that require a deeper understanding of the question. Main areas of philosophy are logic and critical thinking, ethics, aesthetics, epistemology, metaphysics, and many others discussed in more detail below.If you like reading about philosophy, here's a free, weekly newsletter with articles just like this one: Send it to me!If you prefer, you can listen to an audio version of this article right here or in your podcast player. Look for the Accented Philosophy Podcast.Philosophy and its main areasPhilosophy sounds like a daunting topic to many, something incredibly complex and boring. But, in its most basic form, it is very close to what we all did as children: ask questions about the world.Philosophy is a field of study that attempts to answer questions that cannot be answered by providing some fact, but that require a deeper understanding of the question itself. For example:What is the meaning of beauty? (Aesthetics)Which actions do we consider to be right or wrong? (Ethics)How can we make correct arguments and avoid mistakes in thinking? (Critical Thinking)What it means to really know something? (epistemology)What is science and what is the proper way to do science? (philosophy of science)What is the ultimate nature of things? (metaphysics)What is a good state or government? (political philosophy)What is ethics?Ethics is the study of how we ought to behave, and why. There are many different theories of ethics, which we briefly discuss in this article.Philosophys aim is to clarify the questions we askBecause of this focus that philosophy puts on asking the right questions, it has sometimes been labelled the study of asking the right questions. This is particularly important because we sometimes tend to ask questions that cannot be answered because the question itself is asked in the wrong way. For example:Does God exist? This question cannot be answered like that. We first would have to clarify what existing means for a being like God. We can see and touch physical, material things, but not everything exists in the same way as a bottle or a table. For example, numbers. The number 42 certainly exists, but where is it? I cannot point at anything in the material world that is the number 42.Or that idea for a poem that I had yesterday. Certainly, in some way, my idea exists. I can remember it, I can recite the poem. But where is it? Is my idea lying on the table over there? No. Numbers, ideas and many other things exist in a different way from material objects, but they certainly do exist in a real way. Christianity exists too, but I cannot locate it.Philosophy is a field of study that attempts to answer questions that cannot be answered by providing some fact, but that require a deeper understanding of the question itself.Or, say, the government of Germany. Even this very real thing I cannot locate or point at. It is not a particular building. The government offices can move to another place, or they may even be entirely destroyed (say, in an earthquake) without destroying the government itself. The government is also not the people. The people that make up the government change all the time, but the government stays the same government. If I owe a thousand dollars to the government in taxes, then I owe the same thousand dollars to the same government even if all the politicians have changed after an election.This is why a philosopher would not accept the question does God exist? without further clarifications. If we think about the way different kinds of things exist long enough, we will end up with a much more complex question, but perhaps one that has a better chance of actually being answered.Recommended for you:Aristotle (384-322 BC)Aristotle (384-322 BC), born in Stageira, Greece, is one of the most influential philosophers who ever lived. He worked not only in philosophy, but also wrote dozens of books on all topics, from astronomy and biology to literary theory.The Philosophy of Apart from these core questions of philosophy, there are many areas of study that are usually called philosophy of (something) and that inquire deeper into some subject than normal science would, by applying the methods of philosophical questioning to this particular subject.For example, the Philosophy of Happiness asks what the concept of happiness really means, what the conditions for happiness are, what it means to be truly happy (as opposed to superficially happy), what the relationship is between the political organisation of a society and the happiness of its citizens, how economic systems (like capitalism) or different religions affect human happiness, how happiness relates to moral behaviour (is it always morally right to make others happy?) and so on.The Philosophy of Love examines what love means and how it is different from friendship or charity, whether love is exclusive or whether we can love multiple people at the same time, how the love of parents or siblings is different from erotic love, whether we can love a country or an animal, whether animals can love, what the relationship is between love and sexuality, how loves understanding and practices have changed over the centuries, whether love is the same all over the world or perceived differently in different cultures, and how social or technological developments affect love (online sex, prostitution, sex with robots, love towards AI systems).The Philosophy of Love examines what love means and how it is different from friendship or charity, whether love is exclusive or whether we can love multiple people at the same time, how the love of parents or siblings is different from erotic love and more such questions.A Philosophy of Cinema might ask what makes a movie a movie, why we want to watch movies that make us feel sad or frightened, what it is that makes a funny movie be funny, how our perception of reality in a movie is different from actual reality (for example, how years of time can be compressed in a movie to two hours and still feel like years to the audience), and whether violence in movies is acceptable or whether it contributes to violence in society.Similarly there is Philosophy of Cities, dealing with questions like: what is a city, how do cities change the lives and the perception of the citizens who live inside them, what is a good city, how can we create better cities that enable citizens to have better lives and so on.A Philosophy of Space Exploration might ask: to whom does space belong, who should have access to resources in space, how does space travel affect our views of life, the connection between space travel and religion, is it theoretically possible that we might fly faster than light or travel through time, if we discovered life on other worlds, how would we recognise it and communicate with it, and which moral duties would we have towards alien life?There is almost no limit to the philosophy of sub-disciplines. There is philosophy of religion, philosophy of history, philosophy of music, philosophy of culture, philosophy of transport, philosophy of technology, philosophy of education, philosophy of fashion, philosophy of food and countless others.Where does the word philosophy come from? The word philosophy comes from ancient Greek. Philos means friend or lover, and Sophia means wisdom. Philosophy, therefore, means the love of wisdom or loving wisdom.How philosophers think: An exampleAs an example of how philosophers might think, lets just look at a pen. A very common, normal, single-use plastic pen. If you look at it with your everyday eyes, youd say, this is a pen. Its something we can use to write. And thats it.Photo by Jon Tyson on Unsplash.The philosopher would not stop here, but begin asking more questions of the pen. First, what does it mean to say that a pen is used for writing? What if I use it for something else? If I take the pen, remove the cap, and use it to stab someone, is it still a pen, or has it become a weapon? Perhaps its now both, a pen and a weapon. Is it wrong to use a pen as a weapon? I can take out the inside bit with the ink and then Im left with a clear plastic tube, like a thick straw. I can use that to drink. Is it wrong to use a pen as a straw? Is there a difference whether I use it as a weapon or as a straw? And if I kill someone with my pen/weapon, is this then, at least in part, also the responsibility of the pens manufacturer? Would he have to justify his decision to make pens that can be used as weapons? But then, cannot everything be used as a weapon?If I take the pen, remove the cap, and use it to stab someone, is it still a pen, or has it become a weapon?You see, were getting into responsibility, liability and ethics here, and also into questions of definition: if things fall into multiple categories, is there a primary category? How do I determine which one it is? Is the thing Im holding a pen that is used as a weapon, or is it a weapon that looks like a pen?But the pen has more to tell us.When Ive used it up, I will have to throw the pen away. Theres little I can do with a pen like this after its out of ink. The pen will end up in a landfill and eventually pollute the environment. It will decompose into microplastic particles, which will enter the water cycle, and end up in someones glass of water years later. This might be dangerous and cause cancer in that person who thinks that they are drinking water, but in reality they are also drinking parts of my discarded pen.What should we make of this?Should the government ban such single-use pens? Does the government have a duty to protect me (and others) from the consequences of using (and then throwing away) such single-use plastic objects? Or should I be free to make my own choice? Here then we would go into the role of the state in relation to free enterprise and a consumer society. How much power should the state have to regulate our lives? Can we be forced to abandon something convenient (a single-use pen) for the greater benefit of all in the long run? These are vital questions that are just now at the centre of the debates about global warming. So the pen has brought us to environmental and political philosophy, to questions of state regulation vs freedom, state paternalism and many more.We could also see the pen as technology, as part of a bigger system of things that need to work together in order to give meaning to the pen. A pen alone is of little use. A single pen in the jungle would not benefit us much.But this pen is also a capitalist pen. It cannot be made by happy farmers in a pre-industrial, agrarian society. It needs a factory that can process plastics and this is only available in what we call developed economies. Often, these economies concentrate the money in the hands of few; in this case, all the people who use pens are going to pay for them, but all that money is flowing into one direction and towards a small number of people: those who own the factory. So right there, you have a question of power within society, of power struggle, of wealth and poverty, of factory workers and factory bosses, of alienation, Marxism and the dream of a better society.Then you could look at the pen as a part of someones self-definition as a particular kind of person. Some professions depend on pens more than others, and wearing a pen in ones shirt pocket is a message to ones surroundings, a statement that the wearer of the pen is a particular kind of person: an intellectual, an office worker, a teacher. So the pen, like any artefact, has a role to play in defining the kind of person who uses it, and so now we are at Heideggers ideas on how human beings realise their Being through their choice of tools. A teacher is not someone who has a particular education to be a teacher. The education might be necessary in some countries, but is not what really makes or defines a teacher. Someone in a less developed part of the world might be a teacher without having a formal education. They would still be a teacher though, if they actually teach. While a teacher with an education, who is out of a teaching job and now driving a bus, would not be considered a teacher but a bus driver. So actually having and using this pen in a teaching context is what would help define a teacher as a teacher. This pen then becomes part of the self-description and realisation of a particular human role.So you see how much there is to talk about when we just look at something as common and unremarkable as a cheap, plastic pen. And we could go on for much longer, examining the way the pen looks (aesthetics), the pens contribution to societys traditions and rituals (Confucian ethics), the power-structures that steer society towards needing pens (philosophy of technology), the pens contribution to ones happiness or unhappiness (Epicureanism), the pens purpose inside the whole of society and the universe (Aristotle and Natural Law theory) and much more. But we will stop here.Id be interested to hear what your take on the question is, whether you are a professional philosopher or just occasionally interested in philosophy. What is philosophy for you? What makes it different from other areas of knowledge? Tell me in the comments!If you are interested in learning more about philosophy, dont hesitate to look around this site! You can also find excellent, understandable introductions to philosophy as books. A review of the best introductions to philosophy is here:Cover image by Danika Perkinson on Unsplash.5 MinutesBasicsLunchtime philosophyQuestions

What is the aim of philosophy according to bertrand russell. What is the ultimate aim of philosophy. What is the central aim of vedanta philosophy. What is the main aim of philosophy. What is the primary aim of philosophy. What is philosophy and aims of education. What is the aim of philosophy. What is the aim of indian philosophy. According to russell what is the primary aim of philosophy. What is the main aim of sankhya philosophy. What is the aim of anglophone african philosophy. What is the aim of logic in philosophy. According to plato what is the aim of philosophy. What is the aim of doing philosophy. What is the aim of philosophy according to russell.