

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

Concepts of Philosophy and Sciences

Dr. Samson Brown Muchineripi Marume

Senior Lecturer & Acting Chairperson, Department of Public Administration,
Faculty of Commerce and Law, Zimbabwe Open University, Zimbabwe

Roy Robson Jubenkanda

D. Phil. Candidate, Zimbabwe Open University, Zimbabwe

Cornelius Wonder Namusi

D.Phil. Candidate, Zimbabwe Open University, Zimbabwe

N. C. Madziyire

D. Phil. Candidate, Zimbabwe Open University, Zimbabwe

Abstract:

In speaking about the sciences both philosophers and scientists employ a certain number and kinds of terms and concepts and because of that factor it becomes indisputably essential to obtain absolute clarity as to these terms and concepts. These terms and concepts constitute the subject of this article

Keywords: *Philosophy, scientists, concepts and terms and clarity.*

1. Introduction

According to William Fox and Ivan H. Meyer [Public Administration Dictionary, 1995, in the forward], students and practitioners of Public Administration communicate through the use of terms and concepts. Often this communication is restricted due to the lack of a clear understanding of the terminology used. One can hardly refer to effective communication if the message is assembled in terms and concepts which the receiver does not understand or relate to. At both the macro and micro levels such a state of affairs has numerous implications for teaching and the profession; it may range from students looking at lecturers with strange facial expression to officials carrying out policies never intended by government. In short, we have observed as scientist and practitioners and as lecturers how terminology impedes communication and, indeed, the learning processes.

Students, lecturers, scientists, politicians, technocrats and public administrators involved in the business of government have one thing in common, and that is to serve society better public institutions. Equally common is their use of subject languages to facilitate the learning and understanding of social sciences including public administration and to some extent also philosophy.

With this background and understanding, it is important to note that the terms and concepts of these vocabularies are sometimes vague and undefined, requiring clarity and unambiguity.

In respect of our subject for examination, we appreciate that both philosophy and sciences employ certain numbers and kinds of terms and concepts and these constitute the subject of this journal article.

2. Purpose of Article

The purpose of this article is to: identify group and explain groups of terms and concepts associated with philosophy and sciences.

3. Group of Associated Terms and Concepts

- General Remarks

➤ The Linguistic – Analytical Trend of Philosophy

Of importance in this discussion is that man's concepts are his means of expressing his knowledge of, or acquaintanceship with the world. The world does not present a problem. It is our reference to the world by means of language, that causes the difficulty. It is necessary to devote attention to the philosophical and logical aspect of language as a means of expression, because language may possess some structure of which we are unaware and which we might unconsciously project onto non – linguistic reality.

Concepts are not empirical. For instance, concepts such a casualty, substance, interaction denial, unity, multiplicity, and object are non – empirical. Concepts such as table, chair, dog, are empirical concepts that it is possible to understand reality in a scientific way. When we say that one event is the cause of another, we are bringing about a causal unity by connecting thee two events casualty. Casualty is part of the way in which we react to events when we take the scientific view.

It is a fact that man reacts by employing his system of symbols. It is important to know what the structure of this system is. Man is compelled to orientate himself conceptually in the world and philosophy tries critically to analyze this conceptual orientation.

➤ **The Phenomenological Trend**

This trend stresses the analytical function of philosophy. Philosophy does not establish facts about existing objects. It confines itself to the analysis of phenomena as intended objects when we analyze something, we isolate certain aspects of it and direct our attention to specific characteristics which go with the name which we assign to the object and in terms of which we distinguish the objects from others. When the phenomenologist analyses fountain pen, he does not express judgments about particular fountain pens; he analyses the properties to which the name fountain pen is attached.

➤ **Common Factor**

The common factor in these trends is their emphasis on the task of philosophy in terms of its investigation into meanings. The philosopher must have insight into symbols, concepts or phenomena. He gains this insight when he understands them, that is to say when he has determined their meaning.

The terms and concepts closely associated with *philosophy and sciences* of which it is indisputably essential to achieve absolute clarity include *natural sciences, mental sciences, ideal or formal sciences, special sciences and disciplines*.

3.1. *The Natural Sciences*

The natural sciences are those sciences which study nature. By nature, we mean an empirically observable reality which exists independently of human activity. Examples are physics, chemistry, botany and zoology including mathematics, statistics, and logic.

3.2. *The Mental Sciences*

The mental sciences study the reality brought about by human activity. We therefore call them the cultural sciences. The concept culture denotes human activity and simultaneously reflects the mental industry of man that is his ideals (aims) and his rational reflection on how to realize these ideals. Ideals and rational reflection are not directly observable but they can be objectified that is to say they can assume a material form. The archaeologist forms a conception of the culture of extinct races by reconstructing their dwellings and implements. Thus material things throw much light on the mental life of a people. The natural objects through which this mental or spiritual reality is made accessible we call documental and monuments. The documents include all written material, the monuments include all material objects fashioned by a people (implements, clothing, buildings, tombstones and so on). Examples of the mental sciences are *sociology, economics, history, psychology, jurisprudence, political science, public administration strategic management, war and strategic studies, criminology, municipal government and administration*.

3.3. *The Ideal and Formal Sciences*

The ideal or formal sciences are not concerned with the observation of empirical objects. They construct their objects of study by description. The mathematician does not busy himself with the empirical observation of a number of physical triangles. He constructs a concept of a triangle and then investigates the implications of the concept and its relation to other concepts. Logic proceeds in a similar manner. His objects of study exist solely by virtue of this having constructed them.

3.4. *What Is the Concept Special Science?*

By special sciences we mean all those sciences which study just one particular aspect of reality. The natural and mental sciences are all designated as special sciences. Philosophy is not a special science because it is not restricted to any one particular aspect of experience. The classification of mathematics and logic is an open question. These are both universal sciences in the same way that a number of basic concepts from mathematics and logic appear in every science.

3.5. *The Concept Discipline*

By discipline we mean a stage in the process of development of a science, or an aspect of the science. If within some science, a certain section of it has not developed much further than the acceptance of a particular method, we call that section a discipline. Every science proceeds analytically, but analysis has developed as an independent discipline. As such, it represents a particular aspect of science without studying any specific object. This means that analysis has developed a specific methodological procedure, that is, disciplined conduct or activity.

4. **The Difference between Philosophy and the Special Sciences**

There is general agreement that philosophy and the special sciences differ, but this difference is rarely adequately precisely set forth. The following differences are stated by the philosopher:

Philosophy is more fundamental and philosophy is universal.

These differences can be traced to the fact the philosopher poses very searching problems about the special sciences.

Example: the scientists lay down general rules in connection with the empirical observation of a particular number of objects. The philosopher then poses the following question: In what way can we justify the inference of a general statement from a specific number of cases? If I discover that a few students do mathematics and Latin very excellently, I am not justified in assuming that all students do mathematics and Latin excellently.

Yet if I observe that a number of plants flourish in a certain part of my garden, I contend that all such plants will flourish there. May I infer so general a statement from observation of a particular sample of plants? This generalization cannot be justified experimentally. The scientist can do several more tests and thereby confirm the general statement – but confirmation and justification are two different things. Now we face this question: Can the scientist construct or propose any experiment which could possibly justify this generalization? This is indeed a fundamental problem. If we could demonstrate that such justification simply is not possible and that there is every reason for rejecting the scientist's supposition, we should have to conclude that the scientist is on the wrong track.

Philosophy is universal in that, in principle, it investigates an aspect of every possible science. The medium of expression (the language) of that science. It investigates concepts which appear universally throughout all sciences, for example, "knowledge," "validity", "truth," "form," and "cause".

In a certain sense, we say that philosophy begins where science leave off, that is, at the point where the sciences, for one or another reason, can make no further progress except by altering their conditions and requirements.

We separate one science from another. The philosopher asks accordingly whether there is any a connection between the various sciences; whether it would be possible to unify the results of all sciences and so to form a complete conception of reality. The scientist does not ask this part of question about his data or results. The question is irrelevant to the solution of his immediate problems. The question is, however, both posed and discussed by the philosopher.

It is the philosopher's thesis that the sciences give rise to problems which lie outside the scope of science. The scientist defends the view that all problems relevant to a particular science do in fact fall within the scope of science and cannot be investigated by outsiders.

However, what does emerge clearly from the discussions is that we are able to formulate a number of problems to which both philosopher and scientists can devote thought.

The fact that not the scientist but also the philosopher is involved in such a discussion clearly indicates that the matter in hand cannot be resolved in accordance with the methods normally used by the scientist within his own field. One of the scientist's normal methods is experiment. But he does not make use of experiment in his effort to convince the philosophers.

In short we state that discussions about a subject differ from statements existing within that subject. The object of study is different. In the first case, the object is the particular science itself; in the second, it is the objects studied by the science.

In what respects, then, may we contend and find justification that philosophy differs from science?

- a) They differ with respect to the object studied.
- b) They differ in their methodological approaches.
- c) They differ as regards formulation of results.
- d) They again in aim.

The prevalent view that each science has a clearly demarcated subject-matter and method accords with contemporary teaching in the sciences, though the man who practices knows nothing of these rigid boundaries.

5. Definition of Science

Science can be defined as systems of statements. This says a great deal because both system and statements must comply with certain requirements:

- a) A system must be logically coherent and methodical. Something is systematic (methodical) when its elements are arranged in a certain way.
- b) A statement is sentence which is either true or false. In science, we are concerned with true statements. A statement or judgement is true if it has a definite connection with the object in question, or if it accords with an accepted and legitimate manner of construction.

If we apply these criteria to philosophy, we shall have to answer the following two questions:

1. If philosophy is a system of true judgements, or true knowledge, what is the object to which that knowledge relates?
2. Along what paths is that knowledge gained that is what methods do we employ in philosophy?

Notwithstanding all the justifications of various methods found in philosophy, the fact remains that philosophy is primarily a conceptual science which is concerned only indirectly with immediate world of experience and therefore must pursue analytical method. The world with which the philosopher business himself is the world of concepts. His method of approach to the world is the rationally analytical one. His aim is to grasp or understand, that is to indicate the part played by a particular concept within a whole. The philosopher therefore provides means for integrating an apparently solitary phenomenon with a whole, a world-view, or world-picture of the so-designated intelligently conceptual scheme of reference.

The facts of chemistry, physics, political science or psychology associate particular occurrences. Thus the situations existing for the philosopher are the given number of expressions, statements of judgement about the original situations.

6. Concluding Remarks

1. The object studied by the philosopher is not identical to the object studied by any one particular science.
2. The philosopher's method is not experimental; it is rationally analytical.
3. The pronouncements of the philosopher illuminate the way in which we deal with things or people only in so far as we know or value these things. Philosophy cannot formulate its results in terms of general laws such as found in some sciences. The philosopher's purpose is to understand or grasp, and this determines the nature of philosophical results.

Philosophy is then by definition a rational attempt by man to pose, and determine the validity of, both problems and solutions pertaining to a world-view and a view of life. Thus philosophy is always a purely theoretical reflection and is characterized by rationality and universality.

7. References

- i. J. Ayer: Language, truth and logic: 2nd edition. New York: Dower Publications, 1937.
- ii. Arnold Brecht: Political Theory: Twentieth Century Foundations of Political Thought: New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1967.
- iii. J. J. N. Cloete: Introduction to Public Administration: J. L. van Schaik, 1985
- iv. W. Fox and Ivan H. Meyer: Public Administration Dictionary, Juta and Company, 1995.
- v. S. B. M. Marume: Public Administration: Epistemological and methodological aspects of African social research studies: work 17: unpublished PhD degree thesis proposal: California University for Advanced Studies, California, September 30, 1988.
- vi. S.B.M. Marume: Public Administration: special contemporary problems and challenges: LAP Lambert Academic Publishing: Berlin, Germany, 2015 [ISBN978-3-659-75883-6].