



Research Article

PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERSTANDING AND ITS ROLE IN OTHER FIELDS OF STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Philosophy is considered the mother of all the other disciplines because of the generality and vastness of its subject matter in contrast to other forms of human inquiry. People talk of philosophy without understanding its role in educational research, particularly its significant contribution to all the other disciplines. It is worth noting that there is nothing in the universe that does not concern or interest philosophy hence philosophical enterprise is essentially the application of reasoning to a wide variety of topics. It is therefore of paramount importance to highlight the important role that philosophy plays in other fields of study in that every discipline raises questions which philosophical investigation can help clarify. Because of the complexity of the world we live in, our efforts to comprehend it are just as diverse. Besides, our different aspirations, interests and activities factor in our endeavor to understand the world and these aspirations and interests find expressions in various fields of study such as history, law, theology, education, economics, political science etc.

Although these fields of study play an important role in our lives generally and in our endeavours to comprehend the world specifically, one cannot divorce them from philosophy. How can this be demonstrated? Given the unrestricted nature of the subject matter of philosophy, one can say that philosophy is an attempt to understand the world, its meaning and values. It examines rationally the fundamental problems affecting man and the world in which he lives. Its field is broad and inclusive. While using the facts and descriptive material presented by other specialized fields of study, philosophy goes beyond description to inquire into the nature, the values and the possibilities of things. Its goal is inclusive, comprehension and wisdom. That notwithstanding, philosophy cannot do without the results of other disciplines. It constantly interrogates and assesses the subject matters of the various fields of inquiry with a view of coming up with a conception of the universe that is coherent and systematic. This paper therefore aims at highlighting the contribution of philosophy to other fields of study such that questions and issues raised in every discipline are addressed in a fundamental and comprehensive manner. Every domain of human existence confronts us with problems on which philosophical reflection can shed light.

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INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

In his *encyclopedia of philosophical Sciences*, Hegel begins his work by saying that “reflection, thinking things over- is the beginning of philosophy”. This means that philosophical reflection can be brought to bear on any subject matter whatever hence, philosophy plays a very significant role in other forms of human inquiry or in other fields of study. Philosophy is relevant to history in so many ways.

For instance: ‘What is history?’ is strictly speaking not a historical question as some may think though it is of paramount importance to history.

The question is about the essential nature of history and as such it is a philosophical question. For a historian to answer this question completely, he or she must be some kind of a philosopher- a philosopher of history. And this may require that the historian is acquainted not only with history but also with philosophy as well. Philosophy therefore plays an important role in addressing the question of what history is. This is because of the nature of the discipline itself in that philosophy is critical and reflective. Philosophers therefore do not take things at their face value. Neither do they take anything for granted.

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This explains why it is said that a person who has studied philosophy can look at an issue in depth, examine that issue comprehensively with sound reasoning as opposed to someone who has not studied philosophy.

Besides, social and political philosophy investigates value judgements concerning society, the state and the individual's relation to these institutions and the following philosophical questions reflect the concerns of social and political philosophy: why should individuals live in Society? What social ideals of liberty, rights, justice, equality and responsibility are desirable? Philosophers therefore are interested in the metaphysical nature of politics, i.e. comprehensive thinking about the ultimate nature of things- what politics ultimately is supposed to accomplish based on the etymological meaning of politics from the Greek word *Polis* meaning city, how the city was to be organized, how the city was to be ruled. In this regard, it is worth pointing out what we mean by philosophy from the origin of the term. The term philosophy is derived from two Greek words, *philo* meaning love and *Sophos* meaning wisdom. Hence literally philosophy simply means love of wisdom. Wisdom must be distinguished from knowledge because one can have a great deal of knowledge and still be a learned fool.

As the ancient philosophers long ago discerned, philosophy is a quest for wisdom. We all are aware that a person can have a great deal of knowledge and still be a learned fool. In our age of confusion and uncertainty, we need a sense of direction. Wisdom is what provides us with that sense: it is an affair of values. As Abraham Kaplan has written:

“Whatever else wisdom may be, it is in some sense an *understanding* of life. It is not a purely cerebral attainment: wisdom is as much a matter of what we do and feel as it is of how we think. But thought is central to it... Wisdom is a matter of seeing things- but as they are, not subjectively” (Kaplan, Abraham, 1977). Wisdom is intelligent conduct of human affairs. We experience intellectual discomfort when confronted with fragmentary and confused views of the world. Without some unity of outlook, the self is divided. Among other benefits, the study of philosophy gives our lives an inner integration, helps us to decide what to approve and what to disapprove and provides a sense of meaning of human existence. What we are saying is that we cannot in anyway whatsoever divorce other forms of human inquiry or other fields of study from philosophy if at all they are to be meaningful at all. In other words, there is no domain in human knowledge where philosophy does not ask questions. Hence the subject matter of philosophy is the whole universe seen from all the dimensions and all forms of human experience.

Statement of the Problem

Many people seem not to understand how philosophy is of paramount importance in other fields of study. However, without giving a general account of the nature and object of philosophical reflection, one cannot fully comprehend its relevance to his or her own field of research. It is therefore right and fitting to point out the role of philosophy in other fields of study by showing some instances of how philosophy gets connected to other disciplines. In other words, there is need to outline and discuss the role and relevance of philosophy to other fields of inquiry, for instance, politics, history, law, theology, religion, education and political

Science owing to the fact that philosophical reflection can be brought to bear on any subject matter whatsoever. In other words, people do not seem to understand that questions raised in the field of history, political science, politics, religion, education, empirical sciences, etc. ultimately have philosophical underpinnings. Because we have said that the formal object of philosophy is all aspects of reality as opposed to the formal object of other disciplines which is restricted to an aspect of reality, it therefore goes without saying that every discipline raises questions which philosophical investigation can help clarify and yet philosophy is not given the attention it deserves. Many people consider philosophy purely as a speculative science which has nothing to do with the other disciplines and yet philosophy is getting clear about what we know and how to live. Philosophy for instance sheds light on the limitations of scientific method by pointing out that in spite of the fact that science itself is objective, we cannot talk of a purely objective science. Secondly philosophers will also argue that science cannot prescribe values besides the great strides which have been made in the field of science and technology and in particular in the fields of medicine and outer space. This is a clear indication that it is inappropriate to divorce any discipline from philosophy given that it is the mother of all other disciplines in terms of study for there are no issues in other disciplines that philosophy cannot help to address.

Objectives of the Study

This study intends to

1. Show some instances of how philosophy gets connected to other disciplines
2. Outline the role of philosophy in other fields of study such as history, law, economics, theology, religion, education and political science
3. Investigate the nature and object of philosophy via-avis other forms of human inquiry
4. Examine the role of philosophy programs in higher in higher education

Expected Output

Having given a general account of the relevance of philosophy to other forms of human inquiry, one can now begin to have a better understanding of the idea, value and meaning underlying the fact that philosophical reflection can be brought to bear on any subject matter whatsoever and for that matter in almost all the other academic disciplines. One can also clearly comprehend the philosophy behind disciplines such as education, medicine, religion, entrepreneurship, economics, law, political science, history etc. The incorporation of philosophy in such disciplinewill enable better service delivery in terms of teaching of the subjects in question for the study of philosophy can help students in that the philosophical techniques they assimilate can help them both in their other academic work and in their general problem solving over the years.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Philosophical problems cannot be solved by using microscopes or telescopes in the laboratory. On the contrary, philosophical problems are logical and conceptual problems which require conceptual or logical analysis or investigation. In this regard, this study used logical thinking coupled with

cases from a literature review to elicit the role of philosophy in other disciplines, particularly within the context of education. The methodology was based on logical and critical analysis of a monograph by F. Ochieng -Odhiambo (2009) entitled *A Companion to philosophy*. The analysis is aimed at shedding light on the contribution of philosophy to other disciplines and why philosophy can help to clarify questions or issues raised in every discipline. The following questions are at the heart of this discussion: (1) Why is it not useful to divorce any discipline from philosophy? (2) What is the deeper meaning and significance of philosophy (3) Should worthwhile knowledge be defined only as that which can be used to earn a living? Is occupational competence the only purpose of education?

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

What is Philosophy?

In one of his works *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, trans. W. Wallace (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975, section 7, G.W.F. Hegel writes: "Reflection- thinking things over- [is] the beginning of philosophy". Each one of us has a philosophy, even though we may not be aware of it. We all have some ideas concerning physical objects, our fellow persons, the meaning of life, death, God, right and wrong, beauty and ugliness, and the like. Of course, these ideas are acquired in a variety of ways, and may be vague and confused.

We are continuously engaged, especially during the early years of our lives, in acquiring views and attitudes, from our families, friends, teachers and various other individuals and groups. This is to say that our way of looking at the world and even classifying objects in a certain way is not something inborn. Rather it is a fruit of a series of shared meanings which we have acquired, from our parents, teachers and the environment in which we have grown. The Germans talk of *Lebenswelt*, meaning the lived world in the sense that the environment in which we live has an enormous influence on our world views.

These attitudes may also be greatly influenced by movies, television, music lyrics and books. They may result from some reflection on our part, or they more likely may result from a conventional or emotional bias. This broad popular man- in- the-street (*common sense*) view of philosophy is not adequate for our purposes. It does not describe the work and task of the philosopher. We need to define philosophy more specifically; the broad view is vague, confused and superficial.

The word philosophy is derived from two Greek words *philia* (love) and *Sophia* (wisdom) hence philosophy etymologically means 'the love of wisdom'. A definition of philosophy can be offered from a number of perspectives. Here I will present two. Each approach must be kept in mind for a clear understanding of the many meanings of philosophy and what particular philosophers may say about the nature and function of philosophy.

Philosophy is a set of views or beliefs about life and the universe which are often times held uncritically. This is the informal sense of philosophy or 'having' a philosophy. Usually when a person says 'my philosophy is' this or that, he/she is referring to an informal personal attitude to whatever topic is being discussed. The former president of Kenya

Daniel Toroitich Arap Moi, spoke of the philosophy of peace, love and unity and yet every elective period, people were being displaced from their homes. Yet he spoke of his philosophy. This is philosophy in the informal general sense of the term in that the ideas, beliefs and views that one holds are not subjected to a critical rational philosophical inquiry. In fact, People believed and acted on the basis of such beliefs without asking themselves why some beliefs are true and why some beliefs are false.

We can also talk about philosophy in the formal/technical/academic sense. In this sense, philosophy is defined as "a process of reflecting on and criticising our most deeply held conceptions and beliefs" (Titus *et al*, 1995). These two senses of philosophy- 'having' and 'doing' cannot be treated independently of each other, for if we did not *have* a philosophy in the informal personal sense, then we could not *do* a philosophy in the critical, reflective and academic sense.

As regards philosophy in the strict, technical (formal) sense, one can also define philosophy as the attempt to clarify and if possible to answer, a range of puzzling and fundamental questions which arise when, in a general and inclusive way, we try to understand ourselves and the universe we inhabit. Among many other things, these questions concern existence and reality, knowledge and belief, reason and reasoning, truth, meaning, and value both ethical and aesthetic.

The questions themselves are of the form: What is reality? What kind of things ultimately exist? What is knowledge and how do we come by it? How can we be sure that our claims to knowledge are not in some systematic way mistaken? In other words, is there any genuine knowledge we can rely on or must we simply depend on our opinions and guesses? What are the canons of correct reasoning? what is morally the right way to live and act and why? Etc. In his work, the *phenomenology of the spirit* (1807), Hegel argues that the goal of the phenomenology is truth and that "truth" is the goal of every human activity- art, ethics, religion and politics as well as mathematics, science and philosophy" (Hegel, 1807). According to Hegel, "philosophy had to be the quest for over-all unity and comprehensibility not piecemeal analysis and justification of particular human endeavours- even such large human endeavours as science and morality" (Robert C. Solomon, 1983). Hegel presents an ironic essay on the substitution of common sense for serious philosophy, as if philosophy is something everyone can do. (He says, we do not believe that anyone who has eyes and fingers can make shoes, so why does everyone think he is a philosopher?). Or else, it is supposed that philosophy is "merely formal knowledge devoid of content". But for Hegel, "philosophy is the basis of all knowledge, as necessary to every Science as it is to "life, Spirit and truth" (Robert C. Solomon, 1983). Philosophy in a phrase is getting clear about what we know and how to live. The truth for Hegel consists not of the details of life but of that single all-embracing, self-reflective philosophical vision, in which all of the pieces fall neatly in place.

Philosophy for Hegel is "the search for truth". In this regard, truth for Hegel, had to be the first of all this comprehensive world-view in which the order and the intelligibility of the various forms of human experience could be established, thus philosophical inquiry, is essentially the application of reasoning to a wide variety of topics. Philosophers therefore

are those people who seek to argue on the basis of reason. They examine rationally the fundamental problems affecting man and the world in which he lives. Philosophers take a second look at the material presented by common sense. They do not take anything for granted. They do not take things at their face value. They try to look at both sides of the coin. They attempt to think through a variety of life's problems and to face all the facts involved impartially. If anything, a person who has studied philosophy is more likely to pursue an issue in depth, examine that issue comprehensively with sound reasoning as opposed to someone who has not studied philosophy. This is so as we have already pointed out because philosophy as a discipline is critical and reflective.

It therefore goes without saying that "the mere accumulation of knowledge does not by itself lead to understanding, because it does not necessarily teach the mind to make a critical evaluation of facts that entail consistent and coherent judgment" (Titus *et al.*, 1995). This explains why it is possible for one to have a great deal of knowledge and still be a learned fool. It is also possible to have great power without insight. We can therefore affirm that everyone thinks it is our nature to think critically while in actual sense, that is not the case. If much of our thinking is left to itself, it is biased, distorted, partial, uninformed or down-right prejudiced. Yet the quality of our life and that of what we produce, make or build depends precisely on the quality of our thought. Excellence in thought, however, must be systematically cultivated. The study of philosophy therefore nurtures or enhances an individual's capacity to think critically by developing some of the skills required to form intelligent opinions, make good decisions and determine the best courses of action as well as recognize when someone else's reasoning is faulty or manipulative. Ideally the study of philosophy nurtures our capacity for making informed choices.

Over the millennia, a great investment of genius has been brought to the task of clarifying and answering the questions of philosophy. Some philosophers have attempted to construct explanatory theories, occasionally very elaborate and ambitious in scope; others have tried to clarify and resolve particular questions by painstaking analysis and criticism. Almost all those who have contributed to philosophy throughout its history have agreed that the matters mentioned above- existence, knowledge, truth, value- are deeply important; and it is upon this consensus that the philosophical debate, which has gone on at least since classical antiquity, has been based.

A genuine philosophical attitude is searching and critical; it is open-minded and tolerant- willing to look at all sides of an issue without prejudice. To philosophise is not merely to read and know philosophy; there are skills of argumentation to be mastered, techniques of analysis to be employed, and a body of material to be appropriated such that we become able to think philosophically. In other words, excellence in thought, however, must be systematically cultivated. Philosophy presses its inquiry into the deepest problems of human existence and attempts to think seriously about fundamental life issues: What is life and why am I here? Why is there anything at all rather than nothing? What is the place of life in this great universe? Is the universe friendly or unfriendly? Do things operate by chance or sheer mechanism, or is there some plan or purpose or intelligence at the heart of things? Is my

life controlled by outside forces or do I have a determining or even a partial degree of control? Why do people struggle and strive for their rights, for justice, for better things in the future? What do concepts like 'right' and 'justice' mean, and what are the marks of a good society?

Often men and women have been asked to sacrifice their lives, if need be, for certain values and ideals. What are the genuine values of life and how can they be attained? Is there really a fundamental distinction between right and wrong, or is it just a matter of one's own opinion? What is beauty? Should religion count in a person's life? Is it intellectually valid to believe in God? Is there a possibility of a 'life after death?' Is there any way we can get an answer to these and may related questions? Where does knowledge come from, and can we have any assurances that anything is true? These questions are all philosophical given that philosophy does not take anything for granted. Philosophy is interested both in the 'why' and the 'how' of things. In this regard, there are no questions raised in any form of human inquiry that philosophy cannot help to clarify owing to the vastness of its subject matter and scope.

The Role of Philosophy in Other Fields of Study

Given the complexity of the world in which we live, our efforts to comprehend it are very diverse. Besides, our different aspirations, interest and activities factor in our endeavours to understand the world. Such aspirations and interests find expressions in various disciplines or rather in various fields of study, such as history, law, theology, art, religion, education, economics political science etc. Though these fields of study generally play a very vital role in our lives, one cannot divorce them from philosophy. Let us illustrate this concept by means of some examples. Given the unrestricted nature of the subject matter of philosophy vis-à-vis other forms of human inquiry, one can say that "philosophy is an attempt to understand the world, its meaning and values. Its field is broad and inclusive. It attempts to answer questions about the kind of universe in which we live and what the ends of life may reasonably be" (F. Ochieng, Odhiambo, 2009).

While using the facts and descriptive material presented by other specialized fields of study, philosophy goes beyond description to inquire into the nature, the values and the possibilities of things. Its goal is inclusive, comprehension and wisdom. This is to say that as concerns the relationship between philosophy and other fields of human inquiry, philosophy is interested in the subject matters of all other disciplines. Indeed it cannot do without their results. It constantly interrogates and assesses the subject matters of the various fields of enquiry with a view of coming up with a conception of the universe that is coherent and systematic. In this regard, it is right and fitting to highlight some instances in which philosophy gets connected to other disciplines or better still to outline the role and relevance of philosophy to other fields of enquiry namely history, law, education, theology, economics and political science, just to mention a few. As far as the relation of philosophy to education is concerned, philosophy can help to clarify educational problems and issues in a more fundamental and comprehensive manner than educational sciences such as educational psychology, sociology of education, educational planning, educational administration etc.

For instance, if we are to give thoughtful answers to evaluative questions about education, we must acknowledge their dependence on philosophy. Educational value judgments, like all value judgments are very at time controversial. Philosophers place emphasis on objective conception of value as opposed to the subjective conception of values. The advocates of subjective conception of values maintain that values are subjective in the sense that they ultimately depend on our desires such that the more desirable something is the more valuable it is while the advocates of objective theory of value maintain that values are things which are objective by arguing based on the etymological meaning of the term value from the Latin term *valere*, meaning to be of worth, that which is good, intrinsically good whether we acknowledge of it or not. Philosophers would therefore pose the following questions relating to education: Do educational values express subjective feelings or objective knowledge? On what bases are particular educational values justified? Other relevant philosophical considerations are: *What is meant by education?* Is it the learning of skills for a job? Is it the memorization of data? Is it, as Alfred Whitehead said, a collection of “inert ideas-ideas that are merely received into the mind without being utilized, tested or thrown into fresh combinations?” (Whitehead, A.N., 1929). Is it a process of continuous reinterpretation of one’s individual and social life? *What is human nature?* Which image reflects accurately the creature to be educated? How do human beings learn? What is the mind? *What is knowledge?* What are the sources and nature of knowledge? What methods can we use to distinguish valid from invalid knowledge? Does what constitute knowledge limited only to what the senses can reveal to us or are we able to go beyond the senses?

Given that all the above questions relating to education are philosophical, it is only philosophy that can help in addressing them satisfactorily and adequately. In this regard, the application of general philosophical positions to educational problems is called philosophy of education. It is only through philosophy of education that one can address such questions in a fundamental and comprehensive manner. One model of this field focuses on three issues. First, basic objectives and specific goals of education, secondly, methods of teaching and learning and thirdly, curricula. To establish a college or university requires a philosophy of education and the answers to a number of basic questions: “What are the basic objectives and specific goals of the school? What methods of teaching and learning are consistent with these basic objectives? What will constitute the curriculum?” (Titus *et al*, 1995). If a college or university system lacks a coherent educational philosophy, the result can be a series of conflicting objectives and aims, random teaching and learning methods and unstable, trendy curricula.

In their work, *philosophy and education in Africa*, Njoroge and Bennaars argue that “Scientific thinking about education has provided us, in the course of time, with very accurate descriptions of educational situations and with detailed analyses of educational problems. In the world today, scientific data on education, in the form of statistical facts and figures, as provided by the educational sciences have become indispensable for the management and development of the educational enterprise” (Njoroge and Bennaars, 1986)

It is often on the basis of these data of scientific findings that educational reforms are introduced, that new curricula are

proposed, that new educational technologies are tried out. Unfortunately, in view of all these educational innovations and experiments and given time, money and expertise, it may appear that the educational sciences will eventually solve most educational problems, particularly those related to educational practice. Scientific thinking about education is for this reason to be strongly encouraged. That notwithstanding, scientific thinking about education cannot solve all the problems; it cannot provide all the answers in the area of education. The main reason for this lies in the basic limitations of scientific thinking. Science, almost by definition, is said to be objective and neutral; it is also empirical, concerned as it is primarily with all that is directly observable through the senses and with the help of scientific instruments. Many problems in education however, go beyond what can be scientifically observed; they belong to the areas of ideas, values and beliefs. These particular problems cannot be solved by the educational sciences, because the solution to these problems depends likewise on personal, social, cultural values, ideas and beliefs, all of which are subjective in the fundamental sense of the word. It is worth clarifying what is meant by the term “subjective” to dispel the idea of being biased or false. On the contrary, ideas or values or beliefs are subjective in as far as they originate from the Subject, from the person, from man who is the foundation of society. At this subjective level, science is “handicapped” by its own method, which is objective rather than subjective, it can therefore not deal effectively with problems, including educational problems, whose origin can be traced from human subjectivity. This is to say that although it is of paramount importance to recognise the specific need for scientific thinking about education, one must recognise the limitations of such thinking as well. Considering these limitations, including the narrow specialisation of the educational sciences, we must therefore look for alternative ways of thinking that enable one to come to terms with education in a more fundamental and comprehensive manner. Here we point to philosophical thinking about education as a possible answer. We have already pointed out that philosophy examines rationally the fundamental problems affecting man and the world in which he lives hence the definition of philosophy as an attempt to clarify and if possible to give answers to certain fundamental and puzzling problems in our attempt to understand ourselves and the world we inhabit. One of these problems is education.

When philosophy examines the problems of education, it does so differently from the sciences. Not only does philosophy employ different methods but its area of concern is also entirely different. “Whereas the scientist is primarily interested in facts and figures when searching for evidence, the philosopher is more concerned with the ideas, values and meanings underlying the facts” (Titus *et al*, 1995). Although philosophical thinking about education is different from scientific thinking, it may be argued that scientific thinking about education is equally necessary. Educational science and technology are necessary because they are useful, practically speaking and are service-oriented. But the philosophy of education derives its use from being valuable. Its value lies primarily in the fact that in a world fascinated by utility practical sense and accountability, educational philosophy provides room for a vision that goes beyond the categories of use and practicability. It thus provides direction and guidance to man as man accordingly it has a necessary role to play in as

far as it tries to liberate man from his own short-sightedness, whereby “use” and “value” tend to be equated only in monetary terms.

“To speak of education in economic terms, in terms of manpower needs and of job opportunities, is the task of educational science. But this is not the only way to speak of education, since the meaning and significance of education go deeper and ultimately touch upon the meaning of life, of human life in the world today” (Njoroge and Bennaars, 1986). To think about this deeper meaning of education is the task of educational philosophy.

In our contemporary era, there is a dilemma: liberal Arts or Vocational Training? Many students today perhaps the majority, believe that the basic objective of education, especially at the college or university level, is to provide vocational training; that is, to prepare students for a job or career. They believe that the need for occupational skills should be the basis of a curriculum; methods of teaching and learning should include whatever means available to communicate clear-cut vocational information; diploma or college degree should be an entry ticket to a good job. One student, studying philosophy because it was required in a vocational program, exclaimed in anguish during a provocative class session, “You are messing up my mind! I did not come here to think; I came for an education.” One wonders whether such a student has connected a view of education with reflected comprehension of human nature, knowledge and values. Are students to be trained only in order to get a job? Should worth while knowledge be defined only as that which can be used to earn a living? Is occupational competence the only valuable purpose of education? These are questions as I had pointed out earlier that only philosophy can help to clarify in amore fundamental and comprehensive manner.

Philosophers believe that if vocational training is the sole content of education, the graduate enters the marketplace unprepared. One reason is that vocational training can become obsolete very quickly. New technologies, new products, new management styles and new industries appear so rapidly that skills learned today are inadequate only a few years later. Training of men and women solely with occupational information often ignores their need for a better understanding of themselves and the world. An education that has humanities as its core and in particular, philosophy, provides the student with permanent knowledge, the ability to think critically and exposure to powerful minds, inquiring intellects, and events of human significance. A commission funded by the Rockefeller Foundation credits the humanities and in particular philosophy with enabling men and women to make critical judgments about ethics and social policy, to understand diverse cultures and to interpret current events in the light of the past. “Consistent with the commission’s recommendations is the Institute for the Advancement of philosophy for children. Founded in 1974, the Institute has been responsible for the development of curriculum material and teaching methods that improve teaching and problem-solving skills. For similar reasons, the American Philosophical Association has active committees concerned with the teaching of philosophy at all level” (Titus *et al*, 1995).

Philosophy is also relevant to history in so many ways. For example, the question: “What is history?” is strictly speaking not a historical question as some may think though it is of paramount importance to history. The question is about the essential nature of history and as such it is a philosophical question. For a historian to answer this question completely, he or she must be some kind of a philosopher, namely, a philosopher of history. And this may require that the historian be acquainted not only with history but also with philosophy. Philosophy therefore plays an important role in addressing the question of what history is. In his work *entitled The Philosophy of History*, the German philosopher G.W.F. Hegel (1770-1831) grapples with questions regarding the essential nature of history. His concern is with such questions as: Is history merely the recording of past events which happen by chance, or do these events have a rational and hence projected towards a definite goal? If the latter, what is the rationale and what is the projected definite purpose? Hegel’s text is a good example highlighting the relation of history and philosophy. Hegel therefore lays much stress on historicism, understood in a broad sense as “the doctrine that emphasises the importance of history for the understanding of human institutions and activities” (Frederick C. Beiser, 1993). “Hegel’s historicism amounted to nothing less than a revolution in the history of philosophy. It implied that philosophy is possible only if it is historical, only if the philosopher is aware of the origins, context and development of his doctrines” (Frederick C. Beiser, 1993). Hegel accused scholars in other disciplines such as theology and law for failure to learn the simple lesson of history: “that what appear to be given, eternal or natural is in fact the product of human activity, and indeed of that activity in a specific cultural context” (Frederick C. Beiser, 1993).

Another central premise behind Hegel’s historicism is his general Herderian view of the role of tradition in the development of the arts and sciences. Citing Herder, Hegel refers to tradition as “the sacred chain” that links the present with the past. It is the tradition that shows us that the past continues to live in the present. What we are now Hegel says is what we have become and the process of our becoming is our history. In other words, Hegel argues that “the power of reason that mankind possesses is not given to it by birth but has been acquired through centuries of effort. The arts and sciences have not been created immediately but they are the products of all past achievement.” (Frederick C. Beiser, (1993)Hegel held that the universe is an unfolding process of thought out of which develop the processes of nature, human history and the organisations and institutions of society. Hegel maintains that even the constitution of a country is the product of its own history. *In his Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, He maintains that there is something special about the very subject matter of philosophy that makes it more historical than other disciplines. “Whereas the subject matter of other disciplines is fixed, given and eternal, that of philosophy undergoes constant development and transformation.” (Frederick C. Beiser, 1993)

Besides, philosophy has a lot to say issues pertaining to law. For instance, given the elusive nature of what justice is, law is yet another discipline that one would have problems trying to divorce from philosophy. Lawyers are concerned with those actions that are legal, that is, are in accordance with the law. But when we pass from what the law says (from the positive

aspect of the law) to the nature of the law itself and begin to ask some fundamental questions, we *ipso facto* pass from law to philosophy or better still from law to legal philosophy. The fundamental questions include questions such as: What is law? What is the end or purpose of all law? Is legal justice compatible with justice? Who is best qualified to make the law? What are the ethical justifications for the lawmaker's qualifications? What is the nature of the principles upon which law is, or should be based? What rights or freedoms should be immune from political or legal control? When is it reasonable to disobey a law? (Civil disobedience). These are questions which, if a lawyer is to answer competently, then he or she must draw from philosophy. It is only philosophy which can address such questions exhaustively.

For instance, according to scholastic philosophers like St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Bonaventure, the definition of law is based on the foregoing notion of the common good. As is evident from experience, the common good is the end or purpose of all law, and without an understanding of what the common good properly is, the nature and function of law in directing human acts cannot be appreciated. "Common good is the sum of those conditions of social living whereby men are enabled more readily and more fully to achieve their perfections and appointed ends". (Peschke, Karl H., 2004).

Common good is clearly distinct from a private good, the latter being the good of one person only, to the exclusion of its being possessed by any other. A common good is also distinct from a collective good, which though possessed by all of a group, is not really participated in by the members of the group; as divided up, a collective good becomes respectively private goods of the members. A true common good is universal, not singular or collective, and is distributive in character, being communicable to many without becoming anyone's private good. Moreover, each person participates in the whole common good, not merely in a part of it, nor can any one person possess it wholly. The distinctive common good to which human law is ordered is the civil, or political, good of peace and order. Such direction of human acts by law is clearly indispensable for human development and perfection. This is to say that according to the scholastic philosophers, law is a certain ordination of reason for the common good, promulgated by one who has care of the community. St. Thomas Aquinas argues that law as a rational project is promulgated with the aim of promoting the common good of the community, sanctioned by he or she who has the mandate to guide this same community. This common definition of law applies proportionately or analogously to the different kinds of law.

According to man's mode of knowing, civil or human positive law primarily realizes the common definition of law. Hence law is first understood to be ordinance of reason by one who has authority to direct the political society and its members to the common civil good, a happiness consisting primarily of peace and order. Civil law directly concerns the external acts of human beings, presupposing the interior principles and acts. Although civil law therefore does not directly aim at making men virtuous in their actions, it does command certain acts that dispose men to become virtuous and forbid other acts that lead to vice and tend to make life in society impossible. In this regard, any definition of law must include two principles, namely common good and rationality. This would imply that one is obliged to obey any law if and only if it is

rational and it is also aimed at promoting the common good. Otherwise if that is not the case, civil disobedience is morally permissible.

This is to say that every civil law, in so far as it aims at the common good and is accordingly a just law, carries an obligation to be obeyed. Yet this obligation rests on more than civil law itself. It derives from a law more fundamental than civil law and its political sanction, viz, what is called natural law. This is the 'unwritten law' that, in its most common precepts, is fundamentally the same for all. The natural law expresses, in universal form primarily, the fundamental inclinations of human reason formulated by reason in a judgment naturally made, that is, with little or no discursive reasoning. Such law then, is natural on two scores: it is not law made by reason so much as discovered by reason; and all men thus naturally know the most universal precepts expressed in natural law. Natural law, so understood, is clearly a fundamental principle for directing human acts.

When asked what good his philosophy did him, Aristotle, the ancient Greek philosopher remarked that it enabled him to do willingly what other people did merely because of fear of the law. "A human being should through reason be able to discover the principles and the laws by which he or she should live by within society. This according to Aristotle, is because natural laws are based on human nature and on the nature of societies. The behavior they prohibit is wrong not because a particular group or state has passed laws against them but because they run counter to the social nature of human beings". (F. Ochieng, Odhiambo, 2009). Since such laws, says Aristotle, are discoverable through reason, one who (through reason) has discovered such laws, in obeying the laws would be willingly obeying them whereas the individual who has not yet discovered such laws, in obeying them would be doing so because of fear of retribution.

One other kind of law must still be mentioned: eternal law. It is even more fundamental than natural law, being the law in which even natural law participates. "Eternal law refers to the idea of the government of things that exist in the mind of God; it is the plan of God's wisdom by which all action and motion of the universe is directed. It directs the universe as a whole to the common good of God himself. This is not the law given through revelation. The knowledge about eternal law can be arrived at by reason alone, though usually indirectly. Eternal law is therefore the ultimate source of all law and the ultimate directive principle of all acts and motions of creatures to their proper ends" (William A. Wallace, O.P. 1977),

As concerns ethical obligations and legal requirements, philosophers argue that ethics requires more of us than does any reasonable body of laws. It also calls on us to more than simply observe others' rights. Why should we in business or elsewhere do more than is demanded by the law or the rights of others? Kant's view among others indicates why? Suppose I own a highly profitable real estate firm. If I make no charitable contributions in my community, I do not violate anyone's rights and I live within mine. Kant might say that although I am not using anyone merely as means- as I would if I employed untrained, unsuspecting people to remove asbestos from a building I am selling- a I am also not treating fellow citizens as ends. I do nothing for their good (beyond what my taxes may do for them). I may defend my conduct by

saying that their rights in the matter ends with requesting, as opposed to demanding my contributions. It is true that I have freedom rights to retain my profit and give nothing to my charity. But is doing so ethical? If I have no excuse, such as a sick child who needs expensive treatments, am I not criticizable as ethically deficient?

On any plausible virtue ethics, morality also calls for doing more than one must in order to avoid violating anyone's rights. Generosity is a virtue. So is beneficence, understood as the disposition to do good deeds toward others. Compassionate caring which is stressed in many religious traditions and prominently in some say, in catholic social teaching and in some Hindu ethics, may also count as a virtue. These virtues would be unfulfilled by my retaining all my profits. It should now be clear that ethics calls on us not only to do things the law does not require, but also to do things that no one else's rights require. Where no one has a right to our help, we may still properly believe we should give it. Indeed what principle would we want others to abide by if we suddenly had an accident but no one owed us assistance? As Kant would stress, a reasonable principle is that, within the limits of our powers and major commitments, we should render aid. Even if a business is enormous and is only a legal person, through its management it has agency and is subject to ethical standards. Even without idealization or the high standards a religion may bring to the operation of business, ethics calls on business to do more than is strictly required by either law or the rights of the persons and communities with which it deals.

Another discipline that one would have problem tying to divorce from philosophy is theology. Theology deals with questions such as what is the nature of the divine. Can the existence of God be proved or disproved? Is there a logical contradiction between the idea "God exists" and the idea "Evil exists"? In other words, how can we reconcile God's existence with the presence of evil in the world? What is religious experience or knowledge? What is religion? Can there be more than one true religion? Is religious faith reasonable or unreasonable? Here comes the philosophy of religion which does not take for granted any claim made about religion but subjects our religious beliefs and concepts to a critical rational philosophical inquiry. Nobody would deny that philosophers of religion are people who try to philosophise about religion. They are people who try to think clearly. They typically seek to argue on the basis of reason. It is an interesting picture in the Bible that none of its authors ever try to prove the existence of God; his existence is simply assumed throughout. "The idea that our beliefs should be justified by logically structured arguments is one that comes from the Greeks. These two tributaries of western civilization- the Hebrew and the Greek- eventually came together in the Middle Ages as Christian thinkers benefitting from the work of Arabic scholars became interested in Greek culture, particularly Greek philosophy. The result was a flowering of philosophy and theology that sought to work out ways in which the claims of the Bible could be harmonized with the truths arrived at by rational reflection. It is in the Middle Ages that we first encounter sustained and sophisticated attempts to prove God's existence" (Horner Chris and Westacott, 2000). In this regard, the basic fundamental questions in theology mentioned above cannot be answered adequately or satisfactorily by limiting oneself to what a non-philosopher

theologian may say. Neither can one answer them only by appeal to the Bible or Quran for instance. The best way to answer them is to appeal also to human reason- to philosophy given that philosophical enterprise is essentially the application of reasoning to a wide variety of topics.

As concerns the relation of philosophy to political science, it is worth noting that some terms employed in political science have two types of meaning, descriptive and prescriptive or normative. However, it is the normative meanings of terms that make them have universal appeal. A political scientist may be conversant with the descriptive meaning of say democracy in the US but not necessarily with the normative meaning of democracy. To discuss the normative meaning of democracy is to pass from politics to ethics (or social and political philosophy). In other words, it is to treat politics ethically or philosophically. Besides the descriptive dimension of ethics, the normative dimension of ethics is concerned with ideals, norms, principles by which an individual ought to live or act. For instance many practical obstacles stand between the democratic ideals of equality, freedom and the good life and their realization. In this regard, philosophy raises some pertinent questions: how can a democracy cope with concrete inequalities among its citizens? This is because there are striking inequalities of material, social and cultural opportunities.

Regarding the relation of power to authority, philosophers advocate for the ethical theory of the state whose general position is that "it is inappropriate to divorce politics from ethics since the ultimate aim and function of the state is ethical" (F. Ochieng Odhiambo, 1998).

The basic idea is that the state is the defender of the liberty and the property of the citizen in a kind of "social contract" between the rulers and the ruled. Social contract theory explains how and why the state has certain obligations to its citizens such as the promotion of justice, the promotion of equality of opportunity and ensuring that everyone enjoys the full benefits of freedom. Besides, the notion of consent in the establishment of authority is of paramount importance as far as the relation of power to authority is concerned. Consent of the ruled is nowadays often viewed as amoral demand that must be met if the state is to possess legitimate authority and this is often taken to be a strong argument in favour of democracy. A further justification for the state's authority lies in its ability to promote the common good. In other words, there may be goals that the state should aim at for intrinsic, moral reasons and not only because they promote freedom or security (Horner Chris and Westacott Emrys, 2000).

For instance the state may set up fund or subsidize healthcare, education, welfare, invalidity benefits, libraries, museum, art galleries, music festivals, national parks, wildlife, sanctuaries etc. on ground that they make possible or positively promote human flourishing and not because they protect anyone's rights or promote equal opportunity. This is a conception of the good that includes but exceeds the good of individual freedom.

Philosophy has also a lot to say in the domain of economics and one cannot divorce philosophy from any economic discourse. Economic activity is of fundamental importance for the material conditions of human existence. However,

philosophy goes deeper in addressing issues to do with any kind of economic enterprise. Besides the satisfaction of material temporal needs of man, philosophers place emphasis on man's needs in his totality, namely intellectual, moral, spiritual and religious needs. This is to say that philosophers address economic matters from a moral standpoint. Scholars of economics for instance, have often refused moral considerations in the sphere of their science as an undue intrusion and usurpation. Economics, it is affirmed, is a science in its own right just as biology or medicine. Its fundamental task is the study of the laws that permit the optimum combination of means for the maximizing of the output together with the minimum use of scarce resources. In this task economy enjoys its own scientific autonomy and is independent of moral considerations. To a certain extent then, then, the aim of economic activity is profit. Economic liberalism, the maximizing of profit is even the supreme goal of efficient management. This is to say that the maximizing of profit as the highest criterion does not provide a barrier against the production of harmful products or of noxious commodities. It is not in a condition to secure a just wage if there is an excessive offer of work. It does not know boundaries against the destructive exploitation of the environment. Philosophically speaking particularly from a moral point of view, philosophers have rejected the above theorem that the fundamental purpose of economic activity should be "profit or prestige" (GS 64).

"Even though an economic enterprise must work profitably in order to survive and to develop and even though the striving after a reasonable profit remains legitimate, profit can only be a secondary purpose in economic enterprise" (Peschke, Karl H., 2004). Were it to be the primary purpose, this would inevitably bring many abuses and injustices in its train as proven by ample experience. An example of such an abuse is the scandals of 1988 surrounding the dumping of toxic wastes from Europe in African countries, which are not equipped to cope with them, but accepted them- pressured by financial needs at times for the ridiculous price of US dollars 2.5 per ton (Peschke, Karl H., 2004). Some of the wastes are highly poisonous to humans and nature and would require enormous sums to neutralize them.

Philosophers therefore insist that this sphere of human activity, namely economics also stand in need of an ethical orientation. They maintain that economic activity is of fundamental importance for the material conditions of human existence. Many men and women are involved in it, in factory, field, office or shop and all depend on it. However, they argue that "the proper function of the economy is one of service" (Peschke Karl H., 2004). And it is here that moral evaluations come into play. In the static economy of a rural and pre-industrial society, the purpose of economic activity was to the greatest extent the satisfaction of the basic, material needs of people. This being the case, questions about further goals, criteria and norms appeared superfluous. Yet the dynamic economy of an industrial and post-industrial society definitely extends beyond the satisfaction of these most basic needs of people, and the question of its further goals poses itself with greater force. "It is to be retained that the objective of economy does not consist in mere profitability nor in the maximizing of the social produce or of the always greater material welfare of as many people as possible. All these are criteria of a utilitarian ethics, which cannot withstand a

careful scrutiny in the light of the demands of universal justice.

What is therefore the authentic end of economy? The purpose of economic activity is the same as the purpose of human work. It is the constant teaching of the catholic social doctrine that the economy must be at the service of the person and not vice versa the person at the service of economy. Vatican II declares: The ultimate and basic purpose of economic production must be "the service of man, of man, that is, in his totality, taking into account his material needs and the requirements of his intellectual, moral, spiritual and religious life; of all men whomsoever and of every group of men of whatever race or from whatever part of the world" (GS 64). In a special way, attention must be given to the poor. Not that the supreme end of economy would be the service of the poor; this would be too narrow a definition. But the neglect of the poor is quite evidently a sign that an economic system does not resolutely stand at the service of God's resolute plan for humankind, which can be realized fully only if all men and women are enabled to contribute efficiently to it.

An economy paced at the service of the genuine needs of people can be summed up as an economy placed at the service of the common good. "The common good is the sum of those conditions of social living whereby men are enabled more readily and more fully to achieve their perfection and appointed ends" (GS 26; 74). The definition adds to the achievement of men's perfection that of their appointed ends, inasmuch as men have also the task to place themselves at the service of other people and of God's plan with the world. The functions of the common good are basically two:

First it promotes and makes possible an integral human existence for its members. In the realization of this goal, a person is helped by different societies, which all have their own common good in order to assist their members in the attainment of full humanity. Second, the common good is to preclude antisocial impulses in human nature from interfering with the rights of others and with the social order. This aspect of common good is realized by the establishment and securing of peace and order. The most efficient means to it is the law of the state, which has the power of coercion behind it (Peschke, Karl H., 2004)

The common good of a society is promoted by the members who belong to it. Theirs is the responsibility and obligation to respect and to advance it. The common good is therefore also an ethical enterprise. In this regard we can see the fundamental role played by philosophy in other fields of study and in this particular case in economics when it places emphasis on the need for ethical considerations in any kind of economic enterprise by pointing out that economic theories that maintain that economy should enjoy its own scientific autonomy and therefore should be independent of moral considerations are insufficient theories in that economic policies which cannot address the concrete needs of the human person are not worthwhile.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Having given a general account of the role that philosophy plays in other fields of study, one therefore have a better understanding of why philosophical reflection can be brought to bear on any subject matter whatever owing to the vastness

and generality of its subject matter. In other words, philosophy is interested in the subject matter of all other disciplines hence the idea that the subject matter of philosophy is the whole universe for there are no issues in other disciplines that philosophy cannot help to clarify. Philosophers do not claim that they have answers at their fingertips. That is why we had pointed out that philosophy is an attempt to clarify and if possible to give answers to certain fundamental and puzzling questions in our attempt to understand ourselves and the universe that we inhabit. In other words, philosophy examines rationally the fundamental problems affecting man and the universe in which he lives.

This explains why philosophy is the mother of all the other disciplines in terms of its object of study for the formal object of philosophy is all aspects of reality while that of other disciplines is restricted to an aspect of reality. In this regard, we talk of philosophy of medicine, philosophy of religion, philosophy of business (business ethics), philosophy of mathematics, philosophy of science, philosophy of Art, philosophy of law (legal philosophy), philosophy of politics (political philosophy), philosophy of mind, philosophy of education, philosophy of history, philosophy of economics etc.

This explains why we have maintained that, the formal object of philosophy is all aspects of reality) as opposed to other sciences such as physics, biology, and psychology whose formal objects is limited to a specific aspect of reality. For instance from the etymological meaning of Biology which is derived from two Greek words, *bio* and *logos* meaning life and science respectively, this means that biology is limited to the study of living organisms and the same applies to psychology which is derived from two Greek words *Psyche* meaning mind and *logos* meaning science hence psychology becomes the science of mind or mental phenomena. This is not the case with philosophy owing to its vast subject matter and scope and there cannot be any problem which philosophical reflection cannot help to address or clarify hence the dictum that philosophy is the mother of all other disciplines. For instance the term **PhD** from Latin *Philosophia Doctor* (Doctor of Philosophy) hence we talk about Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy, Doctor of Philosophy in Education, Doctor of Philosophy in Physics, Doctor of Philosophy in Medicine, Doctor of philosophy in mathematics, etc. In all these cases the term philosophy is constant and does not change.

Besides, we have also examined the fundamental role played by philosophy in other forms of human inquiry such as law, religion, history, economics, political science, education and even in theology. In other all the above disciplines cannot be divorced from philosophy because philosophy contributes toward a better understanding of historical, educational, religious, legal, and even economic matters in such a fundamental and comprehensive manner. With respect to economic matters, philosophers lay stress ethics, which deals with what is right and wrong in human relations. Philosophers see the need of ethical considerations when we are dealing with matters to do with economics by not only pointing out the secondary purpose of economic production which is basically the satisfaction of the material temporal needs of the people but also the primary or the supreme goal of any economic enterprise which besides the material needs also include other needs, namely intellectual, moral, religious and

also spiritual. Philosophy is interested in economy which takes into account man's needs in his totality hence the expression economy in the service of man and not vice versa man in the service of economy. In this regard, economy placed at the service of the genuine need of the people is the same as the economy placed at the service of the common good which is construed as the sum of the conditions of social living that enabled men to achieve their appointed ends.

We have also examined the important contribution that philosophy makes as far as educational issues and problems are concerned. While acknowledging the significant role played by educational sciences in educational enterprise, we have seen that educational sciences cannot address educational problems comprehensively. This brought us to philosophy of education as the application of general notions to educational problems. We pointed out that while educational sciences see education in terms of job opportunities and career, philosophy of education is interested in the deeper meaning of education which entails the meaning of life, life of man in general. Philosophers consider education as a multi-dimensional concept comprising the cognitive, critical/creative, normative and dialogical dimensions. This implies that worthwhile knowledge cannot be defined only as that which can be used to earn a living for education should aim at forming an all-round individual. The problem is that most teachers and teachers to be have been made to believe that teaching is primarily the acquisition of technical skills and competency which of course is necessary as a cognitive dimension of education. However, what we are saying is that the cognitive dimension of education by itself is not sufficient and therefore there is need to incorporate the other dimensions of education if at all education is to have a meaningful purpose for one can have a great deal of knowledge and still be a learned fool. It is possible to have power without insight.

We have also highlighted the importance of philosophy to law by shedding light on the nature and end of all law. In this regard, any definition of law must include two principles, namely rationality and common good in that for a law to be morally binding, it must be reasonable and it should also help in promoting the common good understood as the sum of conditions of social living which enables men to achieve their end. Regarding the relation of ethics and legal requirements, we have pointed out that ethics demands more than legal requirements. Supposing a rich man is surrounded by so many poor people. There is no legal obligation that he has to assist those poor people and he cannot be accused in any court of law for having ignored them, but from an ethical point of view, it is immoral to ignore the plight of those poor people living within the vicinity.

We have also examined the role of philosophy in the historical sphere by pointing out how Hegel, the German philosophy placed emphasis historicism, the doctrine that emphasizes the importance of history in the understanding of human institutions and activities saying that even the constitution is the product of a country's history and that it does not just arise from the blue. In other words scholars in every field must be aware of the origin, context and the development of their doctrines in that nothing happens out of chance hence he lays stress on "tradition" as a chain that links the present and the past

In the political arena, philosophy has a lot to say as well. Philosophers advocate for an ethical theory of the state arguing that we cannot divorce politics from ethics since the ultimate aim and function of the state is ethical. As concerns the relation of power to authority, philosophers place emphasis on consent in the establishment of authority and argue that consent is a moral demand that must be met if a state is to possess legitimate authority and this is often considered as a strong argument in favour of democracy. In this regard, the ruler should say "I am lawful" but not "I am the law".

In conclusion, we can reiterate the usefulness of philosophy by saying that philosophy should play a central part in any balanced college or university curricula. The study of philosophy contributes distinctly and substantially to the development of students' critical thinking. It enhances their ability to deal rationally with normative issues. It extends their understanding of interdisciplinary questions. It strengthens their grasp of our intellectual history and of our culture in relation to others. It increases their capacity to articulate and assess world-views and it improves their skills in writing and speaking.

Philosophical reflection can be brought to bear on any subject matter whatsoever; every discipline raises questions which philosophical investigation can help clarify; and every domain of human existence confronts us with problems on which philosophical reflection can shed light as we saw with regarding to educational problems, problems related to law, economics, history etc. The study of philosophy can help students in all the ways this suggests and the philosophical techniques they assimilate can help them both in their other academic work and in their general problem solving over the years. To sum up, every discipline should take the study of philosophy very seriously having said that philosophical reflection can be brought to bear on any subject matter whatsoever for every discipline raises questions which philosophical investigation can help to clarify and that a person who has studied philosophy can pursue an issue in depth, examine that issue comprehensively with sound reasoning than a person who has not studied philosophy given that the study of philosophy helps an individual to develop critical and problem-solving skills.

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